

CHALLENGES, NEGOTIATIONS, AND FEMINISM IN THE TIJANIYYA ORDER IN SENEGAL AND NIGERIA

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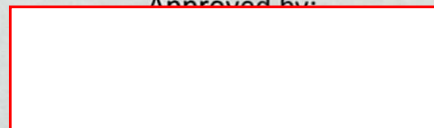
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Exploring Feminism in the Tijaniyya Order of Senegal and Nigeria

Sufism, which is a mystical form of Islam, serves as the main form of religion followed by people living in West Africa. The prominence of Sufism throughout West Africa has provided leadership roles for women not usually granted through their societies or other more orthodox forms of Islam. More specifically, the Tijaniyya order, primarily located in Senegal and Nigeria, played a key role in expanding the access for women to the practices of the movement. A main part of Sufi teachings is a teacher student relationship, otherwise known as a *muqaddam (a)*, or spiritual guide. For most of history, the position was reserved for men (Hill, 376), but with the teachings of Sheik Niasse, many women were appointed to serve the role of *muqadamma* within the Tijaniyya order.

In taking these leadership roles, however, women must embrace characteristics that inherently keep them subordinate to their male counterparts. For women participating as a *muqaddama*, there are extensive challenges and barriers, yet understanding the outcome of their struggle helps to understand the determination, which many of the women embody. The voices of the women indicate that any person with a true connection with the higher deities does not see any separation between male and female. There is conscious resistance to the Western liberal feminist view on gender relations, and the Sufi women of the Tijani order express their will to create gender relations in their own way, which is often reflective of indigenous cultural values. The actions and words of these women reveal a type of feminism, which ultimately liberates and strengthens the women who are participating in leadership roles within the Tijani order in Senegal and

Nigeria. To indicate how these Tijani women leaders are creating a new form of feminism, I will outline the challenges that they have to overcome to be a part of the order, the policy changes that helped women play a larger role in the order, the rules that the women must abide to once they become leaders, and finally how their incorporation of indigenous beliefs influences their actions and mindset of feminism.

There are four main inhibitors to women serving as a spiritual guide within Sufism: *baraka*, purity, the “ideal” woman image, and education. *Baraka*, or blessing is a central element of the teacher-student relationship. The spiritual blessing that a teacher can pass on to a student is a major part of the student being a part of the group. It is perceived that while a woman can possess *baraka*; it is always less than that of a man’s. *Baraka* is passed down from founder to the descendents, but for women to which it is passed, it is believed to be weaker. The continuation of spiritual blessing is through the existence of a person’s individual “strong personality, wealth and knowledge, all things most women lack” (Bop, 1113). Therefore, spiritual blessing, which should be something, which promotes all people ultimately acts in marginalization of the woman. The lack of knowledge as described previously keeps women from accessing the hierarchy existent within Sufism. The case of Nana Asma’u to be discussed will illustrate the barrier of education that many women face.

The ideal of purity is a major barrier for women in their participation in Islam, especially in order to be a leader. At times when women are on their menstrual cycle, they are prohibited from praying, fasting, entering the mosque,

performing *dhikr*, and other duties. Much of these prohibitions come from common uses of Sharia and Hadith. The Quran states “Say it is an illness, so let women alone at such times and go not into them till they are cleansed” (2:222). Islamic law in the form of some Hadiths makes it clear that it is the menstrual fluids that are impure, not the person themselves (Meghan, 383). However, widespread interpretations of various stories of the Prophet use the time of women’s menstrual cycles as an opportunity to put restrictions on woman’s actions. If a person is unable to perform religious rites one-fourth of each month, it will be nearly impossible to act in a leadership position. Women who are on their menstrual cycle are viewed as unclean, and in many cases are isolated from all people during this time.

