



## A Neglected History: How Intra-Sufi Conflicts Shaped the Tijaniyya Sufi Brotherhood in Contemporary Ghana (1970-2001)

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Received: 20.10.2025  
Accepted: 22.04.2026  
Published Online: 30.04.2026

**Abstract:** The growth of the Tijaniyya Sufi order in Ghana has resulted from the immeasurable acts of revivalism of many local scholars. Among the most influential of these scholars was Sheikh Abdullahi Ahmed Maikano, whose contributions to the development of Islam in Ghana are also very significant. However, while Sheikh Maikano's ability to confront the Salafi critiques of Tijaniyya shot him to fame and brought much strength and unity among members of the brotherhood in Ghana, the same cannot be said of Tijaniyya today, which is beset with challenges of factionalism, aggravated by zealous youth who have taken to the social media, to malign each other and vilify past and present otherwise revered leaders. Drawing mainly on in-depth interviews, secondary sources, and historical records, the researchers found that the challenges confronting the Tijaniyya fraternity in Ghana in recent times revolve around Sheikh Maikano and the extent to which loyalty is accorded or denied him. The researchers call for the Tijaniyya to rise above petty rivalries and unite once again to confront other festering challenges, including poverty, illiteracy, and misconceptions about what it means to be a true Sufi, especially in 21st century Africa.

**Keywords:** Religious Authority, Charisma, Sufism in Ghana, Tijaniyya

### 1. Introduction

The Tijaniyya Sufi Brotherhood in Ghana, after confronting decades of unrelenting conflict with the Wahhabis (Salafis) due mainly to theological differences, is now confronted with divisive personality-based conflicts that are becoming increasingly volatile. These internal conflicts are best analyzed as struggles over religious authority and its legitimacy, rather than primarily as conflicts rooted in socioeconomic class antagonism. Therefore, to explore these authority-centered internal conflicts among Tijaniyya factions in Ghana, this paper adopted Weber's theory of charismatic authority, which explains how charisma is stabilized, transmitted, and even contested over time (Weber, 1978, pp. 241-45).

In Weber's description of charismatic legitimacy, authority rests on devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism, or exemplary character of an individual, as well as to the normative order that followers believe a leader embodies (Eatwell, 2014, pp. 3-18). By implication, charismatic authority is a personality trait and involves a social relationship in which obedience is accorded because followers recognize a leader as uniquely qualified. In fact, Weber emphasizes that recognition by those subject to authority is decisive for the validity of charisma and is sustained through what followers might accept as "signs" of proof of extraordinary qualifications. This relational understanding of charisma is particularly relevant to West African Sufi contexts, where religious authority has often been conceptualized through the language of saintly power and *baraka* (divine blessing) (Weber, 1978, pp. 241-45).

In his overview of Sufism in West Africa, Rüdiger Seeseman observes that Sufi *uruq* (orders) constitute a major institutional expression of mystical Islam in the region. As such, a longstanding current in the literature identifies *baraka* as the basis through which Sufi marabouts exercise power over followers

(Seesemann, 2010). From this perspective, the key analytical problem is not only what leaders claim, but how the audience evaluates, circulates, and contests the legitimacy of such claims.

By implication, charismatic authority is inherently unstable and vulnerable to legitimacy crises. This is because when followers believe that “proof” of a leader’s charismatic qualification has failed, or when leadership is interpreted as no longer benefiting the community, charismatic legitimacy may erode or fragment across competing claimants. Weber, for example, observes that charismatic domination tends, over time, to be transformed through a process of “routinization”—the stabilization of charisma into more durable arrangements such as hereditary succession, office-based authority, or rule-governed institutional structures (Stark, 1965).

This paper applies these concepts to the internal conflicts among the Tijaniyya Sufi Brotherhood in Ghana. It analyzes the conflict as a contest over the legitimate representation of a charismatic legacy: who may authoritatively define correct conduct, interpret disputed events, lead communal ritual life, and speak for the Tijaniyya in Ghana amid internal fragmentation. Thus, by foregrounding charismatic authority and routinization, the study develops a theoretical lens that both matches the paper’s empirical focus on personality-centered factionalism and clarifies why such conflicts persist and intensify even within a tradition such as Sufism, whose spiritual ideals emphasize unity and disciplined moral conduct.

The paper argues that the root cause of the current divisions within the leadership of the Tijaniyya in Ghana is traceable to the 1970s, when a group of Tijani leaders in Ghana had differences with the Ghanaian scholar, Sheikh Maikano, regarding the interpretation of Shari’a provisions to establish clear rulings on the limitations placed on Islamic marriage. Against this background, the study aims to highlight how internal disputes among leading figures of the Tijaniyya Sufi Brotherhood in Ghana contributed to the formation of factions within the moment, especially between the 1970s and early 2000s. Thus, the study situates the career, legacy, and social and religious challenges of Sheikh Abdullahi Ahmad Maikano in Ghana to explain how personal loyalty significantly shaped the rise of internal factions such as the Jallo and Cisses. The study is limited to internal conflicts among the Tijaniyya Sufi Brotherhood in Ghana and addresses the central problem of the relative absence of a sustained historical analysis of intra-Sufi conflict in Ghanaian Islamic studies. So far, scholars have often focused on the Sufi-Salafi rivalry in Ghana rather than on patterns of internal contestation within Sufi orders themselves.

To its adherents, Sufism is the supreme goal of human life, journeying with the *Shari’a* (law) on a *Tariqa* (path) to reach the *Haqiqah* (Reality), God (Shimshek, 2025). Sufis are usually perceived as people filled with deep religiosity and otherworldliness, who disregard the material things of this world and its pleasures, considering them as deceptive and misleading, and believing that the real purpose of life is to find the way to God to earn eternal bliss in the life hereafter (Zakaria, 2015). The *Tariqa Tijaniyya*, a Sufi order founded by Shaykh Ahmad Tijani in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, enjoins Muslims to follow the path of the Prophet through seeking forgiveness, sending salutations to the Prophet Muhammad, and the remembrance of Allah (*zikr*), while adhering to the Shari’a (Cisse, 2013). These principles of spiritual and physical discipline were embodied in the lives of specific Tijani leaders who emerged to symbolize Islam’s spiritual and intellectual authority in 20<sup>th</sup>-century Ghana. Among the most influential of such figures were the Ghanaian scholars, Sheikh Umar Karkie (d. 1933), Alhaj Hasan Nasru-Deen (d. 1975), Alhaji Baba al-Waiz al-Watani (d. 1982), Alhaji Harun Muhammad Ibn Umar al-Tijani (d. 1983), and Sheikh Abdullahi Maikano Jallo (d. 2005).

