

Cherif Mohamed Ben Abdallah the Leader of Sanusi Movement in Algeria: His Life and Jihad

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Abstract:

Diving into the history of the Algerian desert, especially its southeastern part during the French colonial era, necessitates us, as researchers, to delve into the history of resistances and their prominent leaders. The subject of this research is a model among the leaders of resistance movements that has been extensively discussed, yet remains shrouded in ambiguity—the figure of Cherif Mohamed Ben Abdallah, who led his revolution with the concept of Jihad, after being deeply influenced by the ideas of Sheikh Mohamed Ben Ali al-Sanusi.

Through a historical, descriptive, comparative, and analytical approach, this study aims to uncover the truth about the relationship between the Cherif and the Sanusi order and to elucidate the extent of the ambiguity that still exists. Who was Cherif Mohamed Ben Abdallah, and what was the nature of his relationship with the Sanusi order?

Keywords: Cherif Mohamed Ben Abdallah; Sanusi Order; Sufism.

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1. INTRODUCTION:

We have often heard that Sufi orders played a significant role in the political and battlefields during the French occupation of Algeria. Among them, the Sanusi order actively mobilized resistance in the south of Algeria and rallied spirits. This is evident in the bond between Cherif Mohamed Ben Abdallah and the Sanusi order, which is the subject of this research. We thus inquire into the true identity of Cherif Mohamed Ben Abdallah and the nature of his relationship with the Sanusi order.

By following events and comparing information from both foreign and Arab sources, we aim to demonstrate that Sufi orders in general, and the Sanusi order in particular, formed the backdrop of resistance in the Algerian south due to the nature of the desert and Algerian society.

2. Cherif Mohamed Ben Abdallah as a Figure:

Dr. Kamal Ben Sahraoui mentions that Cherif Mohamed Ben Abdallah, also known as Ibrahim Ben Abi Fares and referred to as "al-Baghdadi," claimed to be a descendant of Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani (Sahraoui, 2020, p. 158), according to Esker. However, Esker merely considered him Ibrahim Ben Abi Fares or Ibrahim Ben Abdallah (Sahraoui, 2020, p. 159), thus highlighting the imprecision surrounding his lineage without addressing the question raised by his Eastern lineage.

Researcher Saud Dahdi comments that Aga al-Ghasoul Moulay Sheikh introduced Mohamed Ben Abdallah as a man of honor and value from the Far Maghreb, citing Ismail al-Arabi: "It is said that they are nobles who came from Sous or the Far Maghreb, and he does not know why he is presented as from the



Far Maghreb" (Dahdi, 2009/2010, p. 57). This points to contradictions and the mysterious nature of this figure.

As an explanation, we find that the resistance leader used religious terms: "glad tidings, jihad, infidels, we raised the Muhammadi banner," to the extent that one of the French officers stated that the resistances in Algeria were led by true or alleged marabouts and that religion drove the law (Khalifi, 2010, p. 263, 264). This means that religion was a means for the resistors to connect with Algerians and convince them of the necessity of jihad as ordained in the Quran.

Abu al-Kasim Saad Allah, may God have mercy on him, informs us that Algerians rose up in defense of their religion, dignity, and homeland, led by nobles claiming to be descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. Thus, they adopted his name "Mohamed Ben Abdallah" and concealed their real names.

Saad Allah explicitly states that the ambiguity surrounding this man's life persists due to the roles he played in the political and military life in Algeria and beyond. According to him, "Arabic documents mention nothing about him, while French documents depict him as an adventurer with boundless ambition, who was one of the Emir's opponents who joined the French in 1841, then turned against them or they against him, leaving Algeria under the pretext of pilgrimage" (Saad Allah, 1992, p. 298, 355).

Saad Allah's words reveal that France used Ben Abdallah against the Emir as part of a divide and rule strategy, exploiting

Ben Abdallah's excessive ambition for its benefit. To learn more about this figure, TRUMELET writes, "In 1840, a year before he first appeared on the political scene, Mohamed Ben Abdallah was a simple and obscure marabout from the children of Sidi Ahmed Ben Youssef of the Ghasoul tribe, living in tents north of Tlemcen, and a student at the Zawiya of Sidi Ya'qub."

He continues, discussing the origin of the Cherif and the truth about his name, saying, "His name was Ibrahim Ben Abi Fares, while others would later know him as Ibrahim Ben Abdallah, only later adopting the title Mohamed Ben Abdallah as his task was to throw us into the sea at the height of the conflict with Abdelkader, his religious reputation grew quickly" (TRUMELET, 1887, p. 79_45).

Abu al-Kasim Saad Allah adds that he was not an unknown Sharif compared to others who raised the flag of Jihad in Algeria. His real name was Ibrahim Ben Abi Fares (Abdul Aziz), with "Abu Fares" being a kunya from his name Abdul Aziz. He added the word "al-Madani" to his official signature as a reference to Medina, where he may have stayed for a while, according to Saad Allah, or to emphasize the religious nature of his movement (Saad Allah, 1992, p. 355). The contradiction in his name between what the French and Algerians say is clear.

