

THE SEAL OF MOHAMMADIAN SAINTHOOD

SEYYIDINA SHEIKH AHMED TIJANI

(MAY GOD BE SATISFIED WITH HIM)

This is a small summary of Seyyidina Sheikh Ahmed Tijani's life (May God be satisfied with him).

A famous master in Sufism whose name is Sidi Mokhtar El Kounty (May God be satisfied with him), had declared that the 12th century of the Hegira was comparable to that of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings be upon him) in many aspects and it was in that particular moment that the Seal of Mohammadian Sainthood would appear.

In fact, in 1737/38 (1150 from the Hegira) Seyyidina Sheikh Ahmed Ibn Muhammad Ibn Mokhtar Tidjani (May God be satisfied with him) was born in a small town of Algerian desert, Ain Madhi. He was the son of the very pious and well learned Sidi Muhammad Ibn Mokhtar Tidjani (May God be satisfied with him) and the lofty and honorable 'Aïcha (May God be satisfied with her).

They were of a noble lineage where one could find several gifted scholars and saints. We can mention as an example his fourth ancestor who owned in his house a special small room where he used to go alone to practice spiritual devotions. He was continuously shut in his room and nobody was allowed to enter that dwelling. He had reached a high degree of spirituality which compelled him to wear a veil from his room of meditation to the mosque and from the mosque to his room again when he was back home. Indeed those who would see his face, even if it was just a second, could not stop watching it, otherwise they would die, what compelled him to do so for 23 years.

Seyyidina Ahmed Tijani (May God be satisfied with him) was from a Sherifian lineage, that is to say, his family-tree could be traced back to the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings be upon him) from Seyyidina Ali and Fatima (May God be satisfied with them) by way of their son Hassan (May God be satisfied with him) but he did not testify it before having asked this question to the Prophet himself (Peace and blessings be upon him) when he saw him in a

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state of waking. He answered him three times: “Indeed you are my son.” Then he added: “Your lineage from Hassan, Ali’s son is authentic.”

Thus, it is in this environment of faith, science and sainthood that was born and grew up Seyyidina Ahmed Tijani (May God be satisfied with him). His family was scrupulously applying the teaching of the Quran and the Sunnah in its daily life.

His father called and encouraged people to carry out good deeds, urged men and women to live accordingly to the Sunnah while he was fighting against any innovation, without fearing for ALLAH’s sake alone, to be wronged by anybody; he was loved and respected. As it often happened, his father used to be visited by spiritual beings (Ruhaniyat) coming to meet all his needs, he would reject them and told them: “Leave me alone with ALLAH. I do not want to have any other link, but that of ALLAH.” People often came to see him in his house and their only purpose was to remember ALLAH.

The education of the saint-child was entrusted to the famous and prestigious Muhammad Ibn Hamou Tidjani (dead in 1162) under the aegis of whom he memorized the whole Quran and this, when he was seven years old. Then he learned Islamic Jurisprudence (Fiqh) according to Imam Malick’s School of Law (May God be satisfied with him) and he studied the different books of jurisprudence with the “knower of ALLAH” (‘Arif billah) the scholar Sidi Mabrouk Ibn Bou’afiya Madaoui Tidjani (May God be satisfied with him). Still very young, Seyyidina Ahmed Tijani (May God be satisfied with him) made himself known thanks to his intelligence and piety; it was the same for his virtues and his modesty. He was an assiduous student and had a surprising will to succeed; he always finished everything he started doing, he always completed it.

One day during his childhood when he was getting out of his school he saw a huge light in front of him that was climbing up to the sky, then the Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him) appeared and enhanced him with these words: “Go on, for you are truly following the right way.” After this event, he ran away to find refuge in his aunt’s house not far from this spot; she covered him up and cheered him up, while she was preparing bread for him.

The young child would see in dreams what was going to happen to him. In fact, he saw himself on a throne, managing and ordering multitudes of creatures. Once he saw the Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him) riding a horse in Ain Madhi and Seyyidina Sheikh was following him very closely; he wanted to ask him for something but preferred waiting that the Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him) dismount his horse to feel more at ease. When the

Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him) got down, he (Peace and blessings be upon him) went to a field and started to pray. Seyyidina Ahmed Tijani (May God be satisfied with him) wanted to join him in his prayer but he only arrived at the moment of the second rak'a. He understood thanks to that dream that his wishes would be fulfilled only in the second part of his life, which was represented by the second rak'a.