## 2. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative historical approach. As such, it draws primarily on oral history from interviews, sermons, written correspondence, and secondary literature. In particular, the interview data are from interviews with senior Tijaniyya scholars, disciples, and community leaders in Ghana between

2016 and 2017. And because new claims about Sheikh Maikano's marriage resurfaced, especially between 2020 and 2025, we made sure that positions involving the new claims, especially from Sheikh Maikano's leading disciples, are reflected in the analysis. Primarily, the interviews were semi-structured. We focused on personal recollections, perceptions of leadership and authority in Ghana's Tijaniyya Sufi brotherhood, and then interpretations of key historical but contested events. Where necessary, as requested by several scholars and community leaders we have interviewed, we granted anonymity to protect informants and to account for sensitive information about specific narratives in ongoing disputes. The paper adopts this approach to limit potential accusations of bias. In all, the data in this paper constitute interviews conducted with over 20 scholars from the Tijaniyya factions in Ghana.

We also cross-checked and analyzed the oral testimonies and documentary sources through thematic reading. The documentary sources included private letters and public speeches. We analyzed them to find specific claims and identify areas of convergence and disagreement. However, given the sensitive and contested nature of several events, particularly those surrounding Sheikh Maikano's marriage and subsequent disputes, our aim is not to establish a definitive factual closure on the matter. All that we have sought to do is to reconstruct competing narratives and situate them within their historical and social contexts to show how they contributed to the development of factions within the Tijaniyya in Ghana. In this way, we have focused on the patterns of these developments, relying largely on oral testimonies, which, although they are crucial for understanding religious movements in contemporary Africa, are rarely preserved in formal archives.

### **3. Life and Contributions of Sheikh Maikano to the Development of the Tijaniyya in Ghana**

Sheikh Abdullahi Maikano Jallo (d. 2005) distinguished himself as an exemplar of spirituality through his service and sacrifice for the Tijaniyya Sufi Brotherhood in Ghana from the late 1960s until his death in 2005 (Ibrahim, 2011). Born in 1928 in his native home of Abuoso in the Western Region of Ghana, Sheikh Maikano, a scholar of Fulani origin, received his early education in his hometown and in Kumasi under the tutelage of Sheikh Haruna Muhammad al-Tijani (Dumbe 2013, p. 37; Mutasim, 2017). After studying in Ghana, Sheikh Maikano, together with his distant relative and friend, Sheikh Abdul-Razak Tahir (d. 2017), a Ghanaian scholar of Dagbamba ethnicity, left Ghana in 1952 to pursue undergraduate studies at Al-Azhar University, starting in 1953 (Tijaniyya TV, 2024). In 1956, he returned to Ghana (ibid) and later served as a chaplain with the Ghana Armed Forces in the 1960s. He later resigned from active duty to pursue religious activism around the country (Dumbe, 2013, p. 46).

Sheikh Maikano became the face of Ghana's Tijani Muslim community by filling the vacuum created by what scholars have described as the 'disinterest' of the Ghanaian Tijaniyya leadership to engage scholars of Salafism in public debates. However, for Sheikh Maikano, that was a missed opportunity to publicly prove the authenticity of the Tijani Sufi order before its critics in a direct, engaging manner, especially amid polemical attacks from the Salafi fraternity around the country. Thus, this decision, in addition to instilling confidence among the youth of the Tijaniyya in Ghana, also entrenched Maikano's base of national support to a point whereby significant masses of Tijaniyya disciples began to identify him as the supreme leader of the Tijaniyya Sufi Brotherhood in the country, starting from the 1980s (ibid). In recent years, the perception about Sheikh Maikano being the *de facto* leader of the brotherhood has been further enhanced by the fact that he is the only Ghanaian Tijani leader who was co-parent-in-law to his mentor, Sheikh Ibrahim Niasse (d. 1975), as his daughter is married to Sheikh Ibrahim Niasse's son, Sheikh Mahi Niasse, the current leader of the Global Fayda community.

The leading example of Sheikh Maikano's debate encounters with opposing scholars occurred in 1969 at Tamale in the Northern Region of Ghana (Haroon, 2008). At the now Jubilee Park, Sheikh Maikano debated Sheikh Afa Yusufu Ajura (d. 2004), the father of the Ghanaian Wahhabi/Salafi ideological brand, on various topics related to the practices of the Tijaniyya Sufi order, including a special prayer they recite for the Prophet Muhammad, known as Salat al-Fatih. During this period, the outcomes of such

ideological encounters between the Tijaniyya and the Wahhabiyya usually turned catastrophic, as Sheikh Maikano survived an assassination attempt in 1974, due to his decision to continue to stay in Tamale, years after the debate (Ibrahim, 2002). Dumbe (2013) further credits Sheikh Maikano as a defender of the Tijaniyya's concept of *Tarbiyya* (spiritual training), together with Sheikh Abdul Wadud and Sheikh Salisu Sha'ban (d. 2021) (Dumbe, 2013, p. 46), a mentee of Sheikh Ibrahim Niasse (d. 1975), and founder of the now Shabaniyya Fraternity in Ghana, Togo, and Benin.

Sheikh Abdullahi Maikano's contributions to the development of Islam in Ghana transcend polemical debates. They include Islamic proselytism among remote communities in Ghana and surrounding areas, through which he attracted a large number of converts to Islam. He also initiated an annual Quranic recitation in Prang, Ghana, to promote Ghana's national security and peaceful coexistence between Ghanaian Muslims and members of other faiths. In Kumasi, his disciples identify him as the sole Tijaniyya scholar who openly challenged the spread of Wahhabism through his counterarguments against Sheikh Abdul Samad Habeebullah (d. 1986), a Kumasi-based cleric, who denounced his membership from the Tijaniyya Sufi order to join Wahhabism in the 1970s (Interview with Ahmad Tijani Ibnu Baba, Kumasi, September 10, 2016). Although scholars have usually suggested that the Tijaniyya leaders in Kumasi failed to respond to Sheikh Abdul Samad's activism until Sheikh Abdullahi Maikano appeared on the polemical scene, counter-narratives suggest that responses did occur, but in ways that lacked Maikano's charismatic appeal.

Written responses by leading Tijani scholars in Kumasi addressed some of the accusations Sheikh Abdul Samad had raised against the practices of the Tijaniyya Sufi order, although the content does not indicate whether he [i. e., Habeebullah] was the intended target of these scholarly productions, or they were just general responses in defense of Tijani practices. Also, while Sheikh Maikano was focused on his preaching tours to challenge the narratives Sheikh Abdul-Samad, Sheikh Mustafa Kamil Khalifa (d. 2011), another leading member of the Tijaniyya in Ghana, and once upon a time, general overseer of the Wataniyya school in Kumasi until his death in 2011, challenged the growing hegemony of Sheikh Abdul Samed at the international diplomatic level, especially with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and other countries in the Gulf.

Reading from the magazine *al-Tadamun al-Islami* (1978-1979 edition), that the Saudi Government was to sponsor Sheikh Abdul Samad's plan to build a University in Ghana, Sheikh Mustafa Kamil Khalifa (d. 2011) wrote letters to five significant offices in the Kingdom, questioning not the significance of the institution but the narrative leading to its establishment. In the correspondence, Khalifa confirmed that Sheikh Abdul Samad was indeed a great scholar among the scholars of Kumasi. But the problem was that he was then operating an elementary school. Therefore, the claim that he was in the process of building a university in Ghana, for which reason the fund was to be disbursed, could neither be justified nor confirmed (Baba Orga, 2014). Copies of the correspondence were distributed to the Islamic University in Madina and to King Fahd, the then-ruler of Saudi Arabia. Other recipients included the Office of Sheikh Ibn Baz, the Grand Mufti of the Kingdom, and other unspecified offices at Ummul Qura and Riyadh (ibid).