Additionally, at other times such as childbirth women are viewed as unclean. The idea of women as unclean inhibits them from attaining high leadership roles (Bop, 1114). Ideas against menstruating women are not limited to Islam. The bias against women’s menstruation is also present in an African indigenous practice located in Northern Sudan. A main part of the practice is spirit possession or *Zar*. However, if a woman is menstruating, it is deemed inappropriate for the spirit to enter her (Boddy, 134). A woman is not menstruating at all times of her life, and it is unreasonable to deny a woman’s participation completely because something that is only minimally part of her life.

The example of two marabout women, Ndeye Meissa Ndiaye and Coumba Keita, who are not part of the Tijaniyya order, but whom are two Sufi women living outside of Dakar, Senegal reveals the importance of lack of menstruation to obtain purity. Both of these women are highly esteemed guides and healers, with clients

and students in Senegal and abroad, whom are both women and men. The two are entirely economically independent, neither being married. Aside from their economic independence and spiritual power, these women claim to have ended their menstruation. The lack of bleeding is an indicator of their power, both for them and for their students. One of the women even quoted that it was by “acting like a man” that she became powerful because women are not superior (Gemmeke, 140). The necessity of these women to not possess traits so commonly associated with women reveals the bias, which exists against women.

The ideal of women is a major contributor to the lack of female leadership in Sufism. Women are supposed to be absent from the public life and serve the needs of her husband and family. It is for this image and the reasons quoted above that Coudou Bop argues that Islam is not a source of empowerment for women, but rather that women should find their advancement through other sections of society (Bop, 1115). However, many others argue much differently concerning the issue of women as leaders and Sheik Niasse emphasized that traits “inherent” to women are obvious indicators for their position as *muqaddamas*. Some women may believe that they do not possess qualities deemed “inherent” to women, but for many areas of society, the women must act within the prescribed boundaries. Sheik Niasse’s appointment of women as spiritual guides was not to break through gender barriers, but rather uphold the gender separation, which was in existence. Additionally, women’s inclinations as mothers made them the perfect candidate to serve as a *muqaddama* as the person should be someone nurturing and capable of teaching others the spiritual process according to Sheik Niasse (Hill, 382). The

feminine characteristic was valued in both women and men leaders, but the women offered additionally utility to Sheik Niasse as they could connect with other potential women adherents to expand the following of the Tijaniyya movement while upholding social norms. It is unclear whether Niasse aimed to include them out of will for gender equality or simply to increase his numbers, but it is clear that the methods he entered opened doors for many women to improve their status spiritually, socially, and economically.

In the early twentieth century, gender roles transformed rapidly with the ideas and message advocated by Sheik Ibrahim Niasse. Contrary to the messages advocated by other Sufi leaders and brotherhoods at the time, Niasse advocated for accessibility and acceptance to all people. His movement labeled *Fayda*, or the Flood, reverberated incredible changes for women and lesser-educated persons in society. The beginning of his movement came in 1929 when he announced to his followers that through a new education system, *tarbiyya*, that any person, female or male, high status or low, educated or non-educated, could come to possess spiritual knowledge of God, or *mariffa* through a relatively short period (Hill, 386). Sheik Niasse appointed many women to become *muqaddamas*, or spiritual guides, during his movement, but many of those remain unknown due to their adherence to seclusion from public life. Many of these women are being revealed, and experiences of them are becoming understood as second and third generation women are now in positions of power within the Tijaniyya (Hutson, 736).

Understanding the purpose and guidelines of these appointments and acceptance of women into the order is critical to truly understanding the role and

agency of the women in leadership. Traditionally, women were and are excluded from becoming *muqaddamas* because of their lack of access to education. Becoming a *muqaddam* or *muqaddama* traditionally required extensive Quranic and non-Islamic education. It would require a large commitment on part of the parents to supply this education, as most education was not free, and it was looked down upon for women to be in public, therefore private tutors would be required. Sheik Niasse afforded educational opportunities for his daughters, such as education at the home, but did not provide the same higher education for them as he did for his sons, who he sent to well-known schools and universities in Morocco, Egypt, and other places (Hill, 387). However, it was the new method of achieving spiritual knowledge, which Sheik Niasse advocated for, which allowed for women to gain access to the *tariqas*, or orders.

