

RELIGION, SOCIAL CAPITAL AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE SAHEL: THE NIYASS TIJANIYYA IN NIGER

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Religion is not often pursued as a source of engagement in the international discourse on development. While faith-based organizations have received a greater audience and exerted greater influence in the past few years under the Bush administration, it is still uncommon for international development agencies to incorporate religious loyalties, insights and communities into their regional or national agendas. This pattern of development practice grew, perhaps, from an attempt to pursue a secular agenda that offended none and therefore was acceptable to all. However, in neglecting the religiosity of the poorest of the poor, the development agenda fails to acknowledge and learn from some of the most innovative, influential and sustainable development actors: the religious leadership of the world's poor.

In the Islamic countries of sub-Saharan Africa, certain religious leaders are making great strides in advancing an ambitious development agenda among their constituent population of believers, who are among the poorest of the poor. In Niger, a country that consistently ranks at the very bottom of many development indicators, the religious leadership of the Niass Tijaniyya, one of the predominant Sufi brotherhoods in Niger, is engaged in a variety of anti-poverty, empowerment and literacy programs that touch the lives of the poorest Nigeriens. Its progress in women's human, economic and reproductive rights is especially remarkable considering the education and poverty levels of the adult population in Niger.

The efforts and progress of these actors are of great value to international development agencies and actors as we pass the midway mark to accomplishing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Regional divergence is increasing, with sub-Saharan Africa falling considerably behind despite the continuing efforts and financial resources funneled into the region. The Niass Tijaniyya may not only provide some guidance in tackling the persistent problems of extreme poverty, high infant mortality, hunger, illiteracy, inequality and disease in Niger, but its leaders

may also prove to be compelling and effective partners in the fight to achieve the MDGs in the 21st century. While these leaders do have access to considerable personal wealth, it is their extraordinary spiritual capital that has enabled them to address these issues with such success in Niger.

AN AFTERNOON IN KIOTA

The afternoon *al-asar* prayer was called just as we entered the small town of Kiota.¹ I adjusted my head covering and breathed in the dusty air of western Niger. As the prayer ended, Sheikh Moussa Aboubacar also known as Sheikh Moussa, the spiritual leader of the Niass Tijaniyya, walked up to his vast concession, a concrete monolith in Kiota. He was accompanied by two military guards, his assistants, an entourage of disciples from Niger and elsewhere in West Africa, and other men and women who pay tribute to Sheikh Moussa's "spiritual power"—or *baraka*—and seek his spiritual guidance and support.² We followed the group of believers up two flights of stairs and into a sparsely decorated room where, one by one, Sheikh Moussa listened to their requests. Some asked for material assistance, others for spiritual support, while receiving small gifts of tribute. Most disciples knelt at Sheikh Moussa's feet while making their requests in hushed, deferential tones and few looked at him directly. After each disciple whispered his entreaty, Sheikh Moussa offered a prayer that their hopes be realized. They sat with their hands raised, palms facing inward to partake in the prayer he offered to God, which touched by his blessing had a greater chance of being granted than their own.

Sheikh Moussa performs this ritual of tribute and blessing daily for thousands of Niass Tijaniyya Muslims from Niger, Senegal, Nigeria and other West African countries. The Tijaniyya is one of several Sufi brotherhoods found in West Africa associated with the "non-sectarian Muslim tradition" of Sufism that emphasizes a more mystical religious practice, expressed mainly through the veneration of saints.³ Sufism is not well known in the West, although nearly one-third of the Islamic world practices this form of Islam. While more orthodox and legalistic sects of Islam discount Sufism as heretical in its veneration of saints, meditation and chanting, Sufis contend that they alone are able to interpret the esoteric doctrine of the Quran, enabling them to connect to the "inner reality of God" through learning, servitude and prayer, and with the guidance of spiritual leaders such as Sheikh Moussa.⁴

The dynamic between Sheikh Moussa's family and the Niass Tijaniyya may be better understood functionally as a type of social capital, which enables the creation and sustainability of the Sufi brotherhood.⁵ This interpretation extends beyond an economic understanding of social capital and touches upon what is produced when hierarchical sources of authority determine social norms that are

accepted with little resistance.⁶ During the ritual of tribute and blessing, disciples elevate Sheikh Moussa's social capital into a form of spiritual capital by recognizing the legitimate authority of Sheikh Moussa's extraordinary baraka.

