

Fes, Morocco

Historical outline



Photos of the blessed zawiya of Seyyidina Ahmed Tidjani (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) In Fes (Morocco)

The city of Fes was built around 789 ad by Sidi Mulay Idriss 1st (may ALLAH be pleased with him), saint and descendant of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). Towards 809, the city became the seat of the dynasty through his equally pious Sidi Mulay 2nd (may ALLAH be pleased with him) where his mausoleum is located. In 818, two distinct quarters developed in this noble city due, on the one hand, to the massive arrival of 8 thousand refugee families from Cordoue (Spain) and on the other hand 2000 refugee families from kairouan (modern day Tunisia)

This imperial city will grow and prosper through events over the centuries. In 859, Fes was endowed with one of the principal, spiritual and intellectual center of Islam, the mosque of Qarawiyn. It is thus named because it was founded by virtue of the generosity of a pious lady named Fatima, daughter of the immigrant Muhammad El Fihri the Tunisian, in the Kaouranese quarter. She invested her entire fortune in the construction of this magnificent mosque which has 14 doors and whose prayer hall can host 20000 people. In addition, within its wall is the oldest Islamic university in the world frequented by the greatest minds in all areas of knowledge. In the 14th century, it was frequented by more than 8000 students.

In the course of history and the succession of ruling dynasties, Fes lost its privilege place as capital of the kingdom to Marrackech and then to Meknes, regaining its status during the reign of the Sultan Alaouite Mulay AbdAllah (1729-1759) and until 1912 when the capital was moved to Rabat. It remains nonetheless the spiritual capital of the country.

Seyyidina Ahmed (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) and his destiny in Fes.

Seyyidina Ahmed Tidjani (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) was only 21 years old the first time he went to Fes, actually he went there with the intention to study in the famous Muslim university of Qarawiyn and then, having obtained all the diplomas he returned to Ain Madhi.

Aside from fleeting visits, the second time that he returned to settle in the famous city, he was 63 years old. He migrated from Boussemghoune on the 17th Rabi el Awal of the 1213 of the hegira (1797/98 ad) with his whole family and arrived in Fes on the 6th of Rabi Thani of the same year, bringing with him the precious legacy of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him): **the Tariqa Ahmediyya, Mohamediyya, Ibrahimiyya Hanifiyya.**

This simple man whose appearance marked by the harshness of the desert intrigued the inhabitants of Fes and its refined and elegant scholars. Rapidly, style gave way to content and the scholars of Fes could only bow before the extent of his particular knowledge and his perspicacity. Even Mawlana Suleiman, the Sultan himself, the great guardian of religious orthodoxy, began to take interest in Seyyidina (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) and in the rumor that he was the direct custodian of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), and his disciple, and that he saw him in an awakened state.

He would test him several times and ascertain the truth of his affirmations to the extent of affiliating himself to the Tariqa with his own noble hands. Mawlana (may ALLAH be pleased with him) offered him a beautiful abode called the Dar Miraya (the abode of mirrors) that was part of his personal estate. Seyyidina Ahmed Tidjani (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) accepted it only after having obtained the proof that this abode was not part of the common heritage of the crown, and for his entire stay until his death, he gave the equivalent in bread of the rent to the poor, as he had been ordained by the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him).

Preceding, the construction of the zawiya, Seyyidia Ahmed Tidjani (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) often used to go to pray in the mosque of Masjid Diwan. There, he authorized and certified the Book **Djawahirou-l-Ma'ani** that Sidi Ali Harazim (may ALLAH be pleased with him) had written from notes that he had compiled.

In accordance with the instruction he had received, he began writing about two months after the arrival of Seyyidina Ahmed Tidjani (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) in Fes in 1213 and completed it in the month of the Dhoul Qada in the year 1214 of hegira.

Having received from the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) the guaranty that all those who would see his face on Mondays and Fridays would be forgiven, on these two days in particular, Seyyidina Ahmed Tidjani (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) made it a habit to go out and stand on the side of the road where there were the most passers by. Similarly, he would perform his prayers in the busiest mosques so that as many people as possible would benefit from this guarantee.

It is in this holy city that Seyyidina Ahmed Tidjani (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) was destined to be granted the ultimate station of Seal of Mohamadian Sainthood, just as Ibn Arabi (may ALLAH be pleased with him) had encountered his spirit six hundred years earlier in this same place. He attained this unique station that had been predicted and announced so many times since his childhood and that was granted to him by the intermediary of Seyyidina Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), the Seal of the prophets.