The process of *tarbiyya* was a short process allowing for an individual to have direct, transcendental access with God. Sheik Niasse's purpose for advocating this path to knowledge was simple: he wanted greater membership in the Tijaniyya order. The appointment of women as spiritual guides was critical to the sustainment of the surge in membership and to adhere to the cultural norm of separation amongst sexes. Student-guide relationships are center to the structure of the brotherhoods within Sufism. The path to understanding connection with God is through teachings and guiding by your individual teacher. In cultures in which it is not appropriate for women and men to form close relationships outside of family and marriage, the student-teacher relationship within Sufism would not be appropriate according the gender roles in place. Therefore, the earliest women to be

appointed as *muqaddamas* were in some way directly related to Sheik Niasse, such as his daughters, sisters, or wives. With the *Fayda*, a much greater need for women guides emerged. It is unknown exactly how many women were appointed at this time, but the impact of these women remains, and even more women are continuing to become *muqadamas* as time is passing.

It is important to note that several prominent women served as spiritual guides prior to Sheik Niasse's movement, such as Nana Asma'u. Her along with other women made tremendous strides in contributing to the education of other women, but these high status women came from powerful, elite, and privileged backgrounds. To achieve the knowledge needed to reach divinity, there are challenges to women in achieving the education that is necessary to become a learned Sufi. Most African societies are patriarchal, and Islam brought an increased level of patriarchy, leading to the marginalization of many women. Nana Asma'u, who lived from 1793 until 1864, and is "well known for playing a key role in the spread of the Islamic revival, and especially for the education of women" (Badran, 295). She was a part of the Fodio clan, who ruled the Sokoto Caliphate in modern-day Nigeria. Her family was a part of the Qadiriyya order, which is an order that focuses on the pursuit of knowledge. Because she was from an upper, ruling clan, Asma'u received complete education in Islamic teaching, and was fluent in four languages. Much of Nana's legacy comes from her poems. She wrote many, many poems focusing mainly on Sufi women saints, Mohammed, and the *jihad* ("Nana Asma'u, Muslim Woman Scholar: Excerpts from *One Woman's Jihad*"). She pioneered the importance of women being educated, and taught classes of both men and women. Through her teachings, she

created a huge network of women, who could then pass on their teachings to other women ("Nana Asma'u: princess, poet, reformer of Muslim Women's education"). Niasse's actions would expand on the actions of Nana Asma'u, allowing more women to become involved through his introduction of *tarbiyya*.

Even once women became leaders within the order, there were still certain values and rules that the women must maintain to uphold norms of the order, society, and culture. Maintaining the balance of attaining a role of leadership while adhering to the rules and values of the order creates:

a dilemma for Sufi women leaders: the social roles they play involve submission, domesticity, and withdrawal from publicity, yet they must differentiate these behaviors from social inferiority, servitude, and a lack of confidence (Hill, 383).

Many of these women leaders operate in two different realities, assuming different personas based on the setting. They carry out familial and marital duties to their husbands and households, wielding little to no power over decision making, but understanding the real *haqiqah*, or truth, the women understand that all social interactions are simply illusory. One such *muqaddama*, Sayiddah Khady, who lives in Dakar, illustrates the concept of "patriarchal bargaining." Kandiyoti defines patriarchal bargaining as "the set rules and scripts regulating gender relations, to which both genders accommodate and acquiesce" (286). Several women discussed illustrate the concept of navigating within a system that inherently subordinates them in order to find power and authority. While serving a client in her home, her husband called her over to bring him water, and she complied. She explained her action as maintaining her role, especially in times when it shows good manners. The actions do not have to be viewed as being submissive, but rather as a deeper

understanding of the piousness, in which the actions train her. Understanding of the deeper hidden meaning is critical to all aspects of Sufism, but many people only see the outer, more obvious meaning of the actions taken by the women, therefore not realizing their moral authority (Hill, 383).