This understanding of social capital as spiritual capital reveals a possible point of engagement for regional efforts to alleviate poverty and otherwise develop relationships with the most impoverished throughout Niger and West Africa. Indeed, Sheikh Moussa and others in his family continue to use their spiritual capital to promote initiatives that impact the health, education and food security of thousands of Nigeriens. Their willingness and ability to effect significant change among their discipleship may present an opportunity for outsiders to better understand, and therefore meet, the needs of those within the community who continue to live in persistent states of poverty.

THE TIJANIYYA BROTHERHOOD

Among the numerous Sufi brotherhoods, the Muridiyya, which follows the teachings of Amadou Bamba, is among the most notable and well-known from West Africa. Less well known is the Tijaniyya, which originated in Morocco during the late 18th century.⁷ Sheikh Ahmad al-Tijani was born in 1737 in an oasis town in southwest Algeria.⁸ As a child, the young Sheikh Tijani is said to have memorized the Quran by the age of seven, before mastering Islamic jurisprudence, prophetic tradition and other branches of the traditional Islamic sciences.⁹ Through his continued studies, pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*) and association with venerated scholars, he became affiliated with various religious orders, whose emphasis on an "elite 'orthodox' Sufism, firmly rooted within the bounds of the Quran and Sunna" were instrumental in the development of the Tijaniyya order, which, by the end of his life in 1815, had attracted thousands of followers.¹⁰ The Tijaniyya *tariqa* is based on three fundamental principles: asking Allah for forgiveness; affirming the oneness of God by reciting, "*la ilaha illallah*," or "there is no God but Allah;" and offering prayers upon the Prophet Muhammad.¹¹

In West Africa, there are two major branches of the Tijaniyya brotherhood. One is associated with al-Hajj Malik Sy and the other with al-Hajj Abdoulaye Niass. Both Malik Sy and Abdoulaye Niass were born into Senegalese Wolof families that shared long traditions of Islamic scholarship.¹² As the traditional Wolof aristocracy crumbled under French colonization, these leaders emerged, stressing their commitment to promoting Islam to a population of Muslim peasants who yearned for a grounded leadership to replace what they had lost.¹³ Whereas the Muridiyya stressed a commitment to work and prayer through work, the Tijaniyya branches stressed the education of men and women alike.

The Niass order is particularly well known for its emphasis on scholarship

and is generally described as a “reformed Tijaniyya, with a special concern with teaching of Arabic language and Islamic sciences.”¹⁴ Abdoulaye Niass was first initiated into the Tijaniyya in 1875 and soon became connected with some of the pre-eminent Tijani scholars of his time.¹⁵ While many of his children continued Niass’ tradition of Islamic education, his youngest son Ibrahim later became the most important leader of the Niass Tijaniyya and inspired the largest Muslim movement in West Africa in the 20th century.¹⁶

Sheikh Ibrahim Niass’ teachings and influence were not limited to spiritual affairs. They also included a wide range of religious and political activity such as working tirelessly for the rights of Muslims and the oppressed worldwide, interfaith dialogue, racial equality and the rights of women.¹⁷ In particular within the tradition of the Tijaniyya, he emphasized education for men, women and children. He encouraged women to compete with men in knowledge and learning and for the young to “make every effort to...acquire more knowledge, not only Islamic knowledge, not only mathematics and its branches, but also [to] be part of and cooperate with those whose zeal is to discover the unknown and unseen things of this world.”¹⁸ Today, the members of the Niass Tijaniyya are known for their religious scholarship and education, their emphasis on the virtue of tolerance, the simplicity of their religious rituals and a great degree of flexibility and openness that distinguishes them from more conservative Sufi brotherhoods.¹⁹

The Niass Tijaniyya is the largest and fastest growing Sufi brotherhood in Niger.²⁰ Kiota, a town approximately 120 kilometers east of the capital city of Niamey, is the most important site for the brotherhood in the country, and perhaps in all of West Africa.²¹ Once the home of the late Sheikh Aboubacar Assimi of Kiota (Sheikh Kiota), a student of Sheikh Ibrahim Niass and former Grand Caliph of the Niass Tijaniyya in West Africa, thousands of pilgrims now visit the town each year.²² There they pay tribute to Sheikh Kiota and receive the spiritual blessings of his successor, Sheikh Moussa Aboubacar, and Sheikh Kiota’s wife, Saida Oumul Khadiri Niass, who is known throughout Kiota as *Maman*.