Zawiya Tidjaniya El Koubra of Fes

Before the blessed Zawiya was built, Seyyidina Ahmed Tidjani (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) and his companions (may ALLAH be pleased with them) gathered in the corridor in front of the door to his house and sometimes in certain mosques to perform the Wazifa together. Then, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) ordain to Seyyidina Ahmed Tidjani (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) to build the blessed zawiya and for that he should choose the best and most pure location.

So Seyyidina Ahmed Tidjani (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) chose the place where the zawiya is presently built. Previously, the neighborhood was called Dardas, and these days, it is called Blida. He purchased this place with his own personal and lawfully acquired funds. It was a ruin with a big fig tree and it is here that Seyyidina Ahmed Tidjani (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) is buried.

This ruin was so frightening that nobody dared enter. According to a reliable source, at certain times, voices could be heard, as if a group was performing the dhikr and it was the place that the Majadhib (drawn towards God and enraptured by Him) used to visit.

Before its construction, the famous majdoub Sidi Lahbi (may ALLAH be pleased with him) used to put his ear to the door and say to the passers by: "Come close and listen the dhikr". When the zawiya was built, this majdoub said: "Fes, and especially Dardas, has been strengthened." Later, Seyyidina Ahmed Tidjani (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) bought the surrounding land and among his acquisitions was a house which belonged to a woman.

When this lady was solicited by people jealous of Seyyidina Ahmed Tidjani (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) seeking to prevent her from conceding anything to Seyyidina (may ALLAH

sanctify his precious secret), he compensated her generously. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) instructed that she should be generously compensated and he said to Seyyidina Ahmed Tidjani (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret): “I want nobody else to take ownership of this place.”

When Seyyidina (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) wished to begin the construction, certain people of Fes gathered to prevent him and brought the matter before the emir Maoulana Souleïman (may ALLAH be pleased with him), the emir of the faithful. He (may ALLAH be pleased with him) had witnessed the prodigies of Seyyidina (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret), and consequently, not only did he ordain the construction but in addition he sent 2 pouches of money and all the necessary for this undertaking. Seyyidina (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) refused this gift and sent it back to the Sultan explaining that he had no need of it and said: “The matter of the Zawiya is taken care of by ALLAH directly.”

Nonetheless, the noble Sultan insisted that he keep the pouches of money and so Seyyidina Ahmed (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) accepted them but refused to use them for the expenses of the Zawiya and gave all the money to the poor and the needy.

The construction of the Zawiya began in 1215 of the hegira (1800 ad). At the beginning of the work, Seyyidina (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) was informed that some of the construction workers, who hated him, were wasting the building material by exaggerating the quantities. The intention was to generate supplementary expenses and sabotage the completion of the construction. Seyyidina (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) paid no attention to their actions as if he had seen nothing. When certain companion, who had also noticed this, questioned Seyyidina (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) about this situation, he answered: “Let them do it, because by thinking that they are deceiving us, in truth, they are being of service to us, and the Zawiya is taken care of by ALLAH Himself.” With every increase of their action, Seyyidina (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) became more joyful and spent even more. Later, Seyyidina (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) passed away and the Zawiya, in which little construction work remained, was completed by the disciples in a very short time.

It is said that once when Seyyidina Ahmed Tidjani (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) was sitting in the blessed Zawiya with some companions that he stood up, and so did they, then Seyyidina stood on the doorstep and looked out to the left and to the right then he smiled and returned inside the Zawiya. His companions asked the reason for his smile to which Seyyidina Ahmed Tidjani (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) replied: “I was looking at the size of the Zawiya and its extent to the left and to the right. It will expand on the right as far as Djiniyara road and on the left as far as Larandja Mosque and it will have 8 doors.” Since this prediction, the Zawiya has been extended more than four times because of the ever increasing number of those who joined the Tariqa and, on the right, it has reached the road in question, and already has 3 doors.