Abu al-Kasim Saad Allah informs us that Cherif is considered by some accounts to belong to the family of Oulad Sidi Sheikh and received his education in Oulad Ahmad bin Yusuf near Tlemcen. (Saad Allah, 1992, p. 355) Perhaps because he studied in the Zawiya of Sidi Ya'qub of Oulad Sidi Sheikh, but it remains a slight possibility since, in the beginning, he fought against the leaders of Oulad Sidi Sheikh and, in the last



stages of his resistance, participated in Oulad Sidi Sheikh's resistance; hence, they considered him one of Oulad Sidi Sheikh.

Regarding the nature of the relationship between Cherif Ben Abdallah and Emir Abdelkader, we refer to what "TRUMELET" stated: He had a relationship with Moulay Sheikh Ali Aga al-Ghasoul, who defected from Emir Abdelkader and sought to gain influence to oppose Emir Abdelkader. He found in Mohamed Ben Abdallah an excellent ally and exerted all his efforts to develop him. Moulay Sheikh Ali almost succeeded in making him a notable figure, attracting tribes such as Bani Amer and Trara. When the ripe fruit felt it was too weak to fight Emir Abdelkader alone, it approached us. He contacted General Mustafa Ben Ismail to reach out to Colonel Tempore, the officer in charge of Oran.

The latter hastened to join the campaign to support his new ally, after the introduction made by Moulay Sheikh Ali about the character of Mohamed Ben Abdallah as a man with significant influence on the tribes of the west, eager, and a special enemy of Abdelkader. Thus, Colonel Tempore believed he had found the opportunity of a lifetime in finding the Emir's arch-enemy and immediately agreed to meet Ben Abdallah. Trumelet continues his account of this meeting, held on December 13, 1841, near Ain Temouchent, attended by Moulay Sheikh Ali, General Mustafa Ben Ismail, Colonel Tempore, and, of course, Mohamed Ben Abdallah, where an offensive-defensive alliance was formed. To not lose the fruits of the coup imagined by Moulay Sheikh Ali, Mohamed Ben Abdallah continued to be considered a qualified sultan, installed as a caliph over the western tribes.



Despite his calls to the tribes, only one hundred horsemen from Bani Amer, Oulad Riyah, and Ghasoul gathered around him. (TRUMELET, 1887, p. 45-47) Thus, we find the French perspective on Ben Abdallah to be somewhat mocking and belittling, portraying him as manufactured for his role rather than a genuine rival to the Emir, due to his weakness and his seeking their help, which they exploited. Trumelet also highlights the French realization, stating, "Mohamed Ben Abdallah, who believed we had invaded for his benefit, was appointed as a caliph in Tlemcen, and he found this position beneath his merits. This caliph sought to expand his arsenal significantly and was very active in this regard.

As a marabout, the caliph was not required to possess the qualities of a warrior, and it was said he completely lacked the vulgar bravery common among Arabs. He left Tlemcen with hatred in his heart, along with his wives and his khoja Si Mohamed Ben Ali, after feeling that pilgrimage advice was a command. (TRUMELET, 1887, p. 47-51) On his part, Abu al-Qasim Saad Allah mentions that Ibrahim Ben Abi Fares, in his letter to the French King, stated that people had called him to war against the Emir and mentioned groups among them. It is known that the Emir was at that time waging a war imposed on him against the French after Vale's violation of the Treaty of Tafna.

Then came Bugeaud (1841) with the goal of annihilating Emir Abdelkader, even if it meant cooperating with his enemies, which materialized in the person of Ibrahim, whom Bugeaud (1842) appointed as the caliph of Tlemcen after its fall to the French. However, these quickly grew wary of Ibrahim's behavior

towards them and accused him of negligence and incapacity, "advising" him to perform the pilgrimage so as not to make him a new adversary (Saad Allah, 1992, p. 355-356). Essentially, he was used as a pawn, and once his utility expired, they disposed of him indirectly.

It becomes clear from the above that Cherif did not meet the French expectations until they discovered he was not a man of war, so they diplomatically banished him, if one may say, although he had sought their assistance against the Emir, to which they naturally responded. Regarding this matter, Kamal Ben Sahraoui states that Sheikh Mahyeddin, the father of Emir Abdelkader, honored Mohamed Ben Abdallah, but when the command passed to the Emir, Ben Abdallah shifted his allegiance to the southern tribes like the Zenata and Oulad Nail.

The Emir headed to Medea, where he demanded obedience from the rebels, but they refused. So, he sent two armies, one led by Caliph Mohamed Ben Allal and the other by the Emir himself, managing to defeat the rebels, and Mohamed Ben Abdallah and Mohamed Ben Ouda fled. After a while, some people captured Ben Abdallah and brought him to the Emir, who pardoned him, and then he headed to the Far Maghreb.

