

The Tijaniyya Order in Laghouat and Its Relations with the Ottoman Rulers

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Abstract

Sufi orders were among the most influential religious and social institutions in the Maghreb. They attracted wide circles of followers. Each order developed a distinct doctrinal orientation, devotional practice, and network of shaykhs. The Tijaniyya became one of the most prominent orders in the region. Its emergence was closely associated with Ahmad al-Tijani and with the Laghouat area, especially the town of Ain Madhi. The celebrated Tijani zawiya in Ain Madhi now preserves a rich archival heritage. Its collections contain hundreds of manuscripts. This makes the town an important centre for research on the origins of the order and its relations with Ottoman authority. Those relations were marked by several confrontations with provincial officials, including Salah Bey and Mohammed al-Kebir. This study examines the role of the Tijaniyya in Laghouat and the lasting traces of its presence. It first presents the historical and geographical setting of Laghouat. It then outlines the life of Ahmad al-Tijani and the foundations of the Tijaniyya order. The article also analyses the nature of the order's relations with Ottoman rulers. It traces the main stages of conflict and concludes with the Tijani revolt against Ottoman rule.

Keywords: Sufi orders; Tijaniyya; Laghouat; Ain Madhi; Ottoman rulers.

Introduction

Every region possesses a civilizational heritage that gives its inhabitants a sense of historical depth. Laghouat is one such region in Algeria. Its religious and social life has taken many forms. Ain Madhi is especially important because of its long history, fortified settlements, and zawiyas. The Tijani zawiya of Ain Madhi has become a destination for researchers and followers of the order. It is associated with Shaykh Abu al-Abbas Ahmad al-Tijani and with the disciples who spread his teachings throughout the region. The order later reached many parts of the Maghreb. Its expansion, however, brought it into conflict with Ottoman authority. The dey regarded it as a rebellious order, and its followers became involved in several uprisings against the ruling administration. The study therefore addresses the following questions:

- What religious heritage from the early modern period is preserved in the Laghouat region?
- What foundations shaped the Tijaniyya as a religious phenomenon in the region?
- What were the main features of the relationship between the Tijaniyya and the Ottoman rulers, and why did the order rebel against Ottoman authority in Algeria?
- Did Mohammed al-Kebir al-Tijani inflict significant losses on Ottoman authority during his campaign against the Bey of Oran?
- Was the Tijaniyya, as part of Laghouat's heritage, recognised by all or some scholars? Did the pressure placed on Ain Madhi end the Tijani mission, its disciples, and its zawiya?

1. Laghouat: Historical and Geographical Background

1.1. Historical Overview of Laghouat

Laghouat is one of Algeria's oldest towns. It was once administered by the local bey and later fell briefly under the authority of the Beylik of Oran. Today, the town lies on National Road No. 1 and is often described as the gateway to the Sahara. It stands beside Wadi M'zi, one of the major watercourses that extend into the desert. The wadi is fed by springs in the Amour Mountains. Laghouat was built along the two slopes of Jabal Tizi Qararin¹.

Several accounts explain the origin of the town's name. Ibn Khaldun linked it to the Berber tribe of Banu Laghouat, which inhabited the area. This tribe descended from the Maghrawa, a branch of the Zenata. He wrote that "the Laghouat tribe is found around al-Bayadh and is known as Ksal." The French writer Jean Melia argued in his 1923 book, *Laghouat et les maisons entourees de jardins*, that the town derived its name from its verdant setting. In Arabic, ghouta denotes a flat and luxuriantly green place². Mufdi Zakaria described the town in the following lines:

O father of the two Ghoutas, by the splendour of Syria,
Our Laghouat makes the Ghouta of Syria seem modest;
Its fragrant gardens are like musk pods,
Diffusing their perfume across the air³.

1.2. Geographical Location of Laghouat

Laghouat lies at 2 degrees 55 minutes east longitude and 33 degrees 48 minutes north latitude. It is about 410 kilometres from Algiers. The province is bordered by Tiaret to the north, Ghardaia to the south, Djelfa to the east, and El Bayadh to the west.

The town was built on the northern and southern heights of a mountain, while Wadi M'zi runs along its eastern side. Its fortifications included two large towers that dominated the top of the plateau and were connected to the surrounding walls. A channel was diverted from the wadi to irrigate the gardens. These gardens resembled two wooded belts extending for about three kilometres to the north and south of the town.