Joseph Hill's article, "All women are guides," highlights the presence of women spiritual guides in the Talibe Baaye, which is a subgroup of the Tijaniyya order. Hill presents an example of a paradox women's engagement: the task of "making hiddenness visible while veiling acts of showing" (379). As with the notion of submission, understanding of the true meaning behind women's actions is important to interpreting the women's true authority. Hill describes his attendance of a Friday prayer session in Dakar, Senegal. Two women, Sayyida Zeynabou Mbathie and Sayyida Aida Faye, were the clear leaders, even if their actions were often orchestrated through men in the group. Adhering to Sharia law, the women sat behind the men in prayer, and Zeynabou Mbathie allowed her husband to lead the prayer. Towards the middle of the activities, Aida Faye interacted with the men doing the chants, and began her own. Quickly, both men and women fell into trances. Zeynabou Mbathie gave the final speech, whispering it in a low voice, and then a man acting as an animator carried it out to the entire group (Hill, 394). Animators speak the words of an esteemed person, so that everyone can hear, allowing the distinguished person to keep his or her voice at a low, respectful level.

Acts of submission occurred, such as deference to the husband, in allowing him to lead prayer, but as Sayiddah Khady described, the acts of submission are part of the visible, obvious reality, which within true understanding, no importance is

given to these actions, other than moral virtues such as maintaining piety and interiority. The speaking through an animator illustrates the Senegalese value that a person of high status must adhere to *kersa*, or restraint. In order carry out this value when delivering a speech, “one must speak through an animator of lower status, whether by age, class, or birth” (Hill, 396). In current Senegalese society, some fulfill the value of *kersa* by simply using a microphone, but many of the most highly esteemed leaders continue to adhere to the use of an animator, including men. Sheik Niasse said as well, that a “woman’s voice is part of her *‘awra*, or that which---like her body (aside from her face and hands)---should be veiled from the public” (Hill, 397). Niasse’s daughter is accounted for many instances of speaking in public, however.

As part of Joseph Hill’s research that recorded the actions of the women discussed above, he also was able to record Sayyida Zeynabou Mbathie’s perspective. During the prayers, the women allowed a man to lead the prayer even if they were spiritually leading the service. He asked her why women do not lead prayer if men and women are equal under Islam as she stated. She responded,

You know, in the *Fayda* of Shaykh Ibrahim, if we were to talk about, as they say, the *‘bātin*,’ it would be a bit surprising. But we keep the best behavior, in that we follow *Sharī‘a* and take women and place them behind [in prayer]. Because *Sharī‘a* has placed women behind. . . . That’s how we make it [our behavior] beautiful [*taaral*], how we give it a pleasing form [*rafetal*]. But it’s not something that women *can’t* do [leading prayer]. Everything that a man can do, a woman can do too. . . . A woman, if we are talking about the true, true, true ‘reality’ [*haqīqa*]—God—truly—a woman can be Imam. Because once you’ve gone to the point of hitting your chest and reaching God, there is no man or woman there (Hill, 399).

The words of Zeynabou Mbathie explicitly depict her maintenance of Sharia for seemingly cultural and societal norms in order to maintain peace, but ultimately it is

clear that she understands that there is truly no separation between man and woman. Her adherence to Sharia appears to be out of respect for the social interactions that it upholds rather than a true belief in the absolute meaning. She acknowledges that women can act as Imams, but does not choose to do so herself. That choice indicates that apparent gender equality is not a priority for her, but rather helping to connect as many people as she can to the message of God. That message can be felt and passed through her to many others, and she engages in the role of a spiritual guide each day. Her visible submission does not trouble her because in the eyes of God gender is not a true thing. The words and actions of Sayyida Zeynabou Mbathie reveal her ideas of the capabilities of women and the actions in which they should engage.