In Ben Abdallah's letter to King Louis Philippe, he informed the King that he considered the Emir his enemy and that he had become a leader of the tribes that requested this from him in exchange for accepting peace with France. In a reminder letter to the King about his Arab origins and his ancestors who ruled parts of Syria and Egypt for a long time, Ben Abdallah spoke about the French exploiting him to strike at the Emir, but

they realized he was not a match for him and sent him to Mecca to avoid his treachery. (Sahraoui, 2020, p. 158-159) Especially after finding in 1844 writings on the walls of Tlemcen: "Mohamed Ben Abdallah, the supporter of religion, may Allah preserve him and give him power over the necks of the infidels." (Dahdi, 2009/2010, p. 57)

Regarding the exile of Ben Abdallah, we rely on Saad Allah's statement that Cherif himself confirmed that pilgrimage was a form of unofficial exile. The exact date of his departure from Algeria is unknown, but some documents suggest that the exile took place in 1845, the year of the famous Dahra uprising, and the period of his travel from Algeria to Mecca remains unknown until his arrival in Mecca. (Saad Allah, 1992, p. 356) Upon leaving Algeria, he headed to Oran, from there to Alexandria in Egypt, and then to the Holy Lands. (Dahdi, 2009/2010, p. 58)

3. Mohamed Ben Ali Al-Sanusi Personality:

Researcher Saud Dahdi states: "Sheikh Mohamed Ben Ali Al-Sanusi is from the lineage of Ali Al-Sanusi Ben Arabi Ben Mohamed Ben Abdel Aziz Ben Shahidah Ben Mohamed Ben Yusuf Ben Abdallah Ben Khatib Ben Ali Al-Sanusi Ben Yahya Ben Rashed Ben Ahmed Al-Marabti Mandas Ben Abdel Qawi Ben Abdel Rahman Ben Yusuf Ben Zian Ben Yusuf Ben Al-Hasan Ben Idris Ben Al-Khalil Ben Abdel Ilah Ben Hamza Ben Ali Ben Imran Ben Idris Ben Abdullah Al-Kamil Ben Al-Hasan Al-Muthanna Ben Al-Hasan Al-Sibt Ben Ali Bin Abi Talib Al-Hashimi Al-Qurashi.

Therefore, his lineage traces back to the family of the Prophet. Regarding the title Al-Sanusi, his grandson Ahmad Al-



Sharif in his book "The Holy Lights in the Introduction of the Sanusi Way" clarified this, mentioning that: "His fourth grandfather, Sayyid Mohamed Ben Abdel Qader, was an Imam who traveled across the Maghreb in pursuit of knowledge and stayed with a tribe known as Bani Sanusi from the tribes of Tlemcen and was thus named after them. Hence, his descendants were named after this name as a blessing." (Dahdi, 2009/2010, p. 1)

As for his birth, Mohamed Ben Ali Al-Sanusi was born on the dawn of 12th Rabi' al-awwal 1202 AH, corresponding to December 22nd, 1787 AD, in the suburb of Mina located on the bank of Wadi Chlef near the region of Wasit in Mostaganem, Algeria, in the village of Tarch, situated between the village of Sirat and Mount Yanaro (currently within the district of Yellel in the province of Mostaganem). Coincidentally, he was born on the anniversary of Prophet Muhammad's birth, hence his father named him Mohamed. Additionally, Professor Mohamed El Yahia mentions that the Sanusi family is known to this day in Algeria as the Atrach family. (Dahdi, 2009/2010, p. 2)

Louis Rinn notes that he is Si Mohamed Ben Si Ali Ben Al-Sanusi Al-Khattabi Al-Hasani Al-Idrisi, born in the year 1206 AH (1791-1792) not far from Mostaganem in the village of Atrach of Oulad Sidi Yusuf, from the tribe of Oulad Sidi Abdallah. His family, like all of Oulad Sidi Abdallah, claimed noble descent from the Prophet's family and that his Sanusi name had no relation whatsoever with the Bani Sanus tribe of the Tlemcen suburbs. The name Al-Sanusi was widely used across the western region of Algeria. (RINN, 1884, p. 481-483)

Mohamed Ben Ali Al-Sanusi grew up in a family known for knowledge, piety, and lineage. His father, Ali, embodied knowledge, righteousness, horsemanship, and archery but passed away when his son was only two years old. His aunt, Lady Fatima, who took care of him, taught him the principles of faith and monotheism after he memorized the Quran by the age of seven. After her death, his cousin named Al-Sharif, also a man of knowledge and virtue, took him under his care.

