

Islam in West Africa between the Qadiris and the Tijanis

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- **Abstract:** The Tijani and the Qadiriyya tariqa are considered among the most prominent Sufi tariqas that have had great impact on spreading Islam in the West African region. Each tariqa demonstrated its adherence and keenness to spread and indoctrinate the teachings of the Islamic religion in a region that had until recently been regarded as either a centre of Judaism and Christianity or a stronghold of paganism and trap in God, Therefore, it would not have been easy for the inhabitants of this region to be convinced of Islam and its principles and rules if there had not been better scholars who contributed with the good word, good manners and treatment to the acceptance of Islam by this African individual as a religion and Sharia governing his diaries and his mannerisms. The Tijani tariqa has contributed significantly to this area, becoming one of the largest and most important Sufi tariqas among the West African population

Keywords:

Tijani tariqa, Qadiriyya tariqa, West Africa, Islam, Omar al-Foti, Abdul Qader al-Jilani

• Introduction

The Tijani and the Qadiriyya tariqa are considered among the most prominent Sufi tariqas that have had great impact on spreading Islam in the West African region. Each tariqa demonstrated its adherence and keenness to spread and indoctrinate the teachings of the Islamic religion in a region that had until recently been regarded as either a centre of Judaism and Christianity or a stronghold of paganism and trap in God, Therefore, it would not have been easy for the inhabitants of this region to be convinced of Islam and its principles and rules if there had not been better scholars who contributed with the good word, good manners and treatment to the acceptance of Islam by this African individual as a religion and Sharia governing his diaries and his mannerisms. The Tijani tariqa has contributed significantly to this area, becoming one of the largest and most important Sufi tariqas among the West African population. It even controls political life to this day like in Mali, Niger and other African Sahel countries. But despite the common goal and supreme goal of both the Qadiriyya and Tijani tariqas of defending Islam and confronting its enemies, we have noticed that divergence and even disharmony has reached the point of hostility at times between them¹, so what are the reasons and how did this reflect on the Islamic call in West Africa? we have noticed that distancing and even dissonance has sometimes reached the point of hostility between them. What are the reasons and how has this been reflected in the Islamic call in West Africa?

1. Definition of the Tijani tariqa ²

The credit for the foundation of the Tijani tariqa is due to Abu al-Abbas Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn al-Mukhtar Ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad Salem al-Tijani (1737-1864) in the city of Ain Madhi (Alaghwat), who studied sharia sciences and visited several Islamic cities, including Fez, Tlemcen, Tunis, Cairo, Mecca and Medina.

He established his tariqa in 1196 Hijri in the village of Abi samghun, one of the most prominent monuments left by Ahmad al-Tijani is Fayd Sidi Abi Al-Abbas al-Tijani, which was collected by his student Ali harazm Barada. As for West Africa, the Tijani tariqa played an important role in spreading the Islamic call during the nineteenth century, especially after the principles of this call, Hadj Omar al-Futi Al-tikruri, who succeeded in establishing an Islamic State

¹ - عبد القادر زبادية، الحضارة العربية والتأثير الأوروبي في إفريقيا الغربية، ص 90-93

² - Deep Knowledge, Ways of Knowing in Sufism and Ifa, Two West African Intellectual, Oludamini Ogunnaike · Penn State University Press 2020

in the west of the continent and fought Western colonization in the futaturwa region until his martyrdom in 1864.³

2. Dissemination of the Tijani tariqa by Haji Omar al-Foti in sub-Saharan Africa:

The spread of the Tijani method in sub-Saharan Africa is due to Sheikh Omar bin Sa'id al-Foti (1796-1864), who was born in the town of helwar, belonging to the matem Directorate, adjacent to the Senegal River and opposite the Mauritanian-Senegalese border. He memorized the Koran and well versed in sharia sciences. He then leaned into the Sufi tariqa and visited Sheikh Mouloud fall Al-Shanqiti and Sheikh Abdul Karim from Futa Jallon and took the Tajani-ward from them.⁴