The first group of appointed *muqaddamas* in Nigeria exemplifies Kandiyoti's notion of patriarchal bargaining as well (Kandiyoti, 274). As part of their initiation into the order and as spiritual guides, they agreed to several specific terms regarding the limits of their role in the organization. There were four additional, primary rules set to the first set of initiator women:

(1) utility-women's activities in the order had to have a unique utility to a goal set by men in the order that men could not achieve through their own efforts; (2) compatibility-women's motives had to be compatible with Tijaniyya and general Islamic principles; (3) consistency-women's roles had to be consistent with Hausa family hierarchy and societal norms; and finally, (4) prestige-women's status and actions had to be in accordance with, or increase, the order's prestige and reputation (Hutson, 741). The rules, which the women agreed to maintain, show the lack of individual power that the women held. The women were completely patrons of the men, at least in the first generation of appointments of *muqaddamas*. They only initiated and led other women, and could not perform *wazifa*, a central practice to the Tijani order. In

the second generation, the women primarily initiate women, as they do not want to upset the harmony by initiating men. They receive their initiator status only from men, and do not pass it along, which goes with the principle of prestige. Their roles do not present a classical women's empowerment ideal, but rather a negotiating scheme that ultimately elevates their status. The role that the women held in the order allowed them access to political networking and other economic roles because of their association with the brotherhood and their esteemed leadership position (Hutson, 741). As with the women in Senegal, the women seem to understand that in order to create autonomy for themselves, that they must not try to break cultural and societal status quo, but rather use the existing system to ultimately create opportunity. If the women were to try and break away from the agreements that they made, they would be alienated, and unable to fulfill any kind of change or impact. Therefore, the patriarchal bargaining, in which they are engaged serves as a way to propel themselves, religiously, economically, and socially.

As with the first-generation of women initiators in Nigeria, the second-generation women remain from the upper class of society, but there have been important changes in the state, which has greatly increased access and opportunity for them. The second-generation women maintain the four rules, to which the original women agreed and are constantly helping the entire order resist the anti-Sufi assaults coming from Saudi Arabia. None of these women have yet to appoint other women as initiators, even though there is no rule against it. Hutson reported from an interview that the women felt there were no other qualified women. Their actions indicate their adherence to the rule of prestige, therefore not wanting to

overstep their bounds as leaders (Hutson, 476). Changes in education policies both from Islam and Nigeria's standpoints are changing, giving more room for women to pursue education. The increase in education has allowed some women, such as one young second-generation initiator, who has delayed marriage in exchange for higher education (Hutson, 747). The actions of this young woman are contrary to the norms of the state, and it can be perceived that her leadership role within the Tijaniyya order and the women before her in leading positions helped influence her path of autonomy and independence. Sufi brotherhoods in Senegal and in Nigeria possess tremendous political and economic ties (O'Brien, 52), serving as a wonderful networking platform for the connected women.

The agreements and actions of the women Sayidda Zeynabou Mbathie, Sayidda Aida Faye, and the first generations of initiator women in Nigeria, adhere to in order to maintain their position as leaders within the Tijaniyya orders in their respective countries may seem completely paradoxical to empowering them, but understanding the hidden meanings of their actions and the benefits of their bargaining reveals the autonomy and agency, which these women are gaining. The results of the women's roles speak for themselves. The power can be felt through their stories, and even more so from their very words. One cannot place judgments based on a certain type of viewpoint, but allow the individuals living in their environment to determine their path to justice. The understanding of alternatives to Western liberal feminist thought will reveal the empowerment, which these women and others are imagining and engaging in.