The province includes part of the Saharan Atlas. Around Aflou, the mountains reach an elevation of about 1,700 metres. The province also contains approximately 47,095 hectares of vegetation cover, although it continues to face the problem of desertification⁴.

2. Shaykh Ahmad al-Tijani and the Tijaniyya Order

Every Sufi order in the Maghreb has a founder. The Tijaniyya is closely associated with Ahmad al-Tijani.

2.1. Ahmad al-Tijani

Sufism, in the form that became familiar in the Islamic world, developed within the social and intellectual changes that followed the Islamic conquests. The expansion of the Muslim polity and contact between the conquerors and the Berber population encouraged the growth of scholarly circles across the Maghreb. The emergence of influential Sufi figures also contributed to the development of

¹. Khadidja Tabaibiya and Halima Saada, "The Tijani Movement in Algeria during the Nineteenth Century: Laghouat as a Case Study," master's thesis, Department of History, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of 8 May 1945, Guelma, Algeria, 2015-2016, p. 39

². Ibid., p. 40.

³. Ibid.

⁴. Ibid., p. 38.

mystical practice⁵. Many Sufi orders consequently appeared in the region. One of the most important was the Tijaniyya, which took its name from Shaykh Ahmad al-Tijani.

Ahmad al-Tijani was Abu al-Abbas Shaykh Ahmad al-Tijani ibn Muhammad, with the first vowel of Muhammad pronounced as a fatha, ibn al-Mukhtar al-Sharif al-Hasani⁶. His lineage was traced to Imam Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya ibn Abd Allah al-Kamil,⁷ and through al-Husayn to Imam Ali and Fatima al-Zahra, the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him⁸.

The founder of the order was born in Ain Madhi, west of Laghouat, in 1150 AH. There he memorised the Qur'an and studied Arabic and Maliki jurisprudence with local teachers⁹.

He memorised the Qur'an at the age of seven under Sidi Isa Baakkaz al-Madawi al-Tijani, a teacher of children. He then studied the foundational, applied, and literary sciences with Shaykh Sidi al-Mabrouk ibn al-Afiya al-Madawi al-Tijani. He eventually reached the level required to teach and issue legal opinions. He later turned towards Sufism and acquired extensive knowledge of its disciplines¹⁰.

His parents died on the same day during a plague that struck the region. He then travelled in search of knowledge. He went first to Tlemcen, where he met several scholars. He later continued to Morocco and settled for a time in Fez. The city attracted students from many regions. There he met leading Sufi figures and studied with them, including Shaykh al-Tayyib al-Wazzani¹¹.

Ahmad al-Tijani later returned to Tlemcen and decided to perform the pilgrimage. He passed through the Zawawa region, where he received the Khalwatiyya path from Muhammad ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Azhari. He also stopped in Tunis and Egypt and learned from several pious scholars.¹² After his return, he travelled to the Sahara in 1196 AH/1782 CE and settled in Boussemghoun. From there, he travelled to Touat, the lands of the Sudan, and Tunis. He then returned to Boussemghoun. There he experienced a spiritual opening and received authorisation to transmit the litanies of his order.

Between 1196 and 1212 AH/1782 and 1799 CE, he established the main foundations of the order.¹³ Several works are attributed to him. They include al-Irshadat al-Rabbaniyya bi-l-Futuh al-Ilahiyya min Fayd al-Hadra al-Ahmadiyya al-Tijaniyya, a commentary on the Hamziyya poem by al-Bahri in

⁵. Marwa al-Tijani, "The Use of Modern Communication Technologies by Sufi Orders: A Field Study of the Tijaniyya Order," master's thesis in Islamic Sciences, Department of Humanities, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of El Oued, 2013-2014, pp. 6-7

⁶. Saida Zizah, "The Phenomenon of Sufi Orders in Algeria: The Tijaniyya as a Model," Eleventh International Conference on Sufism in Islam and Contemporary Challenges, Colonel Ahmed Draia African University, Adrar, Algeria, 9-11 November 2008, p. 564 .

⁷. Tayeb Yousfi, "Scholarly Relations between Algeria and Tunisia during the Ottoman Period: The Letters of Tijani Imams to the Notables of Southern Tunisia as a Case Study," doctoral dissertation in Modern and Contemporary History, Department of Humanities, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Djillali Liabes University, Sidi Bel Abbes, Algeria, 2019-2020, p. 277 .