As the Saint Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him), Sheikh Ahmed Tijani (May God be satisfied with him) became an orphan. Indeed, in 1752/53 (1166H) when he was only 16 years old his father and his mother died the same day because of a plague outbreak. This event did not demoralize him and he kept studying with more determination.

In 1757/58 (1171H) when he was 21, he left Ain Madhi under the impulsion of an extremely strong thirst of learning, he went to Fes which was at this time a well known city of knowledge with notably its famous University-Mosque: Qarawiyyin. This town was also a place where famous masters and saints used to meet and Seyyidina Sheikh Ahmed Tijani (May God be satisfied with him) visited them so as to take advantage from their blessings (Baraka).

Every day, in company of the Qarawiyyin's scholars, his knowledge was increasing. Finally, he got all the degrees that enabled him to teach all the science known by the Muslims of that time but his strong thirst to learn was not yet quenched. His efforts and fear of ALLAH, his modesty, his love of truth and his dislike of falsehood compelled everyone to respect him.

One day he met a Sheikh who belonged to those who have the spiritual unveiling (kachf) and this man urged him to go back to his native town, what he did; on his way back he stopped at many Zaouia and met a great number of pious men. After leaving Ain Madhi, he went to Abiud Sidi Sheikh where he stayed with Sidi Sheikh Ben Eddin (May God be satisfied with him) for 5 years then he left for Tlemcen in 1767/68 (1181H). He was at that time 31 years old and taught there for many years.

In Tlemcen, he was loved and respected by the scholars for his wide knowledge and wisdom. To those who asked him questions about the identity of the great erudite who would have taught him so much knowledge, he always answered: "I did not receive this science from one person only but from all those I met while traveling."

During all these past years, Sheikh Ahmed Tijani (May God be satisfied with him) was successively the follower of many spiritual ways (6 in all) and he met famous saints (Awliya). Among those ways there was the one of the Qutb Mawlana Tayeb Ibn Muhammad (May God be satisfied with him) dead in 1180, the spiritual way of Sidi Abdul Qadir Jilani (May God be satisfied with him), he took in Fes the Nasiriyah Tariqa with Saint Sidi Muhammad Ibn Abdallah Tazani (May God be satisfied with him) then that of the Qutb Sidi Ahmed el Habib Ibn Muhammad (May God be satisfied with him) dead in 1165 known under the name of El Ghamary Sejelmassi. Besides, this great Qutb, miraculously after his death, came to see Seyyidina Ahmed Tijani (May God be satisfied with him) in a dream and gave him one Divine Name to evoke. He also took the baraka from Saint Malamati Sidi Ahmed Tawachi (May God be satisfied with him) dead in 1204. This one gave him a Divine Name and told him: “You need retreat (khalwa), solitude (el wahda) and remembrance of God (dhikr), and be patient until God gives you a spiritual opening, for you are going to reach a very high rank.” Sidi Ahmed Tijani (May God be satisfied with him) disliked those conditions, and then Sidi Ahmed Tawachi (May God be satisfied with him) told him: “Repeat this invocation, be constant in doing so, without any retirement or loneliness, ALLAH will give you a spiritual opening in this case.”

Once he assimilated the teachings and the secrets of the well known scholars he met and reached spiritual high ranks, this thirst and desire of ALLAH that obsessed him still urged him to go further in his quest. Some famous Saints told him that he would attain a high rank he would never have expected.

Thus, he met the great Saint (Wali) endowed with spiritual unveiling; Sidi Muhammad Ibn Hassan el Wanjali (dead in 1185, may God be satisfied with him,) who told him that he would reach the station of the famous Sheikh and Qutb of his time Sidi Abu El Hassan Al Shadhili (May God be satisfied with him) and he revealed him other secrets too.