It should be known that this blessed place has merits that place it above any other Zawiya. Speaking of its merits, Seyyidina Ahmed Tidjani (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) said: “If the great knowers knew the merit contained in this Zawiya, they would come and erect their tents here.” Seyyidina (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) would often speak of the worth of the Zawiya, encouraging people to come and pray here. He (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) said: “The prayer in the Zawiya is accepted without any doubt.” Among the particularities of this blessed Zawiya is the fact that it is forbidden to bury anyone here through respect and in order to preserve its purity. Seyyidina Ahmed Tidjani (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret)

strongly emphasized (insisted) this point going as far as to say: “He who is buried in the Zawiya will be consumed by Fire.”

As a precaution, this warning was engraved on a marble plaque fixed to one of the pillars of the Zawiya facing the place where Seyyidina is buried (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret), following the written instruction given by Sidi Muhammad El Habib (may ALLAH be pleased with him), the son of Seyyidina Ahmed Tidjani (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret). Numerous laudatory poems composed by eminent figures were engraved on the walls and the columns. It should be known also that five wells were dug in the Zawiya, there was also a library belonging to Seyyidina (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) and a room where he prepared medicinal potions from plants.

Also among the merits contained in the blessed Zawiya, it should be known that at the beginning of the construction, Seyyidina Ahmed Tidjani (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) forbade access and then, accompanied by some of the elite among his companions, he engraved the greatest of Supreme Names on the stone and just after it he wrote: “O my God I beseech you, O my Master by the Truth of the greatest of Your Supreme Name, protect my companions from Qaf to Qaf.” Then he instructed for it to be buried in the foundation of one of the pillars which has since be known as the golden pillar.

The death of Seyyidina Ahmed Tidjani (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret)

During the illness of Seyyidina Ahmed Tidjani (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) that preceded Seyyidina’s death, he asked for the Daliya of Boussairi to be brought to him, but this poem could not be found in Fes. So Seyyidina (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) ordained some of the elite among his companions to go to the town of Meknes. When they found it and brought it back, Seyyidina Ahmed Tidjani (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) instructed them to read it to him. After the reading, he did not speak to anybody. He also asked them to bring him the poem of Imam Ghazzali (may ALLAH be pleased with him), he put it under his pillow the day before his passing as Imam Ghazzali (may ALLAH be pleased with him) had done. Here are the first verses of this poem:

« Ask the brothers who have seen me dead,

Who have wept and have sorrowfully recited the funeral litany for me

Is your sorrow for he who has gone

Or for he who remains present among you

Do you truly believe that I am this corpse ?

No, by God ! This dead body is not me.

In this shape, this body

Was my clothes, my tunic for a while.

I am a pearl enclosed in a shell

Which was for me a prison to which I was accustomed.

I am a bird and this is my cage

I have flown and this body has stayed behind to perish

I give thanks to ALLAH who has freed me

And who has built an abode for me on high

Before today I was dead among you

I have been brought back to life and my shroud removed.

On this day, I converse with the noble assemblies

And I see the truth with my own eyes.

I am standing before the well-guarded tablet

On which I read and I see

All that was, all that will be and all that is imminent »

Because of the intensity of what was descending upon him, in the penultimate moment of his life, Seyyidina (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) said: “ALLAH, ALLAH, the light is burning my heart.” He repeated it all through the night. Then, as dawn (Fajr) approached, Seyyidina Ahmed Tidjani (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) turned towards the people present and said: “The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and the four Khoulaifa (may ALLAH be pleased with them) are present, then rise and leave.” Only a few of the elite remained with him. Only one hour later, he performed the Subh prayer, and laid down on his side and requested a glass of water. After drinking, he laid down once more and left this world. It was Thursday the 17th of Shawwal in 1230 of the hegira (1815 ad). He was 80 years old.

He was buried in the presence of an impressive number of scholars, pious men and saints as well as the emir. The prince of believers Maoulana Souleïman (may ALLAH be pleased with him) wished to attend but he was in Marrakesh when it took place. The Qadi of Fes, the eminent Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Dakali (may ALLAH be pleased with him) performed the funeral prayer for the blessed body of Seyyidina Ahmed Tidjani (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret). It was a very intense moment of emotion and tears. He was buried in the garden next to the walls of the blessed Zawiya. Later on, as the Zawiya was extended, this parcel was included within it.

The departure of Seyyidina’s (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) children from Fes.

Seyyidina (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) expressed the wish that after his passing, his companion sidi Mohamed El Ghali (may ALLAH be pleased with him) would performed the funeral prayer for him although he was not present because he was travelling. In addition, he confided guardianship of his two noble children to his great Caliph along with the mission to return them to their home in Ain Madhi.