⁸. Zizah, previously cited work, p. 564.

⁹. Salah Mouayed al-Oqbi, Sufi Orders and Zawiyas in Algeria: Their History and Activities, no edition stated, Dar al-Buraq, Beirut, Lebanon, n.d., p. 175 .

¹⁰. Yousfi, previously cited work, p. 277.

¹¹. Al-Oqbi, previously cited work, p. 175.

¹². Zizah, previously cited work, p. 565.

¹³. Yousfi, previously cited work, p. 278.

praise of the Prophet. Another work is Jawahir al-Ma'ani wa Bulugh al-Amani fi Fayd Sidi Abi al-Abbas Ahmad al-Tijani, which he dictated to his disciple Ali Harazim.

Al-Tijani spent seventeen years in Fez, where the number of his disciples increased. He remained there until his death on a Thursday in Shawwal 1230 AH, corresponding to 19 September 1815. He was about eighty years old and was buried in his well-known zawiya in the Blida quarter.¹⁴

2.2. The Tijaniyya Order

2.2.1. The Concept of Sufism

a. Linguistic Definition

The words tasawwuf and Sufi are widely used, but writers and researchers have not agreed on their exact etymology. Neither term appears in the Qur'an or the Prophetic traditions. Historical accounts also indicate that no group in the Prophet's lifetime was known by this name. Mystical and ascetic tendencies are found in different religions and civilisations. The Arabic term itself is therefore described by some writers as a later coinage whose derivation cannot be established through the usual rules of Arabic morphology.¹⁵

b. Technical Definition

Sufism is an individual spiritual experience rather than a single state shared by all people. Each Sufi follows a particular method and expresses the experience in a different way. For this reason, definitions of Sufism have varied.

Al-Ghazali defined Sufism as "a comprehensive term for the meanings of asceticism, together with further qualities and numerous additions without which a person is not a Sufi, even if he is an ascetic." When Sumnun was asked about Sufism, he replied: "You possess nothing, and nothing possesses you." Ruwaym ibn Ahmad described it as "holding fast to poverty and need, practising generosity and self-sacrifice, and renouncing self-assertion and personal choice."¹⁶

Sufism is not a separate creed or religion that requires a person to leave Islam. It is an intensive practice of worship and obedience and a developed expression of asceticism and devotion¹⁷.

2.2.2. A Brief Overview of the Tijaniyya

The Tijaniyya was founded in Ain Madhi,¹⁸ about sixty kilometres from Laghouat. The order takes its name from its founder, Abu al-Abbas Ahmad al-Tijani. It appeared in Algeria in 1196 AH/1781 CE. Its shaykhs did not claim access to hidden religious secrets. Instead, they and their followers adopted a defined wird composed of invocations and prayers.

The movement drew on the Sufi thought associated with figures such as Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, Ibn Arabi, and al-Hallaj. It began in the Laghouat region and later spread through Fez, where it attracted followers from many areas.¹⁹

¹⁴. Tabaibiya and Saada, previously cited work, pp. 15-16.

¹⁵. Yousfi, previously cited work, p. 186.

¹⁶. Ibid., pp. 187-188.

¹⁷. Ibid., p. 189.

¹⁸. Ain Madhi lies south of the Amour Mountains and is now an administrative district of Laghouat Province. Accounts differ on the origin of its name. The word ain refers to a spring or well used for irrigation. Madhi is linked to Madhi ibn Yaqrub, who is said to have been an Arab commander who came to the area during the Fatimid period, built its first fort, and dug the spring that later bore his name. The Tijaniyya was subsequently associated with the Tajana, a well-known Berber tribe in Algeria. See Zizah, previously cited work, p. 567.

¹⁹. Tabaibiya and Saada, previously cited work, pp. 17-18.