One day he also met Saint Sidi Abdallah Ibn Sidi Arbi Ibn Ahmed (May God be satisfied with him) from Auled Ma-an el Andaloussia (dead in 1188) in Fes who after talking with Seyyidina Sheikh Ahmed Tijani (May God be satisfied with him) repeated three times: “ALLAH grabs by your hand”

One day again Seyyidina (May God be satisfied with him) saw in a dream the famous Saint and Qutb of his time, El Ghawth Sidi Abu Madian (May God be satisfied with him) among a gathering of people where he was saying: “He who gives me something, I will give him what he is longing for.” Seyyidina Ahmed Tijani (May God be satisfied with him) then replied: “I give you four Mathaqil (money) and secure the Qutbaniya el ‘Udhma for me.” He answered: “Yes I do secure it for you and you will not die without getting it.” What confirmed his dream

was that another day Seyyidina Sheikh (May God be satisfied with him) came across a man known by the fact that he could see in a state of waking spiritual beings (Ruhani) and these ones informed him about everything he wanted to know. Seyyidina Sheikh (May God be satisfied with him) told him: "I have hidden something deep inside my heart, can you tell me what it is?" When the man questioned the Ruhani they replied that Seyyidina Sheikh Ahmed Tijani (May God be satisfied with him) was interrogating about the Qutbaniya, the man realized that a mysterious person near the spiritual beings said: "Who allowed you to talk about that matter?" These spiritual beings then answered him: "It is him who is questioning about that." That mysterious person then answered them: "It is me who guaranteed him this Qutbaniya in Tlemcen before his departure, he will not die without getting it, then don't meddle in that matter, neither you nor the others." This pious person was no one else than Sidi Abu Madian the Ghawth (May God be satisfied with him). The man who could speak to those spiritual beings had never seen Seyyidina Ahmed Tidjani (May God be satisfied with him) before and he did not know him either.

After many efforts, he felt the need to go on pilgrimage to Mecca; it was in 1772 (1186), he was 36 years old at that time.

While he was travelling, he met other important personalities such as Sidi Muhammad Ibn Abderrahman el Azhari (May God be satisfied with him) in Zwawa area near Algiers, next to whom he enters the Khalwatiyya spiritual way.

Then he arrived in Tunisia where he met Saint Sidi Abdessamad Rahaoui (May God be satisfied with him). Seyyidina Sheikh (May God be satisfied with him) saw the Prophet (May the peace and blessings of ALLAH be upon him) in Tunisia who told him: "Invoke ALLAH to get Knowledge or everything else you desire and I will say "Ameen" so that your prayer be granted." Seyyidina Sheikh therefore invoked God and the Prophet said "Ameen", after that he (May the peace and blessings of ALLAH be upon him) recited Surah "Ad-Duha" (Surah 93) and when he (May the peace and blessings of ALLAH be upon him) came up to the verse "And verily, your Lord will give you (all good) so that you shall be well-pleased", the Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him) fixed his noble eyes on Seyyidina Ahmed Tijani (May God be satisfied with him) and finally finished reciting the mentioned Surah. Seyyidina Sheikh Ahmed Tijani (May God be satisfied with him) stayed in Tunisia for one year between the town of Tunis and that of Sousse. He was teaching there a variety of sciences as well as the Hikam of Ibn Ata Allah. Dazzled with the extension of Sheikh Ahmed Tijani's knowledge, the Emir of the country sent him a message asking him to stay in Tunisia forever to teach there the sublime science and to deal with religious matters. He proposed him to give him a house, a high salary and to make available to him the Zaytouna University. When Seyyidina (May God be satisfied with him) got the Emir's letter he kept quiet then the day after he left the town and took a boat for Cairo in Egypt, with the firm intention to meet the famous Saint,

the majestic and the perfect “knower of ALLAH” (‘Arif billah) Sidi Mahmoud el Kurdiu (May God be satisfied with him) who was originated from Iraq.

During their first encounter, Sidi Mahmoud el Kurdiu (May God be satisfied with him) told Seyyidina Ahmed Tijani (May God be satisfied with him): “You are loved by God here in this world and in the next world.” Seyyidina Ahmed Tijani (May God be satisfied with him) asked him: “How do you know that?” Sidi Mahmoud el Kurdiu (May God be satisfied with him) answered him: “I hold this truth from ALLAH!” Then Seyyidina Ahmed Tijani (May God be satisfied with him) told him: “I had seen you when I was in Tunisia and I had told you ‘I am wholly made of steel’, and you answered: ‘yes, that’s right and I am going to turn your steel into gold.’” Then Sidi Mahmoud el Kurdiu (May God be satisfied with him) said to him: “Yes it is as you have seen.” Few days later, Sidi Mahmoud el Kurdiu (May God be satisfied with him) questioned Seyyidina Ahmed Tijani (May God be satisfied with him) about his ambition to which Seyyidina replied: “My ambition is to reach El Qutbaniya El ‘Udhma (i.e. the most high-ranking...)” Then the famous scholar declared firmly: “O my friend, The Almighty will give you more than that.”