Thus, Al-Sanusi mastered the Quran in memorization and contemplation and studied jurisprudence, Sufism, and hadith under his cousin's tutelage. He then acquired knowledge from a group of renowned scholars in Mustaganem and Mazouna, including Sheikh Abdel Qader Ben Amour, Sheikh Mohamed Ben Abdelqader, Sheikh Mohamed Ben Al-Qunduz, Sheikh Mohamed Ben Khalifa, Sheikh Al-Saleh Abu Talib Al-Mazouni, and Sheikh Abu Rass Al-Mascari.

In the year 1220 AH/1805 AD, Mohamed Ben Ali Al-Sanusi traveled from Mostaganem to Fez in the Far Maghreb, aiming for academic pursuit and perhaps also due to circumstances that hastened his travel. It is presumed that Al-Sanusi was a Darqawi, and during his stay in Fez, he built his intellectual, scholarly, and reformist character based on three main pillars:

- ✓ Fez being a center for Sufi orders, thus Al-Sanusi acquainted himself with the Tijaniyyah, Nasiriyyah, and others until he managed to establish his own order named after him; his interest in jurisprudential study, deeply versed in the Maliki school while also familiar with the jurisprudence of other schools



- ✓ his interest in political movements, considering Fez a center of scientific radiance. (Dahdi, 2009/2010, p. 2-5)
- ✓ In the same context, Louis Rinn confirms that Al-Sanusi left his homeland at the age of 30, heading to Fez where he stayed for seven years, studying under the city's most renowned scholars. (RINN, 1884, p. 483)

➤ **Regarding his academic life:**

Teaching in Fez, where Mohamed Ben Ali Al-Sanusi obtained the Grand Sheikhood and was appointed as a teacher at the Grand Mosque in Fez, earning great renown. This made the government of Sultan Sulaiman impose surveillance on him, leading Al-Sanusi to decide to leave Fez.

➤ **His pilgrimage to Hejaz:**

Al-Sanusi left Fez in the year (1235 AH/1819 AD) heading towards Mecca. However, he first traveled from Fez to the Algerian desert to acquaint himself with its Zawiyas, reaching Ain Madhi (currently in the province of Laghouat) where he stayed for a short period before heading to Laghouat where he spent some time teaching jurisprudence and Sharia.

He then traveled to Mesad (currently a district in the province of Djelfa) and then to Djelfa and Bou Saada, teaching in each location. During his departure from Algeria, he passed through the village of Timassin (currently a district in Ouargla), entered the Tunisian Jereed until he reached the city of Tunis, then headed to Al-Zaytuna Mosque where he met its scholars and benefited from them.

Afterwards, he traveled to Tripoli, precisely to the Libyan city of Zliten where he met Imran Ben Barka, and from there he

moved to Benghazi then to Egypt. However, he did not stay long there because he was accused of innovation, necessitating his travel to Hejaz. (Dahdi, 2009/2010, p. 5-6) Al-Sanusi arrived in Mecca in the year (1240 AH/1825 AD), where he met Ahmad Ben Idris, known as Abi Al-Abbass Al-Araishi, a Moroccan native, known for combining Sufi and Salafi directions.

Al-Sanusi studied Hadith and Sunnah under his guidance. However, after being complained about by the scholars of Mecca to the Ottoman state, Ahmad Ben Idris was forced to migrate to the Asir region in Yemen. Al-Sanusi accompanied him to Yemen and stayed with him until his death in the year (1250 AH/1835 AD). Al-Sanusi then returned to Mecca and built his first Zawiya on Mount Abu Qubais in (1252 AH/1837 AD).

He stayed in Hejaz for about thirty years, meeting scholars and pilgrims until he left in the year (1255 AH/1840 AD) heading towards Egypt where he was warmly received by the scholars of Al-Azhar, then took the direction to Libya, and headed towards Gabes in Tunisia to enable his entry into Algeria, but the French colonization prevented that. (Dahdi, 2009/2010, p. 7-9)

Sheikh Al-Sanusi returned to Tripoli and from there to Cyrenaica, where he established the White Zawiya after finding followers there in 1258 AH/1842 AD, which he made the center of his call. It is located at the top of the Green Mountain. Regarding his family affairs, it is found that Al-Sanusi married Fatima bint Ahmed bin Faraj Allah and was blessed with Muhammad Al-Mahdi in 1260 AH/1844 AD and two years later, his second son Muhammad Al-Sharif was born. (Dahdi, 2009/2010, p. 10)



It is mentioned that Al-Sanusi returned to the Hejaz, where he stayed for about eight years, calling to his way during the pilgrimage seasons, hoping his method would benefit in the Hejaz and Yemen in addition to establishing Zawiyas in Medina, Taif, Al-Hamra, and Jeddah, then returned to Cyrenaica in 1271 AH/1854 AD.

Two years later, Al-Sanusi decided to head towards the Jaghbul area in the south and established a school there for graduating disciples (Dahdi, 2009/2010, p. 11). It is worth noting here that the date of his return to the Hejaz is not mentioned, and that he polished his personality in the East and returned to the Maghreb to benefit his brothers with his knowledge.