The order gave considerable attention to religious education. Its zawiyas taught Qur'anic memorisation, Prophetic tradition, Sufism, rhetoric, grammar, jurisprudence, and other disciplines. These activities were intended to raise the educational level of the children associated with the zawiyas and of all students who attended them. Prominent Tijani shaykhs included Abu al-Abbas al-Tijani and Shaykh Ali al-Tamassini.²⁰

The Tijaniyya also promoted peaceful coexistence within society, whether in Ain Madhi, Laghouat, or elsewhere. The founder repeatedly stressed these values in his letters and addresses. He urged his disciples not to wish harm upon others, even inwardly. He encouraged them to answer wrongdoing with kindness, forgive offences, accept apologies, endure harm patiently, and respond in the best manner with gentleness. He also advised them to pray frequently to God and to avoid searching for the faults of other Muslims.²¹

2.2.3. Organisational Structure of the Tijaniyya

The Tijaniyya rested on a hierarchical structure with the following positions:

- The shaykh: He stood at the head of the hierarchy. When Ahmad al-Tijani was asked in Ain Madhi to define the shaykh, he replied that this was a person from whom all veils had been lifted, allowing direct and certain contemplation of the Divine Presence.
- The khalifa: He occupied the second rank and inherited authority over the order. He was often called the senior khalifa. Ahmad al-Tijani entrusted this position to his muqaddam, al-Hajj Ali al-Tamassini.
- The muqaddam al-muqaddamin: This office existed in regions where many muqaddams were active. Its holder spread the order and transmitted the Tijani wird.
- The muqaddam: He represented the khalifa and acted on his behalf.
- The raqib: The holders of this position served as intermediaries between the muqaddam and the disciples.
- The disciples: They formed the lowest level of the Tijani hierarchy.²²

2.2.4. Conditions for Membership in the Tijaniyya

The sources list several conditions for joining the Tijaniyya:

- The disciple must receive the dhikr or litanies from an authorised shaykh.
- The disciple must completely renounce any previous Sufi order.
- The disciple must not leave the Tijaniyya after joining it.
- The disciple must not visit saints, whether living or deceased.
- Love for the shaykh must remain constant until death.
- The disciple must never insult or abuse the shaykh.
- The daily wird must be maintained until death.
- The basmala must be recited in all prayers.
- The disciple must honour both parents and should join the order with their consent.

²⁰. Yousfi, previously cited work, p. 246.

²¹. Masoud Ali Zaitouna, "The Role of the Tijaniyya Order in Moderation, the Spread of Islam, and the Achievement of Security," International Conference on Moderation in the Islamic West and Its Impact on the Spread of Islam in Africa and Europe, Institute of Islamic Sciences, University of El Oued, December 2017, p. 744 .

²². Tabaibiya and Saada, previously cited work, p. 28.

- The disciple should reject those who reject the shaykh and love those who love him.
- No one may transmit the wurd without valid authorisation.
- The five daily prayers must be performed on time and in congregation.²³

3. The Nature of Relations between the Tijaniyya and the Ottoman Rulers

During the eighteenth century, Ottoman authorities tightened restrictions on Sufi orders and religious figures after the Darqawiyya revolt. Ahmad al-Tijani was among those affected. Under pressure, he eventually left for Morocco²⁴.

At the same time, Ottoman rulers faced an acute need for revenue because maritime spoils had declined. International conditions had changed, and the balance of power in the Mediterranean had shifted. The rulers therefore turned towards the interior and imposed new taxes on the population. This policy brought them into conflict with Sufi orders and zawiyas, including the Tijaniyya, the zawiya²⁵ of Ain Madhi, and its disciples²⁶ in Laghouat²⁷.

The authorities collected these taxes through appointed khalifas. They usually arrived at the end of spring and demanded levies that were often experienced as unlawful exactions and the plunder of Muslim property. This practice differed from the earlier collection of kharaj, zakat, and tithes according to recognised legal principles. The resulting burden exposed the injustice suffered by the population and the zawiyas, and it encouraged resistance²⁸.

Hostility and confrontation then grew between Ottoman officials and the followers of the Tijaniyya. The authorities accused members of the order of rebellion and deviation and sometimes fought them by force. They repeatedly seized the wealth and property of Tijani communities in Ain Madhi. The town possessed considerable resources because it controlled part of the Saharan trade and lay on major caravan routes. Its prosperity attracted the attention of Ottoman beys, who imposed further taxes. These conditions defined the relationship between the Tijaniyya and Ottoman authority in Algeria²⁹.

4. Stages of Conflict between the Tijaniyya and the Ottoman Rulers in Laghouat

The following campaigns were among the most important military actions directed by Ottoman rulers against the Tijaniyya:

²³. Ibid., p. 29.

²⁴. Abu al-Qasim Saadallah, *The Cultural History of Algeria*, vol. 1, 1st ed., Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, Beirut, Lebanon, 1998, p. 223 .