Both Sheikh Moussa and Maman continue to receive visits from pious pilgrims across West Africa. Maman has inspired an impressive following of her own. The Niass Tijaniyya is particularly well-known for encouraging women’s leadership, most notably among the family members of the brotherhood’s spiritual leaders. Indeed, the wives, daughters and mothers of the Tijaniyya Sheikhs indirectly perpetuate baraka by playing critical roles in the brotherhood’s social life and Maman is not alone among the Tijaniyya women who have inspired followings among the community.²³ These women are exalted not only because of their inheritance of baraka, but also for their scholarship and attention to the religious needs of Muslim women. In some ways, their personality and works may be more important

than their lineage in determining the quality and degree of their baraka.²⁴ Perhaps for this reason, these women are remarkable religious agents, and as “bearers and organizers of baraka,” they may play considerable roles in shaping the Tijaniyya tariqa.²⁵

THE CONCEPT OF BARAKA

Baraka is perhaps best understood as that which enables mankind to do God’s work on earth.²⁶ As indicated above, the Sufi brotherhoods of West Africa are most often associated with individual Sheikhs who usually come from privileged backgrounds or have access to worldly privilege. They tend to be well-educated and have developed principled understandings of what Islam demands of its followers. While each of these brotherhoods may be distinguished by their historical contexts, theological understandings and devotional practices, they all share the belief that their leaders manifest baraka to an extraordinary degree.²⁷ Most often, these leaders claim a holy lineage relating them to the Prophet Muhammed.²⁸ They have, therefore, inherited “the knowledge of ridding the soul or inner self of the layers of darkness, purifying it...and guiding it to the...higher kingdom of God.”²⁹ Among the Niass Tijaniyya, Sheikh Moussa and Maman are two individuals who their followers believe are blessed with the ability to bring them closer to God through their better understanding of how to live a life that pleases God.³⁰ It is this received knowledge that is the essence of baraka.

There are, however, different forms of baraka and even ordinary people may possess this gift to some degree. In fact, the common understanding among the Niass Tijaniyya is that all of mankind possesses baraka, but some have been gifted with a more powerful version than others.³¹ Indeed, a common wish bestowed upon new mothers in Niger is for God to bless the newborn child with baraka.³²

Even animals or inanimate objects may possess baraka. As explained during an open conversation with several Nigeriens from the small village of Kokitamou, an ox and cart that enable a man to work in his fields possess baraka.³³ Gardening tools used by women to grow onions, lettuce and other produce possess baraka. Buckets containing water used to mix mud and build homes possess baraka. Thus, whatever meets the basic and daily needs of a community possesses baraka.³⁴

The concept is, therefore, an inherently flexible and inconsistent construct, and it is these qualities that give it social importance because the promise of baraka may lie anywhere and with anyone.³⁵ There is, however, a marked difference between the baraka of a Sufi Sheikh and the baraka of a farmer with a good work ethic or the baraka of his tools. This hierarchy of baraka is not questioned by the members of the Niass Tijaniyya who believe that these different manifestations of baraka may never be considered of the same quality and accept the greater

blessings of their leadership as the result of God's will.³⁶ At the same time—and as illustrated by the life of Sheikh Kiota—they also believe that the blessing of an ordinary person may rise to meet the baraka of a distinguished Sufi Sheikh if God so chooses.³⁷