When talking about Al-Sanusi's scholarly journey, it is necessary to address the works he left behind that immortalized his name:

- "Al-Masa'il Al-'Ashar", in which Al-Sanusi opposed the Maliki school of Imam Malik, may God have mercy on him.
- "Al-Sabil Al-Mu'in fi Al-Tariq Al-Arba'in".
- "Iqaz Al-Wusnan fi Al-'Amal Bi Al-Hadith wa Al-Qur'an".
- "Al-Manhal Al-Rawi Al-Raiq fi Asanid Al-'Ilm wa Usul Al-Tariq".

After this eventful path full of achievements, Al-Sanusi died at the Zawiya of Jaghbul on Wednesday, 9 Safar 1276 AH/1859 AD, leaving behind his son Al-Mahdi to lead the Sanusi movement. (Dahdi, 2009/2010, p. 12, 14)

4. The Connection between Cherif Ben Abdallah and the Sanusi Order:

Dr. Abu al-Qasim Saad Allah, may God have mercy on him, mentions that the Sanusi movement was behind several uprisings in the south of Algeria, especially the revolution of Mohamed Ben Abdallah... The Sanusi movement was active at a time when other orders were weakened, especially after the French seized endowments, the main source of religion and education. On one hand, and on the other hand, they introduced some prayers and rituals that have nothing to do with religion. The Sanusi way was a modern movement with Sunni teachings and goals.

He mentions that Al-Sanusi was the only man who opposed the fatwa because it called on Algerians to stop jihad against the French. According to the French traveler "Henri Duveyrier", the Sanusi movement was responsible for all resistance acts against France in Algeria, such as the revolution of Mohamed Ben Abdallah in the Algerian desert from "1850-1861", making the revolution of Mohamed Ben Abdallah one of the most important revolutions in the 19th century in southern Algeria, a revolution that took place under the political and religious cover of the Sanusi movement. (Dahdi, 2009/2010, p. 60, 61)

It is necessary to refer to the beginning of the acquaintance between these two personalities, where Mohamed Ben Abdallah met Sheikh Al-Sanusi and thus became one of his followers, and together with his teacher, they sought means to liberate Algeria from colonialism. They corresponded with their companions and friends in Algeria, Tunisia, and Tripoli to know the news of Algeria, and sometimes they sent special envoys to spread their method's principles and political ideas and incite people to resist the colonizer.



Mohamed Ben Abdallah and Al-Sanusi thought about returning to Algeria, especially since the conditions were suitable for a revolution against the occupier, as France reduced its forces after the 1848 revolution in Paris, while in Algeria, followers of Ahmed Bey continued the resistance even after Ahmed Bey's surrender in 1848. The same year the resistance of Zaatcha broke out, and the appearance of Ibn Nasser Ben Chouhada's character.

This encouraged Mohamed Ben Ali Al-Sanusi to send Mohamed Ben Abdallah to Algeria and start preparing for the revolutionary work after assuring him that he would join him when conditions allow. However, Mohamed Ben Abdallah remained hesitant until finally convinced by Al-Sanusi's motivations and left the Hejaz in 1849, making his way towards Tripoli with the Turkish governor Izzet Pasha until they arrived there on April 20, 1850, and from there Mohamed Ben Abdallah headed to Ghadames and then to Ouargla, settling in the Zawiya of Rouissat. (Dahdi, 2009/2010, p. 58, 59)

Kamal Ben Sahraoui confirms this meeting and that Al-Sanusi convinced Ben Abdallah of jihad, entering West Tripoli and then to Ouargla, where the people appointed him as their leader in 1851. (Sahraoui, 2020, p. 159)

Abdullah bin Jilali Al-Saih sees that the revolution of Cherif Ben Abdallah was planned and driven by the Sanusi movement. After meeting Al-Sanusi, both scholars, nobles, politicians, and educators from the Algerian West, and after discussing the situation in Algeria, they recalled the start of Ibn Shakra Ben Nasser leading the Qadiriyya since 1846 and the Zaatcha revolution in 1849, they decided to disperse France's

efforts with another revolution in the south. Cherif returned from the Hejaz at the end of 1849, stayed in Tripoli for a while, then headed with his wife, Maryam, towards Algeria. (Al-Saih, 2010, p. 99)

Dr. Redwan Chafou talks about the positive role played by this movement in the resistance of Cherif Mohamed Ben Abdallah in Ouargla, especially and in the Algerian Sahara in general, and it is distinctive for not owning a Zawiya in the Ouargla region, unlike the Qadiriyya Zawiya in Rouissat, Tijaniyya in Tamasin, Rahmaniyya in Ain Beida and Ladjaja, and the Shaikhia in Chott.