The marabouts discussed previously present an excellent example of women wielding extensive authority and independence, Ndeye Meissa Ndiaye and Coumba Keita, exhibit conformation to a gendered model through their claims of “being like a man” and keeping themselves from menstruating. Much of liberal feminism harks at the ideal of women as perfect and equal to men. There is not an idea of traits of one sex being superior to another, but that all parties are equal. Therefore women should fight for their rights as women, rather than “acting like men” to achieve their goals. Additionally, many Western liberal feminists would not accept the idea of the women discussed above submitting to men, with an ultimate goal of achieving their goals. However, to the women carrying out these maneuvers, they understand that challenging of the system is not what of interest to them, and there is ultimately a resistance to the ideology of the liberal feminist movement. Even as colonial powers have physically left many countries of the Global South, there is a continuing influence by the same countries economically, commercially, and ideologically. Globalization continued and bolstered the influence of certain countries onto others.

“Third-world feminism” is one response to the pervasive liberal feminism. Like Black Feminism, it serves a reaction to liberal feminism’s lack of attention to race, class, and location as being factors to women’s subordination. It focuses on the struggles against slavery, colonialism, imperialism, and racism that women face in their everyday lives.

Third World, or indigenous, feminism, holds out the hope that different feminisms, grounded in the specificities of women's multifarious experiences, may provide the basis for a comparative global feminism that celebrates difference without abandoning the search for common political and intellectual agendas (Connelly, Li, Macdonald, and Parpart, 132).

The actions of the Sufi women in Senegal and Nigeria exemplify the global feminism described above, and it is useful to not only understand the Islamic frameworks that the women are working in, but also to understand the colonial and indigenous cultural influences as well.

Understanding the status of women prior to Islam and other forms of colonization is critical to understanding the form of feminism employed by these women. Prior to Islam's entry to West Africa, women were able to hold many public roles. For example, Njoh explains how "they were involved in matters of taxation, the construction of maintenance of roads, drinking wells and streams, and conflict resolution" (4). In addition to the aforementioned activities, women held high-profile leadership roles in local and regional government systems, specifically within the Wolof and Serer ethnic groups within Senegal. Within the Wolof and Serer kingdoms, powerful women existed, even if only because of their blood or marital ties. However, if one was to examine the origins of men in power, their connections were also due to their kinships. Historians note that the Tukolor kingdom was Islamicized in its earliest existence, possibly accounting for its patriarchal nature. It was not until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that the Wolof and Serer would become Islamicized. The Quran introduced legal rights such as inheritance, marriage, and divorce for women aimed at improving their status (Esposito, 4). However, certain cultural norms carried with the spread of Islam did not impact women positively. Certain groups within the Wolof and Serer ethnicities experienced periods of times when they lived in a completely matriarchal and matrilineal manner. Therefore, changing cultural values and beliefs brought

tremendous change to the women living in Senegal and other parts of West Africa (Creevey, 273).

With the arrival of Islam, it was not appropriate for women to be actively viewed in public, so quickly women receded from political, religious, and community leadership roles or any activities outside of the home such as going to the market (Njoh, 6). The introduction of Islam into the Middle East entered into an existing strong patriarchal context preceded by the male-centered faiths of Christianity and Judaism (Ahmed, 41). The entire Middle East operated under a classical patriarchy system, but the African context of patriarchy looked much different (Kandiyoti, 278), accounting for the greater patriarchal impact of the introduction of Islam into Sub-Saharan Africa. Marriage became the primary path for status for women. Individual women possessed little identity separate from their husbands. Patriarchy was emphasized and it was the man's duty to provide for his wife, so much so that she should not be seen in public. Women, therefore, became entirely dependent on men. Inherent to African cultural norms, men were not responsible for providing for their wives or children. Women provided for themselves and the children including school fees, food, and housing (Kandiyoti, 277). Colonization created new institutions that ultimately led to a strict sexual division of labor, restricting women's economic independence.