SHEIKH ABOUBACAR ASSIMI OF KIOTA AND HIS SUCCESSOR

Sheikh Kiota was born in the early 1920s into a humble farming family. Educated by his father in the Quran, Sheikh Kiota was singled out as a young boy for his well-known farming abilities.³⁸ A visiting Sheikh from Mali, who prophesized that a new Sheikh would be revealed in the region and would be distinguished by his farming skills, indicated that the young Sheikh Kiota would one day attain this position.³⁹ Perhaps because he was “chosen” at such a young age and had not inherited his baraka or otherwise proven himself as a religious authority, Sheikh Kiota embarked on his first *hajj* by foot at the age of eighteen.⁴⁰ His journey there and back lasted thirty months. Upon his return, Sheikh Kiota was received as a blessed leader by the Niass Tijaniyya.⁴¹

During his lifetime, Sheikh Kiota acted as both a religious leader and a political representative (*chef de canton*), yet it was his baraka that brought wealth and recognition to Kiota. It was through his spiritual capital that Sheikh Kiota was able to bring various administrative services, extension agents, schools and other social services to the inhabitants of the town and its environs. Kiota today, which is home to only a few thousand people and enjoys direct access to Niger's main highway via a 27-kilometer paved road that runs straight into town from the highway, built to accommodate the thousands of pilgrims who visit Kiota annually.⁴² This road is only one example of what his disciples believe to be incontestable proof of Sheikh Kiota's extraordinary degree of baraka.⁴³

Sheikh Kiota's son and successor, Sheikh Moussa, inherited this privileged position of religious leadership in 2004. Sheikh Moussa continues to build his following and bring social and economic development to Kiota. In 2005, Kiota became one of the first towns in Niger outside of Niamey and the regional capitals to construct a cellular tower. Within weeks of its unveiling new businesses, such as calling centers and informal charging stations addressing the needs of a cellular clientele, popped up. As of 2007, high-tension wires have been erected, bringing electricity to Kiota and throughout the region.⁴⁴

Sheikh Moussa also continues his father's fight against poverty. Along with his father's baraka, Sheikh Moussa inherited his father's fields, which spread throughout the Boboye Valley. The grains cultivated in these fields are held in twelve granaries, each capable of storing over 1,000 bushels of millet. Farmers and families who have been unable to meet their needs during the farming season may

request grains from these granaries. Their requests are almost always granted by Sheikh Moussa.⁴⁵

BARAKA AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

The social capital manifest in the dynamic between the spiritual leadership of Niass Tijaniyya and its disciples is remarkably different from the traditional economic understanding of the concept, which is based on repeated interactions of similarly situated actors whose futures depend on the decisions of fellow actors. In the economic model of social capital, these actors' interactions over a period of time result in a set of norms mutually accepted by all actors.⁴⁶

The social capital of the Niass Tijaniyya, however, is premised on inequality within the community and the mutual acceptance of the hierarchy of baraka. Baraka functions as an abstract social norm promoting cooperation between and among the Niass Tijaniyya, where all parties recognize Sheikh Kiota or Sheikh Moussa's blessing and confer upon them the authority to determine the boundaries of socially acceptable and beneficial behavior. The community plays a significant role in monitoring Sheikh Moussa's authority; if he engages in behavior that is popularly viewed as unacceptable in one way or another, his authority may be questioned and even nullified.⁴⁷ Ultimately it is Sheikh Moussa who—based on his learning and knowledge of the Quran—takes the first step in interpreting how the Niass Tijaniyya ought to be living their lives. His interpretation is accepted by virtue of what his followers believe to be his superior ability to understand these complicated texts and apply their instructions to daily life, an ability given to him by God.

It is important to recognize that Sheikh Moussa's wealth, charity and generosity confirm his extraordinary degree of baraka among Niass Tijaniyya members.⁴⁸ Indeed, lineage alone cannot establish a devoted spiritual following because baraka multiplies with each generation of descendants. Rather, a possessor of a blessing that inspires and justifies a following must outwardly exhibit his or her baraka in the form of miracles, dreams or acts of generosity. Sheikh Kiota, Sheikh Moussa and Maman have used their considerable personal wealth and connections for the social and economic benefit of the Niass Tijaniyya in and around Kiota. In doing so, their social capital has multiplied, eventually morphing into what maybe better described as spiritual capital, as their disciples attribute their ability to provide for the community to the extraordinary baraka gifted to their family.⁴⁹ By paying tribute to these spiritual leaders, the men and women offering their pious gifts of cash, produce or labor are offering a kind of "spiritual taxation," receiving in return the social security invested in their leader's access to worldly privilege.⁵⁰