Interestingly, Sheikh Abdul Samad referred to this correspondence in his *Risalah al-Da'i Ila al-Sunna al-Zajiru an al-Bid'a*, criticizing Sheikh Mustafa Kamil Khalifa for corresponding with the international Arab community to tarnish the reputation of the scholars of the prophetic tradition (Sunna) in Ghana. From what appears to be a retaliatory action, he accuses Sheikh Mustafa Kamil Khalifa of promoting polytheism in Ghana while corresponding with leaders of Muslim states to discredit Salafi missionaries and their institutions of learning in the country. Moreover, Sheikh Abdul Samad attacked the activities of Ansar al-Fayda, indicating, by this action, that, rather than the scholars of Kumasi being passive towards his mission, as popular narrative would have it until Maikano's arrival, there was an active force opposed to it in the 1970s (Habeebullah, 1978, pp. 42-43).

It could be observed that the fact that Sheikh Abdul Samad dedicated more than a page in such an important work for Salafis in West Africa, discrediting Sheikh Mustafa Kamil Khalifa, especially given that Sheikh Maikano was his main rival, underscores the intellectual threat Sheikh Khalifa might have posed to his mission. In any case, had the transaction for the support gone through and the money been used for the intended purpose, Sheikh Abdul Samad would probably have been the first Ghanaian Muslim scholar to own a private university in Ghana, if not West Africa, in the 1980s. In addition, the facility would have served as a powerful institutional conduit for the diffusion of the Wahhabi/Salafi orientations in Ghana and neighboring states. In brief, it could be said that whereas Kumasi scholars' responses to the critics of the Tijaniyya focused more on peer-level written refutations, Sheikh Maikano mediated those responses for a wider public audience.

Yet, what is universally agreed on is that Sheikh Maikano's approach to addressing criticisms against Sufism was unique. He organized public rebuttals at the exact locations where Sheikh Abdul Samad addressed his gathering, with open invitations to critics for a public debate. Therefore, with responses usually occurring a day after the accusations were made, the intellectual polemics between the two scholars never involved direct encounters, unlike the 1969 debate between Maikano and Afa Ajura at the Jubilee Park in Tamale. However, reports also suggest that Sheikh Abdul Samad Habeebullah refused to respond to Sheikh Maikano's calls for an open debate, as he was more focused on building a strong grassroots base for the growing Salafi community in Greater Kumasi. Direct confrontations would therefore have been a distraction to his vision of establishing Salafi proselytism in the community (Anonymous informant, personal communication, October 10, 2016).

One unique example of Maikano's dedication to community propagation was on December 13, 1972. He left the remains of his wife, who had died a few hours earlier at the hospital in Kumasi, to attend a religious community gathering organized by the Kumasi-based Ansar al-Fayda<sup>1</sup> at *Yatiyati*, a suburb of the region (Baba Orga, 2014). Thus, through several such preaching tours, Sheikh Maikano inspired many Tijaniyya followers to aspire to higher spiritual heights in the Tijani order.

In several interviews, both on social media and on local television stations in Accra, Ghana, the first son and successor of Sheikh Maikano, Sheikh Ahmed Abul Faidi Jallo, suggested that Sheikh Maikano contributed to the development of Islam in Ghana through additional initiatives, such as being the first to introduce the blackboard teaching method to Muslim clerics in Ghana around 1956. Sheikh Tahiru Arabi, one of Maikano's leading disciples, corroborates this narrative, situating the event in Kumasi at the residence of Sarkin (Chief) Fulani, where Sheikh Maikano taught Islamic Jurisprudence to a group of students (Baba Orga, 2014).

However, such narratives appear overly generalized and one-sided. As far back as 1923, Al-hajj Fadl-ul-Rahman Hakim, the first missionary Imam of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission in Ghana, established the mission's Muslim-centered elementary school in Saltpond. Despite using an Islamized curriculum for his students, Al-hajj Fadl-ul-Rahman Hakim integrated secular teaching methods (Humphrey, 1963, p. 119), which by then were already based on the blackboard teaching method. Moreover, by the early 1950s, the Ambariyya Salafi fraternity in Ghana had already begun using similar methods and had started hosting foreign teachers at its institution (Ambariyya Online TV/Radio, 2023).

Sheikh Abul Faidi further argued that Sheikh Maikano was also the first Islamic scholar in Ghana to shift the first afternoon Muslim prayer (*Zuhur*) to its proper time around noon, when it was not the popular practice in Ghana. And although the shift was initially criticized by several Muslim scholars, the change is now adopted and practiced by the majority of Muslims in Ghana, especially Salafis. Further, Sheikh Maikano also instituted an annual Qur'an recitation in Ghana in the Islamic month of Rajab, which has

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<sup>1</sup> The Ansar al-Fayda was a vibrant Kumasi-based Muslim group in the 1970s made up of young Tijaniyya scholars in Kumasi. Their responsibilities included organizing Islamic sermons, especially during special occasions in the community.

been sustained by the Maikano family since 1963. The purpose of this annual Qur'an recitation is to please Allah, to strengthen and safeguard Islam in Ghana, and to promote Ghana's national peace and security.

#### 4. Root Causes of Contemporary Challenges

The fragmentation between Sheikh Maikano and several of his colleagues among the scholars of the Tijaniyya Sufi brotherhood in Ghana, which began in the late 1970s, was both theological and personal. On the theological front, critics of Sheikh Maikano disagreed with him concerning some of his pronouncements, which they considered to be Islamically unacceptable. Constituting part of the events before the brotherhood split in the 1980s, the pronouncements included Sheikh Maikano claims that he had prayed, fasted, and performed the Hajj many more times than the Prophet Muhammad himself (Dumbe 2013, pp. 26-63). While several scholars considered these statements outrageous and unacceptable, defenders of the Sheikh constitute them as signs of the spiritual intoxication common among certain advanced Sufi masters. They suggested that Sheikh Maikano could have made those statements in the same *haal* (spiritual state) as many past Sufi masters, such as the famous Hallaj, who made statements others considered outrageous, when they had deeper, inferential meanings (Abdul-Hamid, 2013). Further, they argue that references to numerous ecstatic pronouncements in Sufi literature are usually the result of spiritual absorption rather than doctrinal defiance. Thus, the referred-to utterances of Sheikh Maikano are not different, so they should be understood within the context of such pronouncements (Anonymous informants, personal communication, March 5, 2016).

Moreover, recently commenting on some of these historical occurrences in the light of Sheikh Maikano's struggles in Ghana, Sheikh Ali 'Original' Cisse, one of Sheikh Maikano's leading disciples, suggested that it is unthinkable to even consider the idea of disrespect towards the Prophet Muhammad due to the utterances in question, given Sheikh Maikano's status as a respected Muslim scholar who understood and lived the Shari'a. He argued that Sheikh Maikano made those statements solely to express gratitude to God for allowing him to pray, fast, and perform the Hajj pilgrimage on numerous occasions, a significant topic that has been clearly missing from the conversation (Sheik Ali Cisse, public sermon in Kumasi, 2023). While such attempts to defend and interpret Sheikh Maikano's utterances are popular, other scholars within the Tijaniyya movement have expressed alternative views.