Regarding the connection between the Cherif and this order, it dates back to the 1840s of the 19th century, in addition to Sheikh Al-Sanusi's call for all Algerians to jihad against colonialism and with the deteriorating situation in southeastern Algeria. Cherif Ben Abdallah found an opportunity in Ouargla, where he was appointed as Sultan in 1851 at the request of Lalla Zahra of Ouargla. This, of course, was after Al-Sanusi mediated for him (Chafou, 2011-2012, p. 186, 187). Abu al-Qasim Saad Allah did not mention that Al-Sanusi supported him with weapons, unlike what Chafou said.

Ridwan Shafou continues his discussion, noting that some sources indicate that Sheikh Al-Sanusi met with the Cherif west of the city of Touggourt, as mentioned by the author of "Riy al-Ghalil" who stated: "...On Tuesday, 15th Rajab in the year 1268 AH, a caravan arrived with four hundred camels, and among them came a man named Mohamed Al-Sanusi, claiming to be a Cherif and acting as a judge for the Cherif in charge of Ouargla as his deputy.



He set up his tent west of Touggourt near the gate of Sidi Abdel Salam, accompanied by a prominent man from the Arba tribe named Sheikh Al-Nasir. They gifted the Arba to Sheikh Salman, a horse from the finest breeds, and brought forty horsemen from the Arba along with a poet...

As for Touggourt at our time, it is undoubtedly for the Cherif, and the people of Touggourt ride every day in their majlis, proclaiming: Jihad for the sake of Allah. As for Hajj Mohamed Al-Idrisi, every day he preaches the book of Jihad to Sheikh Salman and all the notables of Touggourt, telling them: 'Fighting for the sake of Allah is better for you if you only knew. All people fought except you, O people of Touggourt', and here they are, committing to their affair." France did not remain silent about this, employing the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya orders to pressure the Sanusi and arresting the Cherif in 1861. (Shafou, 2011-2012, p. 187,188)

Thus, Sheikh Al-Sanusi's arrival in Algeria was on May 4, 1852, a year after the Cherif settled in Ouargla. Through the letter, it is clear that Sheikh Al-Sanusi came to enhance the Cherif's influence and attract more followers to his method and to strengthen the Cherif's ranks with more fighters. Additionally, France employed some orders to strike at the Sanusi as part of its divide and conquer strategy.

On the other hand, "Trumelet" mentions that in 1849, Mohamed Al-Sanusi, expelled from Algeria, arrived in Mecca, where he met Ibn Abdallah. He describes the men's stance against the French as, "A matching stance, the same hatred

against us, the same desire to inflict as much damage on us as possible."

In his view, this brought the two men closer, and to conceal their actions, Mohamed Ben Abdallah, encouraged by Al-Sanusi, established a type of Zawiya. Algeria had early agents and emissaries who took orders from Mohamed Ben Abdallah's Zawiya, and very active correspondence informed the conspirators in Mecca of all the developments achieved by France. He also says that Al-Sanusi indeed took over a great empire through their former caliph, who shared his opinion about the suitability of the movement, then showed Mohamed Ben Abdallah that he was the man for the moment, and the sacred mission entrusted to him could not fail.

Despite Mohamed Ben Abdallah's dedication, he was hesitant and felt he was not the man for action. He wanted the good cause to triumph but preferred it to be ensured by someone else more trustworthy, which Sidi Al-Sanusi, skilled as he was, seemed to possess. Additionally, he did not know that as a man from the mountains and desert dwellers, he would have to act based on them and that he had no aspirations and it was not his role.

Sidi Ali Al-Sanusi used his most convincing rhetoric to prove to their former caliph that no one else was better positioned to execute his mission, talking about his esteemed personality, his reputation for piety, his hatred for the French, and the high position he held in the mountains; all of this should, on the contrary, facilitate this mission. Mohamed Ben Abdallah evaded and opposed a thousand objections against Sidi Ali Al-



Sanusi's insistence on not considering him serious, which he overcame with triumph.

The former caliph finally agreed to leave for raising the Algerian desert and attempting to throw us into the sea, God willing. (TRUMELET, 1887, pp. 51,53) Then "Trumelet" moves on to discuss the Turks, saying: At that time, the Turks shared Al-Sanusi's view on the appropriateness of launching a provocateur in our desert to contribute as much as they could to the success of the work, taking responsibility for transporting Mohamed Ben Abdallah to Tripoli.

Therefore, the former caliph set off at the end of 1849 with Azza Pasha, the governor of that province. Mohamed Ben Abdallah arrived in Tripoli at the beginning of 1850 and from there went through Ghadames to Souf, where he stayed until February 1851, studying the situation and the region.

Before moving west, he tried to test his influence on Touggourt, not achieving the success he anticipated, he decided to try his luck further. The oasis of Ouargla, which once paid its weight in gold to the lord, was exploited by Ben Abdallah to the fullest, but he lacked the nerve for war.