It is, therefore, the combination of these leaders' privilege and their willingness

to share that privilege that has created a wide “radius of trust” among the Niass Tijaniyya.⁵¹ Actors outside that radius of trust, namely non-Muslims or secular actors whose interests align with those of these spiritual leaders, may be able to engage with people inside it by developing relationships with Sheikh Moussa or Maman. By recognizing the legitimate authority of these spiritual leaders, actors outside the community benefit in their endeavors to deal with those within it. For instance, they may have access to a more patient audience, one more willing to listen and engage in meaningful discussions related to their projects and initiatives at Sheikh Moussa or Maman’s encouragement. They will, in other words, receive the blessings associated with these leaders’ baraka, and even their secular efforts may be enhanced.

BARAKA AND WOMEN’S RIGHTS: MAMAN’S INFLUENCE IN KIOTA

Maman’s dedication to women’s rights provides a compelling example of how secular efforts may benefit from association with the spiritual leadership in Kiota. As the daughter of Sheikh Ibrahim Niase, Maman inherited her father’s baraka. She then married into Sheikh Kiota’s family, acquiring an enviable social and spiritual position within the brotherhood and eventually became a spiritual leader in her own right.⁵² She is one of the most accessible personalities among the Niass Tijaniyya leadership because she is responsible for education, which allows her to transmit her baraka to the public and especially to women.⁵³ As a strong women’s advocate, she dogmatically uses her spiritual capital to influence women’s rights in the community. For instance, Maman has been able to secure the financial and technical resources to give Muslim girls and women access to Franco-Arab education and literacy programs, maternal and child care health, training for income-generating activities and Islamic education.⁵⁴

Maman’s crusade for women’s rights began when she first moved to Niger in the mid-1960s and found a more conservative religious community than the one she had known in Kaolack, Senegal. Many women in Kiota were cloistered and did not leave their concessions to engage in educational or income-generating activities. Maman strove to change this social norm. She began walking around Kiota, going to homes and businesses to talk with both the men and women she encountered. The community, recognizing Maman’s blessing and lineage, eventually accepted her interpretation of acceptable women’s behavior, and today Kiota’s women are engaged in a myriad of economic, social and educational activities. They own small businesses, sell food in the markets, attend literacy classes and organize into small associations to receive micro-loans. Perhaps most impressive are the gardens they plant. In Kiota alone, over 650 women participate in seasonal gardening by planting hundreds of beds of onions, lettuce, cabbage and other produce in a collec-

tive women's garden. This produce supplements their simple diet of millet, maize and manioc, and provides a significant source of additional household income.⁵⁵ This sea of green is a moving tribute to Maman's insistence on women's rights and her influence in the community.

Maman has also been personally engaged in providing education to the children of Kiota and surrounding villages. Her Franco-Arab schools, known as Raouda, have a collective enrollment of over 1,300 students, including over 150 foreign students who are given room and board at Maman's expense.⁵⁶ She is currently completing construction on a new facility for the Raouda High School, which will be the only high school in the town of Kiota and the only Franco-Arab high school in the entire Boboye region.⁵⁷ Maman pays focused attention to the plight of girl students in her schools, and one of her major contributions to the advancement of women was requiring instructor permission for parents who wanted their girls' traditional education interrupted by an early marriage.⁵⁸ This intervention enables girls to continue receiving an education in Islam, while also delaying marriage and, most likely, early pregnancy.

Within the past three years, Maman's influence has expanded to include women's reproductive rights. She has recently indicated that women should be able to rest for a few years between children and has supported birth control for women.⁵⁹ The women in and around Kiota have taken her counsel to heart. In the village of Kokitamou, there are more than a few women who now take one of two forms of birth control—either daily pills or a hormone injection that must be renewed every three months—most of them with their husband's acquiescence.