²⁵. A zawiya is an institution that developed in Muslim society before the Ottoman period in Algeria. In its simplest meaning, it is a place of retreat and seclusion where worshippers and pious people gather. Shaykhs meet disciples there for organised circles of remembrance. See Marwa al-Tijani, previously cited work, p. 17.

²⁶. Disciples form the base of the hierarchy. In the Maghreb they are commonly called murids, while in the Mashriq the term dervishes is often used. Their names vary between orders. In the Qadiriyya they are called the poor, while in the Tijaniyya they are known as the beloved. See Marwa al-Tijani, previously cited work, p. 16.

²⁷. Tabaibiya and Saada, previously cited work, p. 44.

²⁸. Ahmed Tawfiq al-Madani, *Uthman Pasha, Dey of Algiers, 1766-1791*, 2nd ed., National Book Establishment, Algiers, 1986, p. 111 .

²⁹. Tabaibiya and Saada, previously cited work, pp. 44-45.

4.1. Bey Mohammed al-Kebir's Campaign against Laghouat

Mohammed al-Kebir³⁰ led the first campaign in 1784. Its purpose was to place the inhabitants of Ain Madhi under the authority of the Western Beylik. On his way to Ain Madhi, he forced villages to pay outstanding taxes. At that time, the shaykh of the order was residing in Boussemghoun.

Bey Mohammed al-Kebir summoned the local scholars. They tried to resolve the dispute through reason and conciliation. He pardoned the inhabitants but imposed a new annual tax of 188 riyals on Ain Madhi and Laghouat.³¹ Ibn Hattal al-Tlemceni described the bey's arrival in Ain Madhi as follows:

"He then set out for Ain Madhi and reached it in three hours. When its people saw his cavalry appear and his banners approach, fear seized their hearts and their minds were unsettled. They closed their houses, climbed the walls, cried out, declared obedience, and demanded judgement according to the law... The scholars were allowed to come forward. They greeted him and asked him to show compassion, consider their condition, and release them from the first levy, which they could neither afford nor pay. After hearing them and investigating their situation, he was moved by compassion and imposed a charge lower than the first... The next morning, the people of Ain Madhi began paying their levy in horses, servants, and money. They paid part of it and completed the remainder the following day..."³²

4.2. Salah Bey's Campaign against Laghouat in 1785

Salah Bey³³ organised a campaign against Laghouat after a group in the Amour Mountains rebelled. The force travelled through Ain Beida and then Aflou. After compelling the inhabitants of the Amour Mountains to return to obedience, Salah Bey moved towards Laghouat. He attacked and occupied the town by force and brought it under Ottoman authority. Despite repeated Ottoman campaigns, the Tijani movement continued to spread.³⁴

4.3. Bey Uthman's Campaign against Ain Madhi in 1201 AH/1787 CE

In 1201 AH/1787 CE, Uthman Bey, the son of Mohammed al-Kebir, launched another campaign against Ain Madhi. He demanded payment of the tax imposed by his father. As pressure on Shaykh Ahmad al-Tijani increased, the shaykh left for Fez in 1798. On his arrival, he informed Sultan Moulay

³⁰. Bey Mohammed al-Kebir was Mohammed ibn Uthman al-Kurdi. In western Algeria he was known as Mohammed al-Akhal or Mohammed al-Kebir, and his kunya was Abu Uthman. He served as khalifa in Miliana, later became bey of Titteri and its surroundings, and eventually became bey of the Western Beylik. See Ismail Ziouch, "Aspects of the Religious Policy of Bey Mohammed al-Kebir in the Western Beylik, 1779-1797," *Dirasat wa Abhath*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1 January 2020, p. 381.

³¹. Tabaibiya and Saada, previously cited work, pp. 45-46.

³². Kaddour Boujellal, "Manifestations of Rapprochement and Rupture between Scholars and Ottoman Authority in the Western Beylik during the Period of the Deys, 1671-1830," doctoral dissertation in Modern History, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Oran 1, Algeria, 2016-2017, p. 333.

³³. Salah Bey was born in Izmir in 1725. He travelled to Algeria at the age of sixteen and joined the military. He became known for courage and sound judgement and held several offices, including khalifa of the bey and, from 1771, Bey of the East. See al-Madani, previously cited work, p. 133.

³⁴. Tabaibiya and Saada, previously cited work, p. 46.

Ismail that Ottoman injustice had caused his departure. The sultan welcomed him and granted him a residence known as Dar al-Miraya³⁵.