Sidi Al-Sanusi and Azza Pasha, who ordered him to start a revolution in the desert, seemed to have completely overlooked these details, despite their benefit, forcing the future sultan to rent on credit at twelve francs from Wadi Righ to Ouargla two mares, one carrying his wife and the other carrying him. As for the Khoja, Ben Abdallah found it suitable for him to travel by road. It must be said that the secretary regretfully welcomed this

decision with a grimace that his noble lord seemed to ignore. (TRUMELET, 1887, pp. 53,55)

To facilitate Mohamed Ben Abdallah's work with the southern inhabitants, Sidi Al-Sanusi provided him with letters of recommendation for the main leaders of the nomadic Bedouins and the oasis and for the very revered Marabouts in Ouargla. These letters must have been very welcome wherever he wished to appear and could only serve him in establishing his influence in the Great Desert, an influence he would benefit from in his time and when he sees fit.

With the double patronage of the Turks and the religious leaders in Mecca, Ben Abdallah was in an exceptional position to fish in troubled waters with some success, especially considering the political situation of the Ouargla oasis, which he certainly chose as the theater for his operations.

One of the letters sent by Sidi Al-Sanusi to Mohamed Ben Abdallah in Ouargla was addressed to Abdullah bin Khalid, one of the leaders of the Makhadma, a man of influence in his tribe and in Bani Siss, where he lived. Therefore, he was asked for hospitality, and in his house, he suggested waiting for events after endless greeting rituals.

The former caliph gave the letter addressed to him to his host, who in turn handed it to his Khoja, who read the letter aloud, bearing the seal of Sidi Ali Al-Sanusi. It recalled all titles of Mohamed Ben Abdallah to the true believers' trust and respect: "A pious man fearing God, great in the mountains, acknowledged by the most important tribes of the West as their leader; he comes to scorn the perishable grandeur of this world,



seeking refuge far from the French whom he detests, and peace and happiness amidst palm trees, waiting for (of course) better days." (TRUMELET, 1887, p. 55_57)

According to what was mentioned, in the French perspective, the alliance between the two men is attributed to the similar circumstances they faced. Al-Sanusi made efforts to convince the Cherif by speaking of all the Cherif's merits compared to others, despite considering Cherif Ben Abdallah not quite the right man for the role.

The Turks supported Ben Abdallah by undertaking the task of transporting him to Libya, from which he entered Ghadames and then Souf. It's crucial to reflect on what Trumelet wrote, describing indirectly that the Cherif was not humble by allowing his Khoja to walk on foot. What facilitated the Cherif's work was having Al-Sanusi and the Turks by his side. The Turkish support for Ben Abdallah can be interpreted as another attempt by the Ottoman state to reclaim Algeria as its former province.

Dr. Cheikh Lakhal, in his discussion of this character, mentions that Cherif Ben Abdallah contacted the French King Louis Philippe, offering to be with the French and against the Emir. He met with the founder of the Sanusi order, Mohamed Ben Ali Al-Sanusi. On his way back to Algeria, he stopped in Tripoli, where he was welcomed by its governor, Ahmed Azza Pasha, and the Defterdar Amin Efendi Khoja, who incited him to revolt. (Lakhal, 2019, p. 109) It is noteworthy that Dr. Sheikh Lakhal stated that Azza Pasha "welcomed him," not "transported him" as mentioned in most references.

Some sources believe that Sheikh Al-Sanusi did not forget his duty and worked to strengthen the revolution in Algeria by providing it with money, weapons, and men to the extent that the French attributed all resistance acts against them in Algeria, like the revolution of Mohamed Ben Abdallah in the Algerian desert (1848-1861), to him.

This is evidenced by a letter sent by one of his followers in Ouargla to the Turkish director of Ghadames, indicating the arrival of the Sanusi call to Algeria and that many of his followers were fighting the French there. The letter, sent in 1268 AH/1853 AD while Al-Sanusi was in the Hejaz, reads: "As for me, Abdullah, when I arrived in Ouargla, God opened it for us, and it became Mohammedan after it had been in the hands of the cursed Roman and his Khalifa there, praise be to the One who decrees the weak over the strong, and the strong from His servant becomes disgraced and defeated.

But by the blessing of our noble Sheikh, Sidi Mohamed Ben Ali Al-Sanusi, may God be pleased with him and benefit us and you through him, Amen... And the Arabs of Ouargla, its castles, the tribes of Sha'anba, the castles of Taghurt, its Arabs, the Arba, Harzeliya, Hajjaj, many of the Arabs of Dhahira and the castles of Bani Mzab (Bani Mizab) all under the obedience of Allah, His Messenger, and our obedience, and the Mujahideen increase every day... And the Roman sent to us at this hour three Amhals to meet us, and we became like a white mole on a black bull, so God granted us a mighty victory and helped us against His enemies, and the fight between us with gunpowder and swords until we broke them a great defeat and killed about three



hundred and eighty-six men and took many horses and countless rifles..." (Dahdi, 2009/2010, p. 9_10).