ENGAGING RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP

There are, of course, considerable complications in working with religious leaders in Niger and elsewhere. Islam is not monolithic and, even within Niger, there are other brotherhoods and Islamic movements far less tolerant than Niass Tijaniyya. These movements maybe less willing to engage with secular actors and may, in fact, espouse a belief system that is antithetical to core international norms, standards and practices. Working with Maman or Sheikh Moussa may alienate these religious orders and their communities, perhaps compromising ongoing development or anti-poverty efforts in their regions, and would thus require a nuanced approach and a thorough understanding of the implications of such involvement.

Development actors interested in working with individuals such as Sheik Moussa or Maman may learn from the strategies that government actors have pursued. In Kiota, government agriculture extension agents, educators and doctors work in the schools and clinics that they have been able to provide for the com-

munity, alongside Sheikh Moussa and Maman's representatives. They are able to improve the quality and reach of their services through the Niass Tijaniyya network by recognizing the authority of their religious leadership and respecting the religiosity of the community. While many of these government agents are also Muslim, and perhaps even Tijani Muslims, who pray in the company of the community and sometimes themselves seek the spiritual guidance of Sheik Moussa and Maman, their example of including these leaders by visiting them in their professional capacity is instructive. Secular or non-Tijani actors may be surprised at the impact of merely visiting Sheik Moussa or Maman's quarters periodically. This simple act not only builds relationships with these influential leaders, it also acknowledges the religious life of the community and, in doing so, communicates a respect for what the community values deeply.

As we reevaluate the progress made on the MDGs, it is apparent that something is lacking in international attempts to address these goals. It may be time for the development community to incorporate religious leaders in a meaningful way because these individuals are able to influence social norms in a way that secular actors, acting alone, cannot. By grounding their activities within the village economy and religious authority, Sheikh Moussa and Maman are engaging in a development agenda in Kiota that is culturally sustainable.⁶⁰

Recognizing the impact and relevance of religion and religious leaders will require a degree of humility that has eluded the development agenda. In particular, it will demand a respect for indigenous practices that comes only with a deep level of engagement and a commitment of time and resources that may not appear to be efficient or cost-effective.⁶¹ Yet, these leaders lie at the heart of grassroots development mechanisms in religious communities. Kiota provides a stirring example of how religious figures may influence social, economic and political development in poor communities within a relatively short period of time. Indeed, it is quite possible for paradigms to shift, for norms to change, and sometimes, as with the women of Kiota, doors are opened. 

NOTES

¹ From 2004 to 2006, the author lived and worked in Kokitamou, a village approximately five kilometers from Kiota, as a Peace Corps Volunteer. During that time, she developed a familiarity with and respect for the Niass Tijaniyya leadership in Kiota, especially as she learned about the various programs that this leadership initiated and supported for the local population.

² Cheikh Anta Mbacke Babou, *Fighting the Greater Jihad: Amadou Bamba and the founding of the Muridiyya in Senegal 1853-1913* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2007), 6. Baraka has also been understood as a divine blessing, similar to the ideas of grace or charisma in Christianity. And, "although people often differ about the meaning of the word, there is a consensus that baraka is a power that emanates from God, which He confers as He wishes but often on uncommonly pious people, on the family of the

Prophet Muhammad, and on his words enshrined in the Quran.” Babou, *Fighting the Greater Jihad*, 8.

³ “Of Saints and Sinners,” *Economist* 389, no. 8611 (20 December 2008), 73-76, 74.

⁴ Carl Ernst, *The Shambala Guide to Sufism* (Boston: Shambala Press, 1997), 26.

⁵ Although there is no singular undisputed meaning of “social capital,” it is commonly used to refer to the value of social networks. This paper contrasts an economic definition of social capital, grounded in game theory and based on the repeated interactions of similarly situated actors in traditional prisoner dilemma situations, with an interpretation that relies on social hierarchy and the accepted inequalities within the community to develop the cooperation underlying the social network.

⁶ Francis Fukuyama, “Social Capital, Civil Society and Development,” *Third World Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (2001): 7-20 16, 18.

⁷ Donal B. Cruise O’Brien, “Introduction,” in *Charisma and Brotherhood in African Islam*, ed. Donal B. Cruise O’Brien and Christian Coulon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 1-32, 24.