Ahmad al-Tijani nevertheless wanted his sons to return to their birthplace in Ain Madhi. He entrusted them to Ali al-Tamassini and said: "Only the desert suits my sons. There they will live and prosper³⁶."

4.4. Bey Hassan's First Campaign against Ain Madhi in 1235 AH/1820 CE

Dey Hussein ordered Bey Hassan Pasha to campaign against Ain Madhi and arrest al-Tijani's two sons, Mohammed al-Kebir and Mohammed al-Habib. When they heard of the expedition, both men left the town. Mohammed al-Kebir went to Tamassine, while Mohammed al-Habib travelled to Boussemghoun.

The bey found neither man when he reached Ain Madhi. He therefore besieged the town for one month. After bombarding it for fourteen hours in an attempt to break through its defences, he demanded a payment of 100 riyals, together with a number of burnouses and haiks, as the price for lifting the siege. Once the payment was received, he withdrew³⁷.

4.5. Bey Hassan's Second Campaign against Ain Madhi in 1240 AH/1825 CE

Bey Hassan attacked Ain Madhi again in an effort to break the strength of the Tijaniyya. He besieged the town for one month, forcing its inhabitants to seek peace. He accepted an agreement that imposed a new annual tax of 500 riyals and an immediate payment of 2,000 riyals. The heavy burden placed on Ain Madhi and Laghouat left the population with little alternative but to revolt against Ottoman authority³⁸.

These were the main Ottoman campaigns against the Tijaniyya, especially against Ain Madhi in the Laghouat region. The following map traces the routes of these campaigns.³⁹

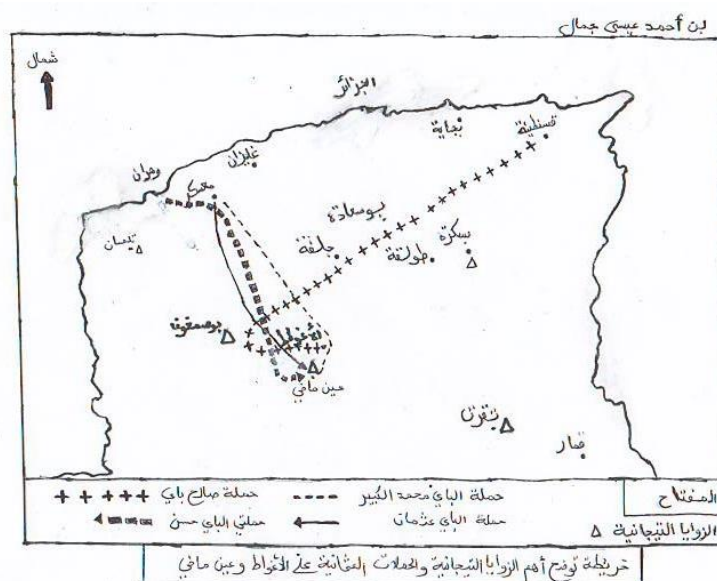


Figure 1. Major Tijani zawiyas and Ottoman military campaigns in the Laghouat region. The original map is in Arabic.

³⁵. Boujellal, previously cited work, p. 334.

³⁶. Tabaibiya and Saada, previously cited work, p. 47.

³⁷. Ibid., pp. 48-49.

³⁸. Ibid., pp. 49-50.

³⁹. The map was prepared by doctoral researcher Djamel Ben Ahmed Aissa.

5. The Tijani Revolt against Ottoman Authority

5.1. Causes of Mohammed al-Kebir al-Tijani's Revolt

The Ottoman administration in Algeria was not a representative government. Rulers relied on officials and ministers who supervised military forces on land and sea. The country remained very poor because its resources were not adequately developed.

In this setting, oppression and contempt for the local population spread. Political authority was monopolised, while indigenous inhabitants were excluded from senior offices. They were admitted only to minor posts of little importance. High governmental offices were reserved for the Janissary class. Earlier persecution of Shaykh Ahmad al-Tijani and the restrictions imposed on him further deepened resentment.

Bey Hassan also attacked the zawiya of Ain Madhi in order to weaken it. He feared that it might rise against him, as the followers of the Darqawiyya had done. He therefore maintained the siege until an agreement was reached and a financial penalty was imposed⁴⁰.