Sheikh Al-Futi visited the holy places in 1827, where he met with one of Sheikh al-Tijani's friends, Sheikh Mohammed Al-Ghali, in which he said: "I handed over myself and my money to him, I threw leadership to him, I stayed serving him for three years, renewed the adoption of him, he taught me the necessary dhikr, organized me in the path of Ahl al-tariqa, he still teaches me the dhikr and helps me with secrets and gained light from him in accordance with the Sharia and the truth". The most significant result of Omar Mohammed al-Ghali's meeting was the appointment of Omar Khalifa of the founder in Western Sudan and his leave. In Sheikh Omar's view, the successor is the Vice-Founder because he communicates to the pupils the memories, parties, secrets, directives, purposes, retreats, literature, science and knowledge he was delivering to them. He did to them what the sheikh was doing, and they had all the rights that the sheikh had to them by virtue of the prosecution, Sheikh Omar returned from Hejaz with a jihadist project; he came determined to gather the Muslims of his country to fight the living pagans among the Muslims, and he said about the fighting and its purpose: "fighting the infidels is something I keep doing until Allah wipes out the state of disbelief in the state of Islam".⁵

After his return, Sheikh Al-Foti called for the dissemination of the taijani method in his country, Futa Toro, and then in other regions of Senegal. Imam Muhammad concentrated his activity in the areas of Bul, sin and Salem. He succeeded in getting a large number of its Muslims to migrate to the seat of his imam to become the nucleus of the Islamic nation that he was trying to build, and he was helped by Islamic figures who were revered by society, and national princes who lost their thrones. Muhammad fought wars against the pagans and suppressed them in many places until they allied with the French colonialism and killed him in 1867.⁶

3 - عبد الرحمان طالب، الشيخ سيدي أحمد التجاني، ديواف المطبوعات الجامعية، 2001، ص6.

4 - عبد الرحمان طالب، الشيخ سيدي أحمد التجاني، ديواف المطبوعات الجامعية، 2001، ص6.

5 - تقارير، الطرق الصوفية في السنغال، موقع مركز الجزيرة للدراسات، 5 أوت 2018
<https://studies.aljazeera.net/ar/reports/2018/08/180805121751184.html>

3. the spread of the Tijani tariqa in sub-Saharan Africa

The Tijani tariqa did not crack on itself in its place of origin in the south of Algeria, but it extended and expanded to include all regions of sub-Saharan Africa, such as Senegal, Mali, Niger and others, and carried with it its message calling for peace and the application of the rites of Islam and spread it among the inhabitants of sub-Sahara, especially the western region of it. One of the goals of the Tijani tariqa was to purify religion from impurities and fads, and call for education and guidance. They took advantage of social relations between the African community and the elders and followers of the Tijani tariqa, such as trade, marriage, etc. Historical sources mentioned that Sheikh Mohammed bin Omar al-Tijani has spread Islam in more than 15 countries..... They were men of advocacy and reform, which made the Tijani tariqa easily penetrate among the population and received the acceptance of the African individual, especially after she stood up to the French colonization led by her Sheikh Sheikh Al-Futi⁷, so the Tijani tariqa was able to play a spiritual and political role at the same time and gained an important place among the souls of the inhabitants of the West African continent, which led to the joining under its banner of several states and governments based on purely religious grounds.⁸

4- The relationship between the Tijani tariqa and the Qadiriyya tariqa in West Africa:⁹

4-1 Features of the Tijani tariqa from other sufi tariqas:

Despite its recent origin compared to other Sufi tariqa, especially the Qadiriyyah tariqa, which dates back to Sheikh Abdul Qader al-Jilani (1770) in Baghdad, then entered West Africa during the 15th century by Twat migrants (Tuat)¹⁰, however, the Tijani tariqa has found itself a foothold in the region because, according to historians, Tijaniya is different from other tariqas. In its principles, it depends on meeting for the job if it has brothers in the tariqa and the continuous love of the Sheikh. In addition to that, the perpetuation of the daily Dhikr without interruption with the elevation of the soul which is not permitted in its response to the face of blessings, but it is permissible in the face of obligation and education in it is for those who are accompanying the necessary Dhikr with their prescribed conditions in its pillars.¹¹

As much as the Sufi tariqas have had many civilizational achievements in various aspects of life, most notably the spread of the Islamic religion and the preservation of the Arabic language, and the orientation of African society towards the ranks of civilized societies, as well as defending the homeland with all its might through the jihadist movements that confronted the European invaders, as much as they had contradictions that puzzled historians and specialists in international

⁷ - زيزاح سعيدة، الطريقة التيجانية النشأة و التطور، مجلة العلوم الاجتماعية، المجلد 8 رقم 04، ص77

⁸ - عمار هلال، الطرق الصوفية ونشر الإسلام والثقافة العربية في غرب القارة، الجزائر، موفم، 1988، ص123

⁹ - Nehemia Levtzion، Randall L. Pouwels :The History of Islam in Africa, Ohio University Press, 2020

¹⁰ - الخليل النحوي، بلاد شنقيط، المنظمة العربية للتربية والثقافة، تونس، 1987، ص120

¹¹ - زيزاح سعيدة، الطريقة التيجانية النشأة و التطور، المرجع السابق، ص79

relations, the two Sufi tariqas that carried the banner of reform in West Africa, we find them although the factors of unity are greater than the factors of division that used to link Tajaniyyah with Qadiriyyah, dissonance was the main feature of The relationship between them reached the point of fighting between members of the same religion and even the same tribe.