⁸ Zachary Wright, *On the Path of the Prophet: Shaykh Ahmad Tijani and the Tariqa Muhammadiyya* (Atlanta: African American Islamic Institute, 2005), www.tijani.org.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ “Tariqa” is an Arabic word used to distinguish the various Sufi orders. “The tariqa is an organization that regroups Sufi disciples around a sheikh.” Babou, *Fighting the Greater Jihad*, 194 n.7; Shaykh Hassan Cisse, <http://www.tijani.org/tijani-characteristics-methods>.

¹² Babou, 79.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Cruise O’Brien, 24.

¹⁵ Zakariya Wright, “Al-Hajj Abdoulaye bin Mamadou Niassé,” <http://www.tijani.org/al-hajj-abdoulaye-bin-mamadou-niassé/>.

¹⁶ Lucy Creevey, “Islam, Women and the Role of the State in Senegal,” *The Journal of Religion in Africa* 26, Fasc. 3 (Brill 1996), 268-307, 284-285; “Shaykh al-Islam Ibrahim Niassé,” derived from Shaykh Hassan Cisse, “Shaykh Ibrahim Niassé: Revivalist of the Sunnah” (paper presented at Northwestern University conference on Muslim Scholars in Africa, 1984), <http://www.tijani.org/shaykh-al-islam-ibrahim-niassé/>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Pearl Robinson, “Islam and Female Empowerment among the Tijaniyya in Niger,” *Research Note* (2005), <http://ase.tufts.edu/polsci/faculty/robinson/niger.pdf>.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Makawa Bara Oumarou, *La Ville Tidjane de Kiota au Niger: un Developpement Endogene a l’Ombre des Marabouts* (Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium: Universite Catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve, 2003), 51.

²² Ibid., 51-52.

²³ Christian Coulon, “Women, Islam and Baraka,” in *Charisma and Brotherhood in African Islam*, ed. Donal B. Cruise O’Brien and Christian Coulon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988): 113-134, 121.

²⁴ Eva Evers Rosander, “Le dahira de Mam Diarra Bousso a Mbacke,” in *Transforming Female Identities: Women’s Organizational Forms in West Africa*, ed. Eva Evers Rosander (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikaninstitutet Uppsala, 1997), 160-174, 164.

²⁵ Coulon, 133.

²⁶ “A goga te irikoy goyo.” (“It [baraka] is doing God’s work.”) Author interview with Fatau Seybou (teacher and Quranic scholar) Kokitamou, Kiota, 2 January 2009.

²⁷ Bryan Turner, *Weber and Islam: A Critical Study* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), 65.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Shaykh Muhammad al-Hafis al-Misri, “The Essence of the Sufi Way,” <http://www.tijani.org>.

³⁰ “*I ga bay han kan irikoy ga ba borey ma te ka bisa iri. Après les prophètes et les caliphs, c’est eux les sheiks qui sont de leur places.*” (“They know what God wants people to do better than we do. After the prophets and caliphs, it is the sheiks who know best.”) Author interview with Fatau Seybou (teacher and Quranic scholar) Kokitamou, Kiota, 2 January 2009.

³¹ “*Adamizey, borey, kulu gonda albaraka amma cindo gonda ga bisa care, zama se irikoy no n’a cacerga no a se, zama se irikoy ga ba ra.*” (Everyone has baraka, but some have it more than others, because God found them, because God loves them.”) Author interview with Indi Djibo (Kokitamou Women’s Association president and Koranic scholar) Kokitamou, Kiota, 2 January 2009.

³² Baraka may also be enhanced over the course of an individual’s lifetime, as in the case of women who have given birth to exceptional children (Coulon, 121). For instance, Diarra Bousso of Senegal has achieved considerable renown as the mother of Amadou Bamba, the spiritual leader of the Murid brotherhood. Although her baraka was in part inherited, it was primarily in her identity as Bamba’s mother that she inspired a following of disciples who pay tribute to her in an annual pilgrimage to Mbacké, a Senegalese town approximately 180 kilometers east of Dakar and the place of her birth. See Rosander 160, 166.