To such scholars, although the statement might have been made in good faith, citing the Prophet Muhammad in this context was clearly avoidable, given the legal implications. To such scholars, the pronouncements were simply a slip of speech, which all scholars are not immune to. Others also insisted that the statement was avoidable and therefore should not be justified or entertained, since uninformed followers may want to learn from the Sheikh and hence use similar utterances without understanding the context in which they were made, since no one could truly determine whether the utterances were a product of spiritual absorption, a slip of speech, or was intended for some particular purpose that was missed in the Sheikh's speech (Anonymous informants, personal conversation, June 2025).

While Tijani followers in Ghana continue to debate these utterances, situating them within the questions of spirituality, intention, and even interpretive charity, the cause of the consequential split within the Tijaniyya Sufi Brotherhood in Ghana extends beyond speech into matters of legal practice and the right to religious authority. The most significant cause of the rupture was Sheikh Maikano's alleged marriage to a fifth wife and his subsequent rejection of counsel from fellow scholars to rescind his decision (Haroon 2008, pp. 435-437). Per the narrative, after the death of Sayyada Sana, Sheikh Maikano's fourth wife, leading members of the Tijaniyya order competed in having their daughters married to him. Among these competitors were Issah Ejura, who offered his daughter, Ayishatu, and Alhaji Baban Makaranta (Sheikh Ibrahim Niasse's first Ghanaian disciple), who recommended that Sheikh Maikano marry a different woman, Merin Jisu. Sheikh Maikano accepted Alhaji Baban Makaranta's

recommendation, likely out of respect for seniority in the Tijaniyya Sufi Brotherhood, which, according to reports, was highly valued at the time.

However, around 1976, the Tijaniyya community in Kumasi was alarmed by rumors that Sheikh Maikano intended to take a fifth wife. Critics claim that Sheikh Maikano had actually accepted and justified his intention to take a fifth wife on the grounds that, in special circumstances, such as a scholar needing extra help in religious services or for maintaining an extended family lineage, the rule of limitation could be lifted (Dumbe, 2013, p. 50). Although we have not seen evidence from Sheikh Maikano himself pointing to an explicit justification of taking a fifth marriage, records of comments he made on pertinent disagreements between him and some Tijaniyya elders from the Kumasi area suggest that he had serious concerns, at least with the way some of the elders had approached the issues of the marriage at the time.

Sheikh Maikano's references to letters sent to him by specific individuals expressed disappointment with correspondence about the marriage and its handling among specific elders of the community. One such occasion was at the Kubura Mosque in Kumasi in the 1990s, when he read a copy of a letter sent to him in the 1980s by a member of the Tijaniyya in Kumasi, who used provocative language to address and warn him not to attend the annual maulud celebration to honor of the founder of the Tijaniyyah Sufi order, Sheikh Ahmed Tijani, in Kumasi. Even though language hinted at other undisclosed personal differences, Sheikh Maikano's explanation made it evident that issues about the marriage could have been a key factor.

Further inquiries about the source of the letter from people who spoke on condition of anonymity suggested that the letter read at the Kubura Mosque was impersonated by one of Sheikh Baban Makaranta's children, as an expression of anger, concerning a disagreement between his father and Sheikh Maikano. Sheikh Mustapha Kamil's (d. 2011) confirmation in a widely circulated video that Sheikh Maikano had indeed had some personal differences with Sheikh Baban Makaranta, after he (i. e., Maikano) had moved from Tafo to Aboabo in Kumasi, is a significant reference point to the undisclosed differences between the two Tijani sheikhs in Ghana.

Realizing Sheikh Mustapha Khalifa had nearly discussed the matter on camera, the interviewers, suggested to the sheikh that the said matter should be reserved for the elders. As a result of this swift intervention by the interviewers, Sheikh Mustapha Kamil (d. 2011), who served as secretary to the Ansar al-Fayda during the era and would have probably had details of the issues from a key player like Sheikh Baban Makaranta himself, changed the topic, as he proceeded to discuss the contributions of Sheikh Maikano to the Tijaniyya Sufi Brotherhood in Ghana. In essence, the letter, read publicly at the Kubura Mosque, was more personal than it had any direct connection to Sheikh Maikano's marriage. However, it contributed to further deepening divisions within the Tijaniyya Sufi Brotherhood in Ghana, due to its provocative content.

Two separate letters sent to Sheikh Maikano in the early 1980s about his purported marriage have become public. The first was from Mallam Baba Ibrahim Salaga, written on December 15, 1981/2, and the other from Sheikh Baba Makaranta, authored in 1981. Although the letters did not use explicit, provocative language, they had different interpretive connotations for different readers. Reports from senior disciples of Sheikh Maikano suggested that the correspondence employed a command, rather than a consultative-seeking tone, to address the circulating rumor. They contend that because the marriage controversy involved a Muslim scholar like Sheikh Maikano, a more diplomatic approach to intellectual discourse could have better addressed the growing tension. On the contrary, adopting a tone that implied he reported to an authority to address the rumors about his marriage carried its own suspicions. The conversation, therefore, should have been handled in a manner befitting a discussion between respected colleagues. (Interview with Adam Saeed, July 18, 2017, Kumasi).

As the community is divided over whether the letters from Sheikh Baba Makaranta and Mallam Ibrahim Baba Salaga to Sheikh Maikano were intended as counseling or a command, the next few paragraphs analyze the contents of the Arabic copies of the letters and their English translations. First, Mallam Ibrahim Baba Salaga writes to Sheikh Maikano:

الحمد لله الذي أنزل في كتابه أحكام شريعته إجمالاً، وصلى الله على سيدنا محمد الذي أمره الله أن يبين لنا أحكام الشريعة تفصيلاً من التحريم والتحليل، وعلى آله وصحبه وسلم تسليمًا. وبعد فأنا نسلم ونكرم ونفضل التحية على حضرة سيدنا وشيخنا الحاج عبد الله ميكانو، وعلى من معه من أهل وتلاميذ ومريدين، خاصة من الرجال والنساء، ونرجو من الله تبارك وتعالى أن يزيدكم فوق ما رمت من خيرات الله وفضله، ونسأله تعالى أن يجعلنا من خواص أصحاب الشيخ التجاني رضي الله عنه. وموجب هذا الخطاب أنه لما وفدنا إليكم لإحياء احتفال مولد شيخنا الختم رضي الله تعالى عنه بقيادتكم، وقد بلغنا من حضرتكم ما يؤسوس خواطرننا، وذلك أنه قيل لنا بأنكم تخمستم في الزوجات، فصرنا بين من يكذب ويصدق، فإن كان ذلك كذبًا وافتراءً فبينوا لنا حقيقة الأمر، لأن الخبر قد ذاع بين الناس حتى صار حديث الركب، ونحن نخشى أن يسبب ذلك هلاك بعض الناس وتقص مرتبتكم عند بعضهم. وإن كان صدقًا وقد تخمستم، وذلك مما لا يخفى عليكم من تحريمه وعدم جوازه إجماعًا، فعليكم بالمبادرة إلى تطبيق الخامسة لأن نكاحها فاسد، وقد أمرنا الشيخ أحمد التجاني رضي الله تعالى عنه بمراعاة الشريعة وإن كنا أهل الحقيقة، فالشريعة تُنسب إلى اسمه الظاهر، والحقيقة تُنسب إلى اسمه الباطن، وهو بكل شيء عليم. والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله تعالى وبركاته