He finally joined the holy town of Mecca and got in touch with pious men devoted to God’s worshiping and “knowers of ALLAH” (‘Arifin billah); Among them the very important Sheikh Sidi Ahmed Ibn Abdallah El Hindi (May God be satisfied with him) who was not allowed to meet anyone. So he sent him a letter in which he announced him: “You are the heir of my sciences, my secrets, my gifts and my lights (spiritual divine lights).” While he was writing these words to Seyyidina Ahmed Tijani, Sidi Ahmed Ibn Abdallah el Hindi declared to his servant: “He is the very man I was waiting for, he is my heir”. Then his servant exclaimed: “I have been your servant for 18 years and today a man has come from the Maghreb and you tell me he is your heir (What about me?)!” Sidi Abdallah el Hindi (May God be satisfied with him) then revealed him this secret: “I was waiting for but him and in that matter I have no responsibility, ALLAH by his mercy, chooses whom He wants. If I were to decide I would have chosen my own son for a long time.” So, he transmitted him all his sciences, secrets and lights. Then he died after having entrusted the education of his only son to Seyyidina (May God be satisfied with him).

He also announced him his impending encounter with the well-known Saint and “Supreme Pole” (Qutb Jami’), Sidi Muhammad Ibn Abdel Karim Samman (May God be satisfied with him) who died in 1775. In fact, he met him in Medina and this one made him go on a retreat for three days and revealed him the great powers and secrets of famous pious “men of God”.

After Medina, the floodlit town, and the visit of the Saint Prophet’s tomb, Seyyidina Ahmed Tijani rejoined Cairo and during a new meeting, Sidi Mahmoud el Kurdiu (May God be

satisfied with him) transmitted him the Khalwatiya spiritual way and delivered him a degree that enabled him to initiate, educate and teach his followers in this religious order.

Finally he left for the Maghreb, went through cities and stopped in towns.

After that, he went to live alone on retreat in the Algerian desert (departure from Tlemcen in 1196) in the villages of Chellala (from 1196 to 1199) and Boussemgoune (from 1199 to 1213).

It was in the village of Boussemgoune that Seyyidina Ahmed Tijani (May God be satisfied with him) obtained “the great spiritual opening” (Fath El Akbar). In fact, when he was 46 years old (1196) during his spiritual retirement, in broad daylight, the Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him) in a state of waking, came up to him and told him: “From now onwards, I am your initiator and your guide; nobody else will pretend to be your initiator; consequently, you must give up everything you have got from previous spiritual ways, nobody will reproach you anything, for I would be your intermediary next to ALLAH and I will help you.”

Therefore he became the trustee of the Prophet’s himself spiritual way which contains all the other spiritual paths. This Tariqa he received is called the Ahmedian, Muhammadian, Ibrahimiyah, Hanifiyah (and Tidjaniyah) Tariqa which contains so many God’s blessings never included in any other ways, the same way as Muhammad’s community has had graces never obtained by any other community. The virtues of the Prophet’s way (and of his Khalife Sidi Ahmed Tijani) are uncountable.

Therefore the Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him) taught Seyyidina Sheikh his wurd (religious prayers one must repeat daily) and dictated him the conditions of this spiritual way. He personally gave him among other pieces of advice: “Keep on following this Tariqa without retiring from this world neither ceasing your relationship with other human beings until you attain the spiritual station to which you are promised, keeping your state, without any discomfort neither difficulties nor excessive religious practices, stop calling on any saint from now on.”

He received a direct initiation from the Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him) who ordered and allowed him to call people to this spiritual way. Then came an expansion-period

that lasted 13 years in this area; people came from several countries to profit from his Baraka and shared what the Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him) trusted him with.

This religious order expanded considerably in a twinkling of an eye and this phenomenon stirred up the jealousy and the restlessness of the Turkish authorities of that time. So again Seyyidina Sheikh Tidjani's destiny was going to be strangely similar to that of the Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him), for as the Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him) had to exile from Mecca to Medina, Seyyidina Sheikh had to exile from Boussemgoune to Fes (departure from Boussemgoune in Rabi'al Awwal 17, arrived in Fes in Rabi' Thani 6, 1213).

In Fes, he educated his followers who were more and more numerous, teaching and explaining them the holy Quran and the Prophet's traditions (Sunnah). The wide extension of his particular knowledge, the depth of his teachings and the disclosure of his genuine wonders won the esteem of more and more people very soon, among them we can find a high number of great scholars, perfect saints and spiritual guides; many of them were grandchildren of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings be upon him).