5.2. The Beginning of Mohammed al-Kebir al-Tijani's Revolt

Mohammed al-Kebir al-Tijani⁴¹ was determined to revolt against Hassan, the Bey of the West, even if this required confronting him in his own stronghold.⁴² He contacted the Hachem tribes and sought their support. He then led a large force from the Sahara against the bey. The army included nine hundred men from the Tajajna.

The force reached Ghriss in the autumn of 1242 AH and camped at Frouha on a Sunday, without hesitation or delay. Mohammed al-Kebir sent al-Hawwari to the bey. The Hachem declared their obedience to the Tijani leader. He also wrote to Banu Amir, Banu Shaqran, the Burjiya, the Gharaba, the Zamala, and the Dawair.

The last four groups were makhzen tribes loyal to the bey and refused to submit. Banu Amir, Banu Shaqran, and other groups waited to see which side would prevail before choosing whom to follow⁴³. On Monday morning, Mohammed al-Kebir al-Tijani advanced towards Mascara. The inhabitants met him in battle, and many people died on both sides. Despite fierce resistance, he eventually gained control of several parts of the town⁴⁴.

When Bey Hassan received the news, he hurried towards Mascara. On the way, he bribed the Hachem commanders and paid them to withdraw. Their departure left Mohammed al-Kebir in a difficult position with only three hundred fighters. The Tijani combatants nevertheless fought with great courage, even though they were not accustomed to the local terrain.

The fighting continued until Mohammed al-Kebir al-Tijani and his entire force were killed in the autumn of 1242 AH/1827 CE. Bey Hassan sent Mohammed al-Kebir's head and sword to Dey Hussein and displayed the heads of other Tijani fighters as a warning. His conduct then became more

⁴⁰. Rafika Toumi, "Movements Opposing Ottoman Authority in Algeria, 1518-1830," bachelor's dissertation in General History, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Dr Moulay Tahar University, 2016-2017, pp. 17-18 .

⁴¹. Mohammed al-Kebir al-Tijani was the eldest son of Shaykh Ahmad al-Tijani. He was born in Ain Madhi in 1196 AH, moved to Fez with his father, and married there. He died in Mascara in 1827 during the battle against Bey Hassan of Oran. See Boujellal, previously cited work, p. 335.

⁴². Tabaibiya and Saada, previously cited work, p. 50.

⁴³. Toumi, previously cited work, pp. 18-19.

⁴⁴. Tabaibiya and Saada, previously cited work, p. 51.

severe, and he ordered the killing of several men associated with zawiyas and scholarship. After Mohammed al-Kebir's death, he was succeeded by Mohammed al-Saghir⁴⁵ al-Tijani⁴⁶.

5.3. Consequences of the Tijani Revolt in Laghouat

The revolt caused substantial material and human losses for the ruling authority. Several senior supporters of Bey Hassan were killed while fighting Hachem tribes allied with Mohammed al-Kebir al-Tijani. The Ottoman rulers did not yield, despite the difficult conditions facing the country. They regarded the rebels as a major threat to internal security and to the Ottoman presence in Algeria.

A letter from Bey Hassan to the commander of Miliana illustrates this view:

"The good news we bring you, God willing, is that we fell upon the camp of the unjust Ibn al-Tijani and his supporters. We killed him, killed his khalifa, and cut off both their heads. We also killed everyone who was with him in his camp. Not one of them escaped. More than a thousand heads were taken. We seized all their horses, camels, tents, and other possessions. Praise be to God for this blessed news. The people have been delivered from his injustice and corruption. We have now informed you. Peace be upon you, by order of the honoured lord Hassan Bey. May God protect him. Amen⁴⁷."

The Tijani revolt also divided scholars. Some supported it, while others opposed it. Among its critics was Shaykh Muhammad ibn Abd Allah al-Jilali, who rejected several teachings and beliefs associated with the Tijaniyya. By contrast, Abu Hamid al-Mushrifi, a scholar from Mascara, supported the popular revolts led by zawiya and marabout figures in the Western Beylik during the early nineteenth century. He expressed this position even though his work was written after the beginning of French occupation⁴⁸.

The threat posed by the Tijaniyya reached the seat of the Ottoman caliphate. Ottoman officials consequently developed deep hostility towards the teachings and beliefs of the order. Tijani followers continued to face pressure even after the French occupation of Algeria in 1830.