Praise be to Allah, who revealed in His Book the rulings of His Law in summary form, and blessings and peace be upon our master Muhammad, whom Allah commanded to clarify for us the rulings of the Sacred Law in detail, explaining to us what is lawful and what is forbidden. May Allah's abundant peace and blessings be upon the Prophet's family and companions. To proceed: we extend our greetings with honor and utmost respect to our master and shaykh, al-Ḥājj Abdullāh Maikano, and to those with him among his family, students, and disciples, men and women. We ask Allah, exalted and Most High, to grant you beyond what you seek of His bounty and grace, and we beseech Him to make us among the special companions of Shaykh al-Tijānī, may Allah be pleased with him. The reason for this letter is that, when we came to celebrate the birth of our master al-Khatm [Sheikh Tijani] under your leadership, a rumour about your eminence that continues to trouble our consciences reached us. We were told that you had taken a fifth wife. This rumor now leaves us between disbelief and acceptance. Therefore, if this is false and constitutes slander, then clarify for us the true state of affairs, for the report has spread among the people and become common talk among the people. We fear that this [gossip] may lead to the moral ruin of some and to a diminution of your status in the eyes of others. If, however, it is true that you have taken a fifth wife, as it is being rumored, this is something whose unanimous prohibition and impermissibility are well known to you. In the event the rumor is true, you must hasten to divorce the fifth woman, for her marriage is invalid. Shaykh Aḥmad al-Tijānī, may Allah be pleased with him, commanded us to uphold the Sacred Law even though we are people of spiritual realization, for the Sacred Law corresponds to the Divine Name of Allah *al-Zāhir* (the Manifest), while spiritual truth corresponds to His Name *al-Bāṭin* (the Hidden), and He is All-Knowing of all things. Peace be upon you, and the mercy of God Most High and His blessings.<sup>2</sup>

Sheikh Baban Makaranta's version of the correspondence to Sheikh Maikano about the said marriage reads:

إلى جناب الفضيل الجليل، ذي الصدر السليم والود الصميم، العارف بالله الرابع، والولي الصالح، ابني البار وحببي حقا وصدقًا، السيد الحاج عبد الله ميكانو، السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته؛ يليه السؤال عن حالكم وعن أخباركم، أسمعنا الله خيرًا، وإن تفضلتم بالسؤال عنا فنحن والله الحمد على الخير وعلى العهد. وبعد، فموجب إعلامه بأنه بلغنا خبر ساءنا وأحزننا وأزعجنا وأقلقنا، وهو كلام شاع وذاع وانتشر بين الناس في قرية كوماسي، وصار الأضداد يشيعونه ويتحدثون به، فيسيئون الظن بنا ويعيبوننا ويعيرونا، وهو نكاحك خامسة، أي تزوجك بخمس زوجات؛ فإن كان ذلك كذبًا فبين لنا وللناس بيانًا شافيًا لتنجلي أحزاننا وغمومنا، وإن كان صدقًا فلتأتنا بدليل وحنة على ذلك، أو أطلب منك الرجوع عنه، لأن فيه زلة قدم ورجوعًا إلى القهقري، والهور بعد الكور، وشماتة الأعداء، ونعوذ بالله من الحور بعد الكور ومن شماتة الأعداء، آمين. وبلغ سلامي إلى سائر الإخوان. انتهى، والسلام

To the Honorable and Esteemed One, the Noble, Pure-hearted, and Sincerely Devoted One, the Gnostic, the Successful and Righteous Saint, My Obedient Son and True Beloved, Al-Sayyid al-Hajj Abdullah

<sup>2</sup> The authors got this copy of the letter from Alhaj Baba Ibrahim Salaga's family in 2016.

Maikano, May Allah's peace, mercy, and blessings be upon you. After greetings and inquiry about your well-being and state of affairs, may Allah let us hear only good from you. If you graciously ask about our well-being, praise be to Allah, we are well and steadfast upon the path and the bond between us. To proceed: the reason for this letter is to inform you that news has reached us which has caused us grief, sorrow, distress, and anxiety. It is a rumor that has spread widely among the people in the town of Kumasi. Opponents have begun circulating it and speaking of it, thereby thinking ill of us, criticizing us, and holding it against us. What is being said is that you have contracted a fifth marriage, that is, that you have taken five wives at the same time. If this is false, then clarify the matter for us and for the people with a full and sufficient explanation, so that our sorrow and distress may be lifted. But if it is true, then bring us proof and justification for it; otherwise, I ask that you reverse the decision [if it is true], because in doing that lies a [spiritual] slip, a return to error after righteousness, and a cause for the enemies' gloating. We seek refuge in Allah from reversal after rectification and from the rejoicing of enemies [about our calamities]. Amen. Convey my greetings to all the brethren. Peace be unto you (Haroon, 2008, p. 445).

If the concerns of Sheikh Maikano's disciples are considered, the letters' contents serve two purposes: they both began with an appeal, then a counseling, but ended with a tone that might qualify as a command requesting that Sheikh Maikano suspended the marriage, even if it was already contracted. This form address might align with concerns raised by those who expected a submission of equals, rather than the father-son approach that Sheikh Baban Makaranta, in particular, had used.

According to Sheikh Abul-Faidi, Sheikh Maikano responded to the demand for an explanation by calling for a roundtable discussion with the scholars of Kumasi. However, the scholars did not honor the request, thereby refusing to sit with Sheikh Maikano to examine and understand his true position on the purported marriage (Tijaniyya Tv, 2024). According to an opinion leader, the fact that Sheikh Maikano did not even study under any of those 'commanding' him to withdraw his decision, might have reduced their action to an element of disrespect (Interview with Adam Saeed, July 18, 2017, Kumasi). In other words, the matter should have been addressed in a gathering of equals, not in a way that the revered sheikh would be treated like an ordinary disciple, who faced disciplinary action before a committee of elders.

While challenging the claim that Sheikh Maikano had indeed married a fifth wife, Alhaji Baban Uwaye further explained that Aisha, the so-called fifth wife, was previously married to one of Sheikh Maikano's deceased friends from Ntonsu Aboaso in Ghana. Sheikh Maikano only married her after he had already divorced one of his four wives. The Sheikh, however, allowed the divorced wife to continue living in his house as a form of courtesy and was providing for her upkeep, all in accordance with Islamic teachings (Interview with Abubakar Baban Uwaye, Kumasi, October 17, 2016). Addressing the issue in another gathering of Sheikh Maikano's supporters, Sheikh Ali Cisse also corroborated Alhaji Abubakar Baban Uwaye's story. He explained that after Sheikh Maikano had divorced the fourth wife, she pleaded with the Sheikh to allow her to stay in the house as a gesture of kindness, and the sheikh honored the request (Sheik Ali Cisse, public sermon in Kumasi, 2023).