In addition to the spreading cultural values of Islam, French colonization impacted women especially in regards to their economic agency. The French emphasized and promoted the production of peanuts, a cash crop, transforming the existent agricultural system. The story of Alinesitoué, a Diola woman prophet,

reveals an occurrence of woman's resistance to the changes made by the French. She implored elements and rituals from "Traditional African religion" to carry out her movement. She urged men in her community in southern Senegal to refuse the cultivation of peanuts and return to the production of rice. The peanut cultivation required men to be diverted from their previous position in assisting with rice production. Rice is the staple food for people in the community, and women were left to continue its production without the help of men. Her resistance ultimately led to her arrest by the French, but her impact was long lasting (Baum, 186). The Diola woman's use of indigenous religious institutions to enact her revolt against the French can provide insight to the power, which women held in indigenous society. Her actions illustrate the power and equality that existed prior to colonization. Whether, the French realized it or not, they removed any authority that women previously held in the agricultural community. Similar "modernization" programs throughout the world in the 20th century not only negatively impacted entire societies through increased wealth inequalities, decrease in living standards, and increase in violence, but particularly impacted the position of women (Reddock, 31). Conversion and joining of brotherhoods increased greatly as a political move to form resistance against the colonial powers. The rise in the population associated with certain Sufi brotherhoods is another factor associated with decreased power of women in West Africa during that time (Creevey, 278). The parallels between opposition to the French and its policies can easily be connected to the aversion to western liberal feminism.

An article entitled, "We don't want equality, we want our rights," voices the resistance and opinions of a group of Muslim women living in Senegal concerning their ideas regarding gender relations. "Women's advancement" is a major part of Senegal's overall development plan, but women's projects that are created are normally marginalized and separate from larger men centered projects. Because of this and the fight to reform the family code which gives explanations on marriage, divorce, inheritance, and other issues that impact women greatly, there are many grassroots movement for achieving equal rights as those for men, but not focusing on gender equality. The women involve feel that they contribute as much if not more than men, and they want to achieve the same legal rights and responsibilities. Within this movement, there is strong emphasis on maintaining a strong Senegalese cultural identity and not simply copying gender models that exist in the West. Many argue, however, that it is the culture shaping the oppression of women. They have received support of major Sufi leaders, markedly the head of the Tijani Order in Senegal, Cissé. The argument of fighting for equality of rights hits on a key idea reverberated through the mentality of many Sufi women leaders, that they do not wish to challenge the idea of differences among genders, but rather that both should have equal access and rights (Sieveking, 35).

It is hard to determine whether one type of feminism should be privileged over another, but I do not think this is the goal of Third World Feminism. I think its aim is to point out that there cannot be one standard for all women to attain to because women throughout the world exist in varied contexts, facing a wide range of challenges that can be based in ethnicity, class, social status, and geographical

location. Clear issues would arise if these women's perspectives were transferred to a different social environment, but for their goals of operating within their cultural context, the women's actions and words express clear feminist attitudes and ideas that are transforming their lives and the lives of girls, women, boys, and men around them.

The feelings expressed by these women in Senegal reverberate similarly to women's movements throughout the globe, aiming to resist the Western feminist approach, which is carried into various environments, in many ways belittling indigenous belief structures. In recent years, conferences of indigenous women occurred, allowing a space for them to discuss their plans of actions of restoring the position of women in their society by embracing indigenous values and belief structures (Marcos, 26). Many of these movements are based on the principle of duality, which acknowledges differences in roles for men and women, but considers them of equal importance; therefore equal status to both men and women. It does not aim to produce societies where there is no longer a gender standard, but rather to afford equal opportunities and rights to all members, which have been lost due to cultural impositions through colonization, religious change, or other means. The actions and mentality of the various Sufi women leaders exemplify the changing ideal of feminism throughout the world. The women are influencing the ideal of feminism by employing indigenous values as a conscious resistance to colonization, and continuing influence through globalization, to establish their authority and agency through their roles as spiritual guides within the Tijani order in Senegal and Nigeria.

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