We recall an example of this when Sheikh Ahmed Al-bekai Al-Qadri confronted Sheikh Omar al-Foti al-Tijani in the Timbuktu region and major battles occurred, one of the results of which was the death of the leaders Omar al-Foti al-Tijani and Ahmed Al-bekai Al-Qadri.

The first half of the nineteenth century was the period of the beginning of the Qadiri-Tijani dispute, and perhaps the most important reasons for this dispute is due to the attempt of Qadiriyya to impose itself as the only tariqa in the region dating back to the beginning of the 15th century, so the tijaniyyah of the region was considered as a harm and a rival, which had just begun to penetrate into West Africa. The dispute between the two methods was initially limited to theoretical controversy, as is the case with various religious doctrines in Islam, but with the advent of Sheikh al-Haj Omar al-Tijani, the controversy moved to the military, where the latter worked to form an army like the Qadiriyya not to fight Qadiriyya as some people think, but the reason at first was to confront colonialism, which was fighting religion and language in the region. One of the goals of the taijaniyya was to impose Islamic law, spread the Arabic language and fight the infidels, so Sheikh taijani tried to impose his method by force to spread the taijaniyya starting in 1846, but unfortunately misunderstandings and lack of communication between the parties turned the differences into violence and fighting, battles took the most space from them.¹²

At the end of the Thirties of the nineteenth century, after the return of Sheikh Omar from Mecca, where he took the idjaza of tijanism from its delegate in the land of Hijaz, Sheikh Ghali Mohammed, and became the resident Sheikh of tijanism in West Africa, Since that time, Sheikh Omar began to take care of strengthening the tariqa not only in the religious field, but also encroaching on the political side by trying to impose a tariqa adopted by states as a doctrine and a law of governance, then the rulers of the Qadiriyya in the Hausa countries felt the danger and made sure that the goals of Omar al-Futi are greater than the definition of his tariqa and that this is considered a threat to the existence of Qadiriyya in the region, namely the search for a homeland and a political background for this tariqa, which is only at the expense of Qadiriyya, so they started fighting him with expulsion and not accepting him on any land of Qadiriyya tariqa, as Ahmad Al-Kanmi expelled him from Borno, and he was also expelled from Sokoto in 1837 after Umar al-Futi showed his desire to rule as the successor of Muhammad Bello, and his followers were harassed in the city of Hamdullah between 1818 and 1862. Umar al-Futi found only an area in central Senegal to form his army and organize his group, and that was in 1846.

Sheikh Omar was able to extend his influence in large areas of the takrur country, but he found violent resistance from Sheikh Al-Bakai Al-Qadri .Sheikh Al-Bakay wrote many letters against taijanismo, the most famous of which was the correspondence of the scholars of the city of Marrakech, as well as the emirs of Massena who preceded Al-Bakay wrote against al-Foti, the letters have shown the essence of the ideological disagreement between Qadiriyya and taijaniyya, and one of the results of this disagreement is that the population of the West Coast was divided into two parts, Qadiriyya and taijaniyya, and the battles between the two communities ended only in

1877 with the division of the area between the two parties, and these battles have exhausted the population they reflected on the region and were The inevitable consequence of the weakening of each side for the other was the planning of the French occupation to completely conquer the region, the same for the English, who were closely following the events, and managed to do so after a short time.

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• Conclusion

Whatever is said about the difference between the Tijani tariqa and the Qadiriyya tariqa in West Africa, this dispute remains a disagreement between brothers who were interested in spreading religion and defending the nation, but we cannot deny the existence of external lapses and interventions that increased the gap between the two parties, the most important of which were the grudges that the Christian West was trying to spread among Muslims. As is the case in our time, because of the courage of the tajanis and even the qadiris in resisting him and not leaving the opportunity for him to do whatever he wants with Muslims, let's finally say that whatever the negatives, the positives of spreading the Islamic religion, the Arabic language and Islamic culture among a society that was described as primitive, backward and Pagan is a gain recorded by historical writings.

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