Baban Uwaye further clarified that Sheikh Maikano's open declaration to a group of Kumasi scholars who visited him at home in Prang in 1985 that "I will soon add a sixth and a seventh wife!" was an expression of anger due to how the scholars approached him about the matter, and not a confirmation that he had indeed taken a fifth wife. The visitors are said to have been aggressive in their questioning and even refused to accept the courtesies offered to them to sit down and rest after their long journey, before any conversation began (Interview with Abubakar Baban Uwaye, Kumasi, October 17, 2016).

However, a senior member of the Tijani Sufi order in Kumasi, who was part of the delegation sent to Prang to seek explanations regarding the true state of the marriage denied this narrative of a wrong approach and disrespect to Sheikh Maikano during the said visit. According to the elder, there might

have been some tensions regarding the matter for other reasons, even before their arrival. Sheikh Maikano's reaction to their inquiry could therefore be understood within this broader context, instead of attributing it to something they never did (Interview with Sheikh Abdul Razak Umar, interviewed in Kumasi, January 2017).

Regardless of the facts of the matter, and given these contradictory claims presented here, it is possible to suggest that the fact that Sheikh Maikano's purported marriage had already become public discourse before reaching the elders of the Tijaniyya, could have undermined any attempt to amicably address the issue. This observation is supported by several reasons. For instance, in responding to the already widespread rumor, supporters composed satirical lyrics that were sung at popular gatherings, implying that their relationship with the Sheikh was not based on personal issues but on the love of Allah through the Tijaniyya order. Sheikh Maikano's psalmist, Ibrahim 'Bob' Niasse sings in Hausa:

Laa ilaaha illa Allah Laa ilaaha illa Allah

Ai ba awre ya gama mu da Baaba ba

Balle awre ya rabaa mu da Baaba!

Son Allah ya gamaa mu da Baba

Laa ilaaha illa Allah Laa ilaaha illa Allah.

Meaning:

There is no god but Allah... There is no god but Allah

(Since) Our relationship with Baba (Sheikh Maikano) was not established because of marriage

Issues about his Marriage cannot break the bond between us!

Our bond with Baba was established through the love of Allah

There is no god but Allah... There is no god but Allah...

Primarily, the lyrics of this song are a testimony to the willingness of Sheikh Maikano's supporters to side with him through the challenging moments, even if the rumors of the addition of a fifth wife were true. The lyrics further satirically insinuate that if the scholars who questioned Sheikh Maikano about his marriage had a bond with him that was established on a genuine love for Allah, his private matters, his marriage in particular, should not have destroyed their relationship. Clearly, when sensitive discussions involving a scholar of Sheikh Maikano's pedigree are handled by the masses in this way, it becomes difficult to solve the matter in an organized way at the apex level of Tijani leadership. The implications of the development, including a failed attempt to unite the Tijani factions in Kumasi in the 1990s, are indicative of this difficulty.

During a gathering of Tijani leaders and disciples at the Wataniyya family house in Kumasi, Sheikh Mustafa Kamil expressed joy at the turn of events that he gifted Madaha Mallam Mustafa his personal cloak for chanting a popular song of unity about Tijani leaders in Ghana. However, the intended purpose of the historic gathering failed to materialize because of unresolved suspicions that resurfaced a few days later.

Yunus Dumbe also attributed the understanding of the *Tarbiyya* (an esoteric training by the Tijaniyya Fayda Brotherhood) to some of the reasons that have also triggered the split of the Tijaniyya fraternity in Ghana into factions. According to Dumbe, the definition of the concept of the *Tarbiyya* became a major point of contention among the Tijanis of Ghana in the 1980s, particularly between those who do not share the position that the *Tarbiyya* is a path to spiritual upliftment through which the initiated could 'see' God and those who had absolute faith in it. This disagreement was so profound that the supporters

of the *Tarbiyya* began to label their fellow Tijani members who experienced reservations about the concept of 'seeing' God as *Munkir-Faila* or Salafi/Wahhabi-like Tijanis (Dumbe 2013, p. 47).

Dumbe further argues that the effect of the division caused by the concept of the *tarbiyya* was felt during a *Maulud* (celebration of the Prophet's birth) forum in 1983. Sheikh Mustapha Kamil Khalifa (d. 2011) unequivocally condemned Sheikh Abdul Wadud's appeal to the masses to respond to the Salafis that (some) members of the Tijaniyya community could 'see' God in broad daylight. A similar incident occurred the year after at a similar function when Sheikh Aminu Bamba Ejura debunked a similar appeal from Sheikh Salisu Sha'ban. Thus, the 'seeing' of God debate remained unresolved between supporters loyal to Sheikh Maikano (such as Sheikh Abdul Wadud) and opponents (Dumbe 2013, pp. 58-59). Although Sheikh Abdul Wadud has challenged this narrative, arguing that it never occurred (Interview with Sheikh Abdul Wadud, Kumasi, 2016), debates over how to interpret the *tarbiyya* away from this literal meaning persist, with leading Tijani scholars explaining that the spiritual training leads the initiated to experience the presence of God in one's life, not 'seeing' in the manner put. Thus, the *tarbiyya* debates support one of the main propositions of this paper: that prioritizing the preservation of Islamic Law (*Sharia*) rather than pursuing personal ambition was a leading cause of disagreement among the earlier generation of Tijani scholars in Ghana, especially from the 1970s onward.

### **5. Formation of the Jallo and Cisse Factions within the Tijaniyya in Ghana: A Discussion About Loyalty and Dissatisfaction.**

The disagreement between Sheikh Maikano and fellow Tijaniyya scholars on the rumor about his marriage laid the foundation for the explicit internal factionalism confronting the Tijaniyya Sufi brotherhood in Ghana today. On his part, Sheikh Maikano broke away with several intellectually accomplished loyalists among the youth who had remained staunch followers of his tradition, including, Sheikh Abdul Wadud Haroon Cisse, a Kumasi-based Muslim cleric. Later, when Sheikh Abdul Wadud also broke away from Sheikh Maikano in the early 2000s, he became the leader of a faction of the Tijaniyya in Ghana, now known as the *Ciesawa*, a Hausa word connoting the followers of Sheikh Abdul Wadud Cisse. Notably, Sheikh Abdul Wadud, in addition to being the *khalifa* (successor by intellectual tradition) of his father, Sheikh Harun Mohammad al-Tijani, also doubles as the leader of two out of the six Tijaniyya power houses in Kumasi – Sheikh Baban Makaranta (d. 1988) and Imam Mohammad Chiroma (d. 1968). Today, members of the *Ciesawa* faction, who are among the main supporters of the Ghana National Chief Imam, are considered the main rivals of the *Jallo* faction led by Sheikh Ahmed Abul Faidi, Sheikh Maikano's first son and successor.