Researcher Kaddour Boujellal discovered a document in the Overseas Archives at Aix-en-Provence, France. It indicates that groups loyal to the Ottomans continued to harass Tijani communities after those communities had gained influence over Saharan routes and caravans. The document is a letter from Tijani Tuareg of the Ahaggar to General de la Roque, the governor of Constantine. They asked the French administration to pressure the government in Istanbul to recover camels lost by members of the Faghas and Imghasaten tribes after an attack near Ghadames by al-Hatman, Awlad Bu Sayf, and al-Zawayid, groups described as loyal to the Ottomans⁴⁹.

The letter reads as follows:

"To the esteemed and powerful lord, the General, governor of Constantine and the territories under it, including Touggourt and El Oued. Peace be upon you, and God's mercy and blessings. We inform you of the calamity that befell us near Ghadames. Men were

⁴⁵. Mohammed al-Saghir al-Tijani was Mohammed al-Habib. He was born in Fez in 1802. He assumed leadership of the Tijaniyya in 1844, after the death of al-Hajj Ali al-Tamassini, and remained its leader until his death in 1853. He was buried in Ain Madhi and left two sons. See Boujellal, previously cited work, p. 335.

⁴⁶. Tabaibiya and Saada, previously cited work, pp. 51-52.

⁴⁷. Boujellal, previously cited work, p. 340.

⁴⁸. Ibid., p. 341.

⁴⁹. Ibid., pp. 342-343.

killed, camels were taken, and homes were plundered among our tribe, the people of Faghas, and among some men from Imghasaten.

The people of Faghas sent us and appointed us to seek your protection and assistance in recovering the camels. They also ask the French state to speak to the Sultan of Istanbul because the attackers are his subjects. They are the tribes of al-Hatman, al-Zawayid, and Awlad Bu Sayf.

When the raid occurred, we were camped in Ghadames, which belongs to the Sultan of Istanbul. We believed ourselves safe because its governor, Muhammad al-Darbas, is the pasha and the Sultan's deputy. We were deceived by this promise of safety, or he himself was mistaken.

We ask your high authority to exert every effort to recover our property from the Ottoman state. We also ask that the Ottoman state punish the raiders who plundered us, took our tents and all their furnishings, and left our families abandoned on the ground.

We hope that the French state will accept this just request and assist us, since we have sought its protection. We ask either for the return of our property itself or for compensation from those who raided us.

Enclosed with this letter is a list of the affected people of Faghas and Imghasaten, together with the total number of camels they lost. Peace. From Muqaddam Abd al-Nabi Bazaghli al-Faghasi, Hindbul al-Faghasi, Bashhaw al-Faghasi, and al-Talib Muhammad, acting on behalf of our tribes. Written on 12 Jumada II 1311 AH."

The episode reflects part of the hardship and insecurity experienced by local communities under Ottoman rule and during the continuing struggle surrounding the Tijaniyya⁵⁰.

The Laghouat region therefore suffered from the late eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century because Ottoman officials viewed it as a valuable source of tax revenue. Its importance derived from its position on caravan routes and from the trade linking northern Algeria, the Sahara, and eastern regions.

The inhabitants of Laghouat remained attached to the Tijaniyya. Ottoman rulers tried to separate them from the order, but they failed to eliminate it. The continued presence of the Tijaniyya in the town, and especially the survival of the Ain Madhi zawiya, provides clear evidence of this endurance.

Conclusion

Laghouat possesses a rich cultural and civilizational heritage that reflects the religious identity of the region. Ain Madhi occupies a central place in this history because it served as a major centre of the Tijaniyya and witnessed repeated confrontations with Ottoman authority. The Tijani zawiya of Ain Madhi remains a visible expression of this heritage.

The conflict intensified during the final decades of Ottoman rule, when the administration imposed increasingly heavy taxes on the population. Ottoman authority was also entering a period of decline in Algeria. A confrontation became likely because the region was prosperous and occupied an important commercial position.

The inhabitants of Laghouat identified strongly with the Tijaniyya. The order encouraged resistance to repeated taxation and to the conduct of Ottoman officials. The Ain Madhi zawiya also performed several social and religious functions. It provided teaching, moral education, devotional practice, food, and shelter. At the same time, it mobilised followers and strengthened collective commitment.

⁵⁰. Ibid., p. 343

These activities provoked a forceful Ottoman response. The role of the zawiya grew during the final period of Ottoman rule, precisely when the influence of the central administration and its provincial rulers was weakening in both eastern and western Algeria.

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