³³ Kokitamou lies approximately 5 kilometers west of Kiota and is heavily influenced by the town’s spiritual leadership. Its small population of nearly 500 people is composed exclusively of Niass Tijaniyya Muslims.

³⁴ “*Haikulu kan ga muradey feeri gond’albarka.*” (“Whatever opens/meets needs has baraka.”) Author interview with Fatau Seybou (teacher and Quranic scholar) Kokitamou, Kiota, 2 January 2009.

³⁵ Turner, 67.

³⁶ “*I si hin ka te afo. Calipha wono irikoy no na zumandi.*” (“They cannot be the same. The Calipha’s is directly from God.”) Author interview with Fatau Seybou (teacher and Quranic scholar) Kokitamou, Kiota, 2 January 2009.

³⁷ “*Tout depend du Dieu. Borey kulu si hin ga bay. Irikoy ga cabe.*” (“Everything depends on God. Man cannot know [the quality of the baraka]. God will show it.”) Author interview with Fatau Seybou (teacher and Quranic scholar) Kokitamou, Kiota, 2 January 2009; see also: Babou, *Fighting the Greater Jihad*, 8 (“[I]t is also accepted that there are special circumstances that can signal a person out as its recipient [as a recipient of baraka]”).

³⁸ Oumarou, 55.

³⁹ Oumarou, 56-57.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Oumarou, 63.

⁴³ Oumarou, 66.

⁴⁴ As of January 2009, electricity was still too expensive for most people in the region to afford.

⁴⁵ The only requests that are denied are those that Sheik Moussa determines are not truly made of necessity, where, perhaps the family has other resources they may use to provide for themselves and their families and is in fact taking advantage of Sheik Moussa’s generosity.

⁴⁶ Fukuyama, 10.

⁴⁷ “*Nda a si te mate kan sheiku ma te, iri ga fay nda.*” (“If he isn’t acting how a Sheik ought to act, we will have nothing to do with him.”) Author interview with Alphaga L’Aminu (Quranic scholar and teacher) Kokitamou, Kiota, January 3, 2009.

⁴⁸ Charity establishes a link among the community of believers that extends beyond their submission to God. This link is one of both duties and rights: those who have possessions have duties toward those in their community who do not; those who do not have possessions have rights before God and among their community. See: Ziauddin Ahmad, “Islam, Poverty and Income Distribution,” *Islamic Economics Series 15* (The Islamic Foundation, 1991), 17; and Tariq Ramadan, “Economic Resistance,” *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004), 174-179. “[T]he rich, those who have possessions, must never forget, for in their property...is ‘the right of the beggar and the disinherited’). This right comes from the belief that humanity is a single creation of God

and there is no place within this creation for extreme inequality. See Ahmad 16-17; and Ramadan 181-183. Inequality to some degree will exist, but if man is holding God's creation in trust, then it is his/her duty to provide for it as best as possible within his means.

⁴⁹ Bradford Verter, "Spiritual Capital: Theorizing Religion with Bourdieu Against Bourdieu," *Sociological Theory* 21, no. 2 (American Sociological Association, 2003), 150-174, 158.

⁵⁰ Cruise O'Brien, 28.

⁵¹ A "radius of trust" refers to people in groups who share cooperative norms that allow their members to achieve positive externalities and thus widen the radius of trust beyond the group (Fukuyama, 8).

⁵² Robinson, 1.

⁵³ Oumarou, 76.

⁵⁴ Robinson, 1.

⁵⁵ Some women are able to earn as much as 75,000 West African francs (approximately \$150) from their seasonal gardens, which may feed a household of six for nearly three months.

⁵⁶ Author interview with Hassan Wakasso (teacher, Raouda) Kiota, 4 January 2009.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Oumarou, 78.

⁵⁹ Sheikh Moussa has also indicated some degree of support for women's reproductive rights.

⁶⁰ Robinson, 1.

⁶¹ Despite the fact that Peace Corps is one of the few programs facilitating this level of deep engagement in developing countries, it has been criticized for not being an effective or efficient development organization. This criticism does not address the value of living within a community for two years or recognize that development actors have as much to learn, or perhaps more, to achieve their respective goals.