Sheikh Abdul Wadud's breakaway from the Sheikh Maikano-led faction developed from historically remote causes. According to Sheikh Abdul Wadud, he had patiently obeyed and served Sheikh Maikano so that "the youth would learn to be obedient to the elderly," and not because he expected any rewards or favors. He added that even when, later, he had specific differences with some of Sheikh Maikano's actions, he had to be accommodating because any attempt to openly disagree and distance himself would not benefit the Tijaniyya fraternity, especially during those tense historical moments when the brotherhood was already struggling with sensitive internal divisions (Interview with Sheikh Abdul Wadud, Kumasi, 2016). In this context, the obedience of Sheikh Abdul Wadud appears not to be a matter of personal decision. It is likely in obedience to the teachings of the Tijaniyya Sufi tradition, which demands that the disciple be dutiful to the sheikh, even if their actions cause them pain (See Cisse, 2013).

However, given the narrative transitions, the final split between Sheikh Maikano and Sheikh Abdul Wadud in 2001 stemmed from three fundamental, unaddressed differences. First, Sheikh Maikano's inability to directly participate in or send a representative to mourn with the Harun family in Kumasi when Sheikh Abdul Wadud's brother, Mallam Madawi, lost a wife in the 1990s. According to Sheikh Abdul Wadud, Sheikh Maikano was present in Kumasi when the said death was reported and was officially informed. Therefore, the absence of Sheikh Maikano or any member of his family at the funeral

home to offer condolences was a painful event for the deceased's family. Perhaps, the disappointed was badly felt because Sheikh Abdul Wadud then served as the pivotal mouthpiece of the Jallo community in the region. Another event was Sheikh Maikano's criticism of Sheikh Abdul Wadud and his friend Alhaji Shamsu Kwakwa for failing to attend a funeral sermon the night before the final *addu'a* (farewell prayers) for Sheikh Maikano's deceased granddaughter.

The scenario created by the narratives is quite interesting; while Sheikh Abdul Wadud expressed discontent with Sheikh Maikano for not mourning with his family when his brother lost his wife, Sheikh Maikano, on the other hand, expressed his disappointment at Sheikh Abdul Wadud's failure to arrive earlier for the final funeral rites of his (Sheikh Maikano's) granddaughter. According to Sheikh Abdul Wadud, he was not happy with the way the criticism was carried out, especially when he and his friend Shamsu Kwawa were responsible for airlifting the deceased granddaughter from Senegal to Accra for advanced medical tests. In addition, the two friends covered all her medical bills during her treatment until her death (Interview with Sheikh Abdul Wadud, Kumasi, 2016).

However, given the patterns of these narratives, it is possible to suggest that the tension between Sheikh Maikano and Sheikh Abdul Wadud, even in the 1990s, extended beyond these concerns about funeral attendance, even though such other factors might have been latent and therefore treated with less significance. In this context, Sheikh Abdul Wadud's acknowledgment that he suppressed ideological differences while still with Sheikh Maikano, serving as his leading representative in Kumasi, is an important yet unwritten part of the causes of their subsequent split. In fact, Sheikh Abdul Wadud's 'personal decision' (Ibid) to skip the annual Prang Maulud in 2000 reflects such underlying factors. On the other hand, Sheikh Maikano's reference to Sheikh Abdul Wadud and his friend Alhaji Shamsu Kwakwa as *ashrar* (evil people) for their failure to grace the farewell sermon might have also been triggered by an entirely different cause, which, unfortunately, will probably remain unanswered, due to Sheikh Maikano's demise.

The final split occurred in 2001 during the organization of Sheikh Maikano's annual Maulud in Prang, Ghana. During the event, a conflict was reported between the supporters of Sheikh Dhul Qarnain, another in-law and leading disciple of Sheikh Maikano from Salaga, Ghana, and those of Sheikh Abdul Wadud. The tension led to the firing of gunshots in front of Sheikh Abdul Wadud's residence in Prang. Sheikh Abdul Wadud interpreted the incident as a direct sign that his life was in danger. So, he expected a public condemnation of the incident from Sheikh Maikano himself. However, Sheikh Maikano's silence, according to Sheikh Abdul Wadud, prompted him to reconsider the significance of his continued alliance with the Sheikh Maikano-led faction of the Tijaniyya in Ghana. He reasoned that the event of his death during the said incident in 2001 would have been meaningless, judging by the absence of public condemnation from the leader of the event himself (Ibid). Consequently, interventions by other leading Tijaniyya leaders requesting that he rescind his decision to leave Prang that very day were heeded, although he refused to participate in the climax of the celebration slated for the night.

Responses from members of the Tijaniyya who spoke on condition of anonymity about the conflict between the supporters of Sheikh Dhul Qarnain and Sheikh Abdul Wadud in Prang in 2001 are mixed. Some have argued that Sheikh Maikano's purported silence on such a serious matter could not have been deliberate if special attention is given to the status of the leaders of the conflicting intra-Maikano factions. Apart from the fact that both Sheikh Dhul Qarnain and Sheikh Abdul Wadud were respected sheikhs with large followings within the Sheikh Maikano-led faction, they were also married to his biological daughters. Therefore, any attempt by Sheikh Maikano to express public dissatisfaction with either faction would have led him to directly involve himself in dividing not only two of his two leading support bases in Ghana but also his household. His public silence on the matter was therefore born of necessity, guided by wisdom and experience, and not a sign of insensitivity. After all, he applied the same principle when a similar event occurred in Asokore, Kumasi, somewhere in the 1990s, when itchweed

was blown on the invited guests. Casualties were reported in later years because of this incident (Anonymous informants, personal communication, August 2025).

Others also suggested that Sheikh Maikano's position in that situation provided the right tool for him to intervene by calling the two conflicting in-laws to order, using explicit, unconditional language, in the interest of the larger Jallo fraternity. During that time, the scholar argued, Sheikh Maikano's charisma gave him a strong voice in Ghana that even his open criticism of Ghana's former President, Jerry John Rawlings, did not cause loyal supporters of the ex-president and his National Democratic Congress (NDC), who formed part of Maikano's fraternity, to leave his side. Therefore, openly condemning the actions of his sons-in-law's supporters could have eased the situation rather than worsening it. For others who argued they had been part of the history all along, the split was bound to happen, given the pace at which Sheikh Maikano's support base in Ghana expanded. Mass explosions of supporters always emerge with such outcomes (Anonymous informants, personal communication, August 2025).

Consequently, the split has emerged with additional controversies that continue to attract attention among Tijani followers in Ghana. Members continue to debate whether drumming and dancing should be promoted at Mauluds grounds, and, secondly, whether the practice of reciting the *wazifa* (a Tijaniyya litany) over the dead before burial has any basis in Islamic law. While notable sheikhs within both factions have waded into the debate, much of it remains a series of polemical encounters on social media, where discussions are personality-driven rather than based on a holistic approach to addressing the issues involved.