Indeed, Seyyidina (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) had said: “Only the desert is suitable for my children”

When Seyyidina (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) left this world, the Pole sidi Hajj ‘Ali Tamacini (may ALLAH be pleased with him) accompanied by several companions from the desert, wished to take the children of Seyyidina (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) but they were enjoying Fes so much that they refused to go with him and decided to stay at Dar al Miraya.

Unable to force Sidi Hajj (may ALLAH be pleased with him) left and then having left the city, ordered his men who numbered 200 to stop and to raise their hands and to beseech ALLAH thus: “I implore ALLAH that the Sultan reclaims Seyyidina’s (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) house so that his children would lose interest and wish to leave this place.” Then he concluded his supplication and set off again on the road to Ain Madhi.

Later, in accordance with ALLAH’s destiny, this following incident occurred: Sidi Muhammad el Kabir (may ALLAH be pleased with him), Seyyidina’s (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) son was riding down the road on a mule that belongs to his noble father. Moulay son of Sultan (may ALLAH be pleased with him) saw him and said: “I would like you to bring me that mule so that I can ride it and admire it because I like it. Then I will send it back to you.” Sidi Muhammad el Kabir (may ALLAH be pleased with him) understood his real objective, and that it was simply a ruse in order to take possession of the mule. And so he did not bring it to him. The Sultan’s son felt offended and so he sent a letter to his father who was in Marakesh to inform him that Seyyidina’s (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) children wished to live the city.

Moulay Ibrahim asked his father what was to become of the Dar Miraya after their departure. The Sultan ordained to give this house to a Sherif who was a member of his family. This reply arrived on the day of Eid el Adha (celebration of sacrifice). Mulay Ibrahim (may ALLAH be pleased with him) informed Seyyidina’s (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) children that should leave the house that very day pretexting necessary maintenance. Before his passing, Seyyidina Ahmed Tidjani (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) had predicted this, and that the subsequent acquisition of the house by one of his disciples, and this is indeed what happened.

Seyyidina’s (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) children went with all their possessions to the blessed Zawiya. In this uncomfortable situation, they began to feel cramped. In this way, they waited for Sidi Hajj ‘Ali Tamacini (may ALLAH be pleased with him) so that they could leave with him to Ain Madhi. When finally he came back and wanted to take them with him, they were prevented by the companions of Seyyidina Ahmed Tidjani (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) who lived in Fes. They could only go after lengthy discussions. On the 21st of Safar 1231 of the hegira, a little more than four months after his passing, the blessed body was exhumed by his children and several servants and inhabitants of the Sahara.

He was placed in a coffin which they hid in the Djiniyara road (not far from the Zawiya) awaiting the departure for the Sahara the next day or the day after that. On the night when Seyyidina (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) was removed from his tomb, he visited 50 of his companions (appeared to 50 of his companions) in a dream and said to each of them: “I am going to travel”.

When they gathered in the blessed Zawiya the day following the exhumation, and all recounted the same vision, they understood that Seyyidina Ahmed Tidjani (may ALLAH sanctify his

precious secret) had been removed from his tomb. They looked for him and found him in the street in question where he had spent the night with his children. At this precise moment, Seyyidina's companions (may ALLAH be pleased with them) realized that the prediction Seyyidina (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) had made before he died, wishing for his companion Sidi Muhammad el Ghali (may ALLAH be pleased with him) to perform the funeral prayer for him, had been accomplished.

He was traveling when Seyyidina Ahmed Tidjani (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) passed away, but since this unexpected event had coincided with his return, he was able to perform the prayer for Seyyidina (may ALLAH be pleased with him).

When they put him back in the tomb, an indescribable fragrance emanated and the perfume was so intoxicating that it was feared that the people present would swoon. In addition, they noticed that the vegetation at his feet was flourishing and glossy. It was as if he had just died. As a precaution, the inhabitants of Fes built something heavy and solid on his tomb.

The tombs of several Seyyidina's (may ALLAH sanctify his precious secret) children, who have died at a young age, including Sidi Khalifa, Sayda Fatima, Sidi Muhammad AsSeghir, are in Fes. A large number of his companions and pillars of the Tariqa were buried in different cemeteries outside of the old city (may ALLAH be pleased with them) (Bab Ftouh, Bab Ajissa...).



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