Thus, since his meeting with the Messenger of ALLAH (Peace and blessings be upon him) in Boussemgoune, he had never stopped applying his teachings and education during all those years, through different events, till the so much announced and predicted day when he reached the supreme rank of the Qutbaniya el 'Udhma in Muharram month in 1214 (in 'Arafat through a prodigy).

So he attained two single stations in the saints' spiritual hierarchy, the one of Khatmiya (the seal of sainthood, the highest rank among saints; he closed forever the sainthood's stations) and the one of Katmiya "the Hidden Pole" a spiritual rank known only by ALLAH and His Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him). He was awarded this high rank on Safar 18. He is the spiritual intermediary between Prophets (Peace of God be on them all) and all the other saints.

A poet said: "The message has been closed by our saint Prophet and the sainthood has been closed by Sheikh Ahmed Tijani; what we mean here is to make people be aware of his supreme and single sainthood; as for the Pole of common sainthood, he will always exist as time goes by, by the pure favour of our glorious Lord."

He is on the top of the sainthood ladder. Only the Prophets (Peace be upon them) and the Prophet's companions occupy a more high-ranking station. He is the Hidden Pole who will be known only at the last judgment day through a voice that will shout: "O People who are gathering here! Here is your guide who transmitted you Divine lights since the beginning of the creation, till now!"

Seyyidina Ahmed Tijani (May God be satisfied with him) revealed: "The master of the existence (Peace and blessings be upon him) has loudly and clearly informed me that I am the Hidden Pole and this when I was in a waking state not in a dream."

He also explained the role of the Hidden pole on these terms: "All the saints drink from our ocean (of spiritual divine lights/flux) since the creation until the day when an angel will blow into the horn of the last judgment." He said also: "All the flowing of lights coming from the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings be upon him) is collected by the spirits of the other Prophets. Then all the flowing of lights coming from the Prophets is collected by my spirit; and from me it is shared among the creatures since the beginning of the world till the day when an angel blows into the Horn of the last judgment day. But, I have received sciences through which I have been favoured, between the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings be upon him) and me, with no intermediary."

These words have been said in the intention to allow the followers to understand better the importance and the values of the blessings that ALLAH has bestowed to the owner of this spiritual rank never attained by any other saint and therefore to be grateful towards ALLAH.

ALLAH said: "And proclaim the Grace of Your Lord"

In the same way, the Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him) had proclaimed: "I was already a Prophet while Adam was between water and clay"

The Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him) also declared: "I will be the first risen from the dead the resurrection day, I will be the speaker when resurrected people are gathered and the announcer of good news when people are desperate. I'm the holder of ALLAH's praise-banner without any pretentiousness. I will be the first to ask for intercession and get it; I will be the first to knock at Paradise's door and to be allowed to enter. I will do so with poor believers and I'm the most deserving among all Adam's children next to my Lord without any pretentiousness."

Seyyidina Ahmed Tijani (May God be satisfied with him) said: “My two feet you can see here are set on the nape of the neck of any saint” Sidi Muhammad el Ghali (May God be satisfied with him) a prominent Seyyidina’s companion made him note that Sidi Abdul Qadir Jilani (May God be satisfied with him) said almost a similar sentence. Seyyidina Sheikh Ahmed Tijani (May God be satisfied with him) replied: “He was perfectly right to say such a thing, but he was talking about the saints of his time, as for me, I repeat it again: My two feet that you can see here, have never ceased being on the nape of the neck of any saint”

Sidi Muhammad El Ghali (May God be satisfied with him) said about Seyyidina Sheikh Ahmed Tijani’s role and rank: “It is through his intermediary that all the saints, without being aware of it, do receive the spiritual flowing of the Prophets (Peace be up on them).”

Seyyidina Ahmed Tijani (May God be satisfied with him) left this world on Thursday Shawwal 17 1230 when he was 80 years old. After having finished Subh prayer, he laid down on his side, asked for a glass of water, he drank out of it, then his blessed soul left his blessed body.

He was buried in the garden which juxtaposed the walls of the blessed Zaouia of Fes. After that event, gradually, during its enlargement this plot of land was included in the Zaouia (beginning of building in 1215).

Since his departure the light he had inherited from the Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him) never ceased to spread.