## 6. Discussion and Recommendation

The findings of this paper suggest that the internal fragmentations of the Tijaniyya Suf Brotherhood in Ghana cannot be explained through materialist or class-based models of conflict. Factors that contributed to the internal fragmentation, beginning in the 1970s, are outcomes of disputes over religious authority, legitimacy, and succession of the brotherhood's national leadership within a charismatic tradition. It is in this sense that we find Weber's insights that charismatic authority is inherently unstable and prone to crisis when processes of routinization remain contested, deeply reflecting the Tijaniyyah experience in Ghana. However, as disagreements persist among specific factions over current issues of domination and power, the paper suggests that compromises and consensus may be achievable, even if they must be done without conformity. This is because common practices of the Tijaniyya Sufi order, such as the observance of daily spiritual practices, can continue to bind members together. Other differences, particularly on whether to drum and dance at *Maulud* grounds and the practice of reciting *wazifa* over the dead before burial, can be reserved for further discussion among the scholars of the order.

With too much focus on personal differences, especially from the 1990s to the early 2000s, rather than on developing development-focused initiatives for members, many Tijaniyya youth have become self-styled spiritual consultants and public preachers, prioritizing wealth and popularity over true spiritual transformation (Zakaria, 2015). This has opened the floodgates for people, including non-practicing members, who may not be willing to compromise on certain positions in the name of Tijaniyya unity, to also establish themselves as Tijaniyya sheikhs to pursue their own interests.

According to some interviewed elders of the Tijaniyya brotherhood, their personal encounters with specific spiritual consultants show that some are either ignorant followers or have exploited the movement's intractable tensions to identify with it when they have not been initiated into the Tijaniyya Sufi order. For instance, Sheikh Saeed al-Miskeen, the Imam of the Kumasi Wangara community and a *muqaddam* of the Tijaniyya movement, shared an experience with a relative who worked as a spiritual consultant and had hung a picture of Sheikh Ibrahim Niasse in his room. Upon questioning, the consultant had no exact idea who Sheikh Ibrahim was, nor had he ever been initiated into the Tijani

order. In fact, the spiritualist made it clear that the picture on the wall was meant to attract customers to patronize his services, nothing more (Sheikh Saeed al-Miskeen, interviewed 2016). Thus, these developments reflect a broader transformation in the modes through which religious authority is claimed and circulated.

To tackle all differences in a way that would ensure workable solutions are found for the challenges discussed, this paper suggests that the leadership of the various factions of the Tijaniyya Sufi Brotherhood in Ghana should call for a National Tijaniyya Unity Conference in the spirit of Qur'an (49: 9), which makes it imperative to promote unity through the principles of justice that make it obligatory for contending parties to accept peace proposals (Bidabad, 2012). Such conferences could be an annual affair to plan projects aimed at tackling the socioeconomic problems in Ghana, where Muslims are deeply affected. They may include establishing a national Tijaniyya educational institute and vocational training centers. With dedicated, committed leadership and strong organizational and fundraising skills, such initiatives can yield very positive results.

In Kumasi and Accra, where Jallo and Cisse factionalism seems to dominate, ongoing efforts to foster unity through joint practices such as Maulud celebrations and *hailala* (Friday gathering for the remembrance of God) sessions at either faction's mosques should be supported and encouraged. Also, joint cleanup exercises before and after annual Mauluds, as well as Qur'anic memorization and recitation competitions, should be encouraged to bring the opposing factions together. Above all, personal differences and interests should not override the aims of the broader teaching of the Tijaniyya Sufi Brotherhood, which emphasizes forgiveness and holding on to the teachings of the Sharia (Cisse, 2013). With tact and exemplary leadership from the elders, the existing rivalry between the Jallo and Cisse factions can be turned into something positive, where each group, in trying to outdo the other, does so not through unyielding social media debates but through productive social and economic initiatives.

## 7. Conclusion

This paper explored the genesis of the current internal fragmentation of the Tijaniyya Sufi Brotherhood in Ghana. It traced the genesis of the internal fragmentation to the period between the 1970s and early 2000s. The paper argued that the divisions should be understood as contests over charismatic authority rather than a material struggle. Using the career and legacy of Sheikh Abdullahi Maikano as conduits for this fragmentation, the paper draws on disputes over legitimacy, the interpretation of Islamic law (Sharia), and succession as potential destabilizing factors, even in traditions that place a strong normative emphasis on unity and spiritual refinement, such as Sufism. The analysis shows that Sheikh Maikano's rise as a national hero of the Tijaniyya Sufi Brotherhood in Ghana in the 1970s generated new expectations about leadership, accountability, and moral authority.

Thus, while Sheikh Maikano's Charisma unified large segments of the Tijaniyya community, it also exposed the limits of individual authority within a tradition anchored in both Sharia and spiritual discipline. For instance, disputes over Sheikh Maikano's controversial utterances and the alleged fifth marriage did not just involve doctrinal or legal struggles. They also constitute reasons why the spiritual authority was contested. As the paper has shown, these early disagreements were never conclusively resolved. They rather gave rise to new patterns of mistrust, selective loyalty, and interpretive divergence in subsequent decades of the Tijaniyya's development in Ghana.

The formation of the Cisse-led factions, which broke away from the leadership of Sheikh Maikano in the early 2000s, exemplified the institutionalization of earlier unresolved tensions. For this reason, the paper considers the later episodes of the fragmentation in the 1990s and early 2000s as reinforcing these divisions by transforming personal grievances into collective concerns. For example, disagreements over funerary obligations, public criticism, and responses to violence were shared as personal grievances, but later became reasons for which internal fragmentation deepened. In this

context, as far as the Tijaniyya Brotherhood in Ghana is concerned, loyalty to persons and lineages often overrides appeals for shared jurisprudential or ethical principles.

This paper has explored the patterns of these conflicts from the 1970s with the aim of providing a historically grounded understanding of the internal fragmentation of the Tijaniyya Sufi Brotherhood in Ghana, thereby challenging later interpretations that attribute the development solely to the excesses of the youth. In doing so, the paper offers a different interpretation of current tensions. Also, it helps to situate Ghanaian Sufism within wider debates on religious authority, fragmentation, and continuity in modern Islamic movements in West Africa. New challenges, such as whether one can be a Tijaniyya and a Shia at the same time, are emerging and further dividing the movement. This has no relation to Sheikh Maikano, Sheikh Nuhu Sharubutu, or Sheikh Abdul Wadud, and should be addressed in a separate research paper.

### Article Information Form

**Authors Contributions:** Conceptualization: F.I.Z., S.M.Z.; Methodology: F.I.Z., S.M.Z.; Validation: F.I.Z., S.M.Z.; Formal analysis: F.I.Z., S.M.Z.; Investigation: F.I.Z., S.M.Z.; Resources: S.M.Z.; Data curation: F.I.Z.; Writing - original draft: F.I.Z., S.M.Z.; Writing - review & editing: F.I.Z., S.M.Z.; Supervision: S.M.Z.; Project administration: F.I.Z., S.M.Z.

**Conflict of Interest Disclosure:** No potential conflict of interest was declared by the authors.

**Plagiarism Statement:** This article has been scanned by iThenticate.

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