



Shaykh Muhammad al-Hāfiz ¹

By Shaykh Fakhruddīn al-Owaisī ²

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¹ Sayyidinā Shaykh Muhammad al-Hāfiz al-Tijānī of Egypt, must not be confused for al-`Arif Billāh Shaykh Muhammad al-Hāfiz al-Tijānī al-Shinqīti ؒ of Mauritania, who was a prominent *kehalifa* of Shaykh Sīdī Ahmad al-Tijānī, the founder of the Tijānī *tariqa*. Shaykh al-Hāfiz al-Shinqīti passed away in the mid-1800's and was a great Walī of Allāh and *faqih* of his time. It is he who has the credit of spreading the *tariqa* Tijāniyya all over the Sahara, especially Mauritania where his descendants (known as *Anlad al-Shaykh al-Hāfiz*) are still great Tijānī spiritual masters with large followings.

² Shaykh Fakhruddīn Owaisī al-Madanī is from the tribe of Sayyidunā Owais al-Qarnī, and a *muqaddam* of the Tijāniyya in South Africa. He was born in the USA but grew up and studied in Medina al-Munawwara for 18 years. He has an MA in Islamic Studies from the University of Cape Town and is the Imām of the Hout Bay Mosque at the last Tip of Africa. He is also the Head of the Sunni `Ulemā Council of Cape Town. Shaykh Fakhruddīn studied with Sayyid Muhammad `Alawī al-Malikī of Mecca and has *ijāzab* in Hadīth from Sayyid Muhammad al-Yaqūbī. He took the *Tariqa* from the great Sufī master Shaykh Hassan Cisse of Senegal, who is the grandson and *kehalifa* of Shaykh al-Islām and Ghawth al-Anām al-Hāj Ibrahim Niyāss ؒ the possessor of the *sayda* (Spiritual Flood) predicted by Shaykh Ahmad al-Tijānī ؒ. He may be contacted on fdowaisi@gmail.com.

He is Sayyidinā al-Shaykh al-`Arif-Billāh, al-Sayyid Muhammad al-Hāfiz al-Masrī al-Tijānī ؒ, one of the greatest *muhaddiths* of Egypt in the past century, as well as a renowned Friend of Allāh.

Al-Sayyid Muhammad al-Hafiz bin `Abdul Latif bin Sālim was born in the district of Munufiyya in Egypt in the year 1315 (1895 circa) to a family connected to the noble Ahlul Bayt.

After studying the Ulūm of the Dīn in Egypt, Shaykh al-Hāfiz traveled abroad in the pursuit of the Sacred knowledge. During these blessed journeys, he gained precious *ijāzāhs* from some of the greatest Shuyūkh of the time from the East and the West of the Islamic world, such as Shaykh Badruddīn al-Hasanī of Syria, Sharīf `Abdul Hayy al-Kattānī and Sīdī Ahmad Sukayrij of Morocco, Shaykh Alfa Hāshim of Medina, Shaykh `Abdul Baqī al-Ansarī of Mecca...etc.

After his period of learning, Sayyidinā Muhammad al-Hāfiz totally dedicated himself to the teaching of Hadīth. He taught Sahīh al-Bukhārī more than 40 times in Egypt, and many other books of Hadīth as well. It is said that he used to know them by heart.

It is narrated that when he went to Fez, Morocco, to visit the blessed Tomb of his Spiritual Master, Mawlānā al-Qutb al-Maktūm Sayyidī Ahmad al-Tijānī al-Kabīr ؒ, he was asked by the Shaykhs in Fez to teach them the Arba`īn of Imām al-Nawawī, which he did from memory.

He also wrote many great works on Hadīth, *tafsīr* and *tasannuf*, and made *tabqīq* of many original gems in the field of Hadīth, which were part of his private library which also has one of the best collections of manuscripts in Egypt. For this he had copied and collected manuscripts from the most ancient libraries in Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem, Damascus, Cairo, Fez, Tunis, Sudan and other centers of Islamic learning that he had visited.

Shaykh Dr. `Abdul Halīm Mahmūd, the Rector of al-Azhar, wrote in Sīdī al-Hāfiz's obituary, "the *Imām al-muhaddithīn* has died".

Shaykh al-Hāfiz also took part in the Jihād against the English in Egypt in the early 1900's, and even Imām Hassan al-Banna used to seek his advice. He also debated and defeated the Orientalists in Cairo at that time.

More than all of that, Shaykh Muhammad al-Hāfiz used to meet Sayyidinā Rasūlullāh ﷺ in a state of wakefulness. That was his high *maqām* in *wilāya*.

He was originally involved in the honorable Khalwatī, Naqshbandī, and Shadhilī *tarīqahs*, then left all of them to take the Way of the Seal of Muhammadan Saints Sayyidinā Ahmad al-Tijānī ؒ, through the Mauritanian Shaykh, Sīdī Ahmad al-`Alawī al-Shinqītī.

Numerous people from all walks of life took the Tijānī Spiritual Path from Shaykh al-Hāfiz and attained great spiritual heights. He was as famous as a Spiritual Master par excellence as he was a *muhaddith* of the Time, a combination extremely rare in our age. His Tijānī Zāwiyah

in Cairo was and remains a great center of spiritual refreshment for those who live in or visit Cairo. His books on *tasawwuf* and *tariqa* are considered gems of spiritual knowledge.

Our late Ustādh, al-Sayyid Muhammad bin `Alawī al-Mālikī of Mecca was a very keen student of Shaykh Muhammad al-Hāfiz in Hadīth and *tasawwuf*, when he was studying at the Azhar. He would fondly remember his "blessed gatherings", always calling him "a great Walī of Allāh", and mention some of his *karāmahs*. In fact, the Sayyid always mentioned him in the forefront of the list of his teachers in all his *ijāzahs*.

Shaykh-al-Islām fi Ifriqīyya al-Hajj Ibrahīm Niyāss ؒ of Senegal would say, whoever saw the face of Shaykh al-Hāfiz, has seen the face of Sīdī Ahmad al-Tijānī ؒ himself....and Sayyidinā Rasullāh ﷺ had told Sīdī Ahmad al-Tijānī that whoever sees your face must die on *imān*.

Shaykh al-Hāfiz al-Tijānī passed away in 1398 (1978) in Cairo. He was succeeded by his learned son al-Shaykh al-Sayyid Ahmad Muhammad al-Hāfiz, who authored a detailed biography of the Shaykh. He was a giant of the 20th century indeed. May Allah be pleased with him. ³

³ A summary of his biography in Arabic may also be viewed on the following site: www.alsiyada.org (The official website of one of his students, the Grand Muftī of Nigeria, Sharīf Ibrahīm Sālih al-Husaynī al-Tijānī).