This letter reveals several points:

- Cherif Mohamed Ben Abdallah is one of Al-Sanusi's followers.
- The Cherif's control over Ouargla and the tribes of Sha'anba, Taghurt, the Arba, Harzeliya, the Arabs of Dhahira, and the castles of Bani Mizab in 1853.
- The increasing number of the Cherif's followers.

Dr. Abu al-Qasim Saad Allah informs us that Ibrahim also contacted the Ottoman authorities in the East, and perhaps they were the ones who reached out to him. Since the Ottomans did not recognize the French occupation of Algeria until 1847, Saad Allah states that he has no information on how the cooperation between the three parties (the Ottoman state, Al-Sanusi, Ibrahim) was agreed upon.

What he has is that Ibrahim returned with the blessing of Al-Sanusi along with the new Ottoman governor of Tripoli (Azzat Pasha) and, after certain preparatory arrangements, entered Algeria through Ghadames and settled in Ouargla. However, there is no specific date for his arrival in Ouargla, with three possible dates being 1849, 1850, and 1851.

It seems that the first date might be the most accurate considering the events in the Ziban reached the Wadi Souf and the Jerid (Nefta, Tozeur...) and Tripoli, which could have encouraged the Ottoman authority there and the Sanusi

movement to cooperate with Ibrahim to expand the scope of the revolution.

This is supported by Bou Baghla's statements in Djurdjura and his announcement in 1850 that the Ottoman Sultan was in the south and would come to their aid. All of this helps favor the first two dates. Ibrahim was called Cherif Mohamed Ben Abdallah, concealing his name known to the French authorities and adding a religious aspect to his movement as a means of recruiting the masses.

His return from the Hejaz might have facilitated this. The situation in the Sahara helped him, especially with the death of Hajj Ahmed bin Babia, the "Sultan" of Ouargla, in 1850, leaving power in the hands of Lalla Zahra. It is said that Sheikh Al-Sanusi advised Cherif well about Lalla Zahra and to seek her help, and perhaps she was a follower of the Sheikhia order. (Saad Allah, 1992, p. 356_357)

On the other hand, Dr. Khenfar Habib informs us that Cherif Ben Abdallah settled in the Zawiya of Rouissat throughout 1850, gauging the situation, and began to move in February 1851 with support from Al-Sanusi and his letters to various local leaders and regions, and with Turkish support from Libya, the Cherif managed to gain the support of most influential tribes and leaders in the Ouargla region, especially Hajja Zahra, the righteous saint who had significant influence in Ouargla and its surroundings (Habib, 2019_2020, p. 81).

This might be why Al-Sanusi asked the Cherif to take good care of her. As evidence, she made efforts to sway tribes, leaders, and sheikhs of the region in favor of the Cherif, and at the end of



August 1851, representatives from the three districts of Ouargla and representatives of the region's kasbahs, except for Sa'id Atbah who were with Bani Babia, approached the Cherif, asking him to be the Sultan of Ouargla. (Habib, 2019_2020, p. 81)

5. The End of Cherif Mohamed Ben Abdallah:

One reference states that Bash Agha Si Boubker Ben Si Hamza pursued Cherif until Cherif Ben Abdallah was finally arrested at the end of 1861 and handed over to the French, who exiled him to France and imposed house arrest on him in a military prison at Place de Douberqon on the island of Corsica. What is peculiar here is the punishment issued by France against him because, after two years of house arrest, Cherif Mohamed Ben Abdallah returned to Algeria.

This return raises a host of questions. However, Abu al-Qasim Saad Allah says that he was transferred to the prison of Annaba after falling ill in 1863, arriving there nearly dead. (Dahdi, 2009/2010, p. 68)

Kamal Ben Sahraoui traces the news of Ben Abdallah and how the French imprisoned him in Perpignan and then in the province of Constantine (Sahraoui, 2020, p. 159). Sheikh Lakhal also confirms this in his discussion on the arrest of Cherif Ben Abdallah by Bash Agha Si Boubker son of Hamza in October 1861, where he was transferred to the prison of Gara El Hajj then Oran and finally to the island of Corsica (Lakhal, 2019, p. 110_111).

Conclusion:

At the end of this modest research, we have reached the following conclusions:

- ✓ Cherif Mohamed Ben Abdallah was the sole leader of the Sanusi in southeastern Algeria.
- ✓ There was a change in Cherif Mohamed Ben Abdallah's stance towards colonialism; after working in its favor for a while, he changed his position and rebelled against the colonialism in southeastern Algeria.
- ✓ The Sanusi opened the way for Ben Abdallah; all his steps and the timing of his resistance were orchestrated by the Sanusi.
- ✓ Cherif Ben Abdallah was an opponent of Emir Abdelkader, as stated in most historical narratives.

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