

## Judicial Institutions in the Rural Areas of the Regency of Algiers during the Ottoman Era (1518–1830)

Dr. El-Amir Boughedada <sup>1</sup>, Dr. Ali Ayada <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Mohamed Khider – Biskra, (Algeria).Email: [boughedada.elamir@univ-biskra.dz](mailto:boughedada.elamir@univ-biskra.dz)

<sup>2</sup> University of Mohamed Khider – Biskra, (Algeria). Email: [ali.ayad63@yahoo.com](mailto:ali.ayad63@yahoo.com)

Received : 11/02/2025 ; Accepted : 21/08/2025 ; Published : 19/09/2025

### Abstract:

During the Ottoman era in Algeria (1518–1830), rural areas relied on informal judicial institutions to maintain social order and resolve disputes. Three main groups played a judicial role: the Murabitun (ascetic religious figures), Sufi orders, and tribal sheikhs. The Murabitun, revered for their piety, issued immediate and final judgments accepted without appeal. However, many were unqualified impostors who ruled by personal preference rather than Islamic law. As their influence declined, Sufi orders assumed judicial authority. Their leaders, respected as spiritual heirs of the Prophet, mediated disputes with rulings rooted in religious mysticism rather than legal codes. Despite lacking formal legal training, their judgments were widely accepted. Tribal sheikhs also settled conflicts, relying on wisdom and local approval, though sometimes their rulings diverged from Islamic law. All three groups functioned without formal legal assistants or documentation, and their influence was strongest in areas beyond Ottoman control. Their presence brought stability, filled the void of official institutions, and reflected the community's need for accessible justice rooted in trust and tradition.

**Key Words:** Murabitun, Sufi Orders, Tribal Sheikhs, Ottoman Algeria, Rural Justice Institutions

### INTRODUCTION :

One of the key factors that helped rural populations organize social life and maintain stability in villages during the Ottoman period was the presence of judicial bodies. These bodies settled disputes and conflicts that arose among individuals from time to time. Most commonly, these disputes related to trade, religious matters such as inheritance, divorce, alimony, and issues concerning what is lawful or forbidden in religion.

The judicial bodies that handled such matters in rural and mountainous areas differed in their structure and importance from one region to another. In some regions, the judicial role was carried out by a well-known marabout (religious figure) in the area, or by followers of a Sufi order that held influence in the region. In other areas, local elders or respected community figures were responsible for judicial matters<sup>1</sup>

However, this does not mean that judicial authority in all Algerian rural areas was held by these figures. In some rural regions that showed a degree of loyalty and submission to Ottoman rule, judicial matters were handled by a legal agent. This agent was appointed by the city judge. Before his appointment, he had to pass a specific examination and provide proof of good reputation and integrity<sup>2</sup>.

We will attempt here to shed light on the judicial bodies in rural and mountainous areas that were beyond the control of the Ottomans, offering clarification and analysis.

**1. The Judiciary of the Murābiṭūn (Ascetics):** The term Murābiṭ is derived from the Arabic root *rabāṭa*, meaning commitment or pledge. A Murābiṭ is someone who pledges before God not to overstep moral boundaries and to act only in ways that serve the good of humanity. For this reason, the Murābiṭūn were held in continuous reverence, even after their death<sup>3</sup>.

At first, the term Murābiṭ was used in the Maghreb, as in the Arab East, to refer to any man known for his piety who remained stationed at frontier posts—both to repel enemies and to devote himself to worship. Over time, the meaning evolved. It came to refer to anyone who inspired curiosity and admiration for his asceticism and devotion. It was also used to describe anything extraordinary or astonishing to the mind. Additionally, the term was applied to anyone who renounced worldly life, whether alive or dead. The name was also given to the tomb that contains the body of a Murābiṭ, as well as to his successor<sup>4</sup>.

The Murābiṭūn began to spread widely in Algeria starting from the fifteenth century CE. They chose rural areas and mountainous regions as the center of their activity and as their place of residence<sup>5</sup>. Each Murābiṭ confined his presence to a specific area in the countryside, usually within the territory of his tribe or clan<sup>6</sup>.

Although the Murābiṭūn began to lose their areas of influence gradually from the early sixteenth century CE, Sufi orders began to take their place. These orders were able to absorb most of them into their ranks.<sup>7</sup> However, some of these Murabitun managed to withstand these pressures. They maintained their presence and continued to exist even during the French occupation of Algeria<sup>8</sup>. This enabled him to play a fundamental role in the social life of certain rural tribes and clans. He was able to replace the official bodies and institutions that these social units lacked, especially the judiciary.

These Murabitun acted as both religious and criminal judges within their spheres of influence. They handled and decided various disputes among members of the tribe or clan. Their rulings were immediate and final, not open to appeal. The disputing parties trusted them and accepted their judgments without objection, even if the outcomes were not in their favor. This was due to the remarkable authority they held, as described by Hamdan Khodja<sup>9</sup> -This was deeply rooted in the

minds of the disputing parties, who believed that these rulings were divine judgments. They saw the actions of the Murabitun as a reflection of the divine power guiding and commanding them<sup>10</sup>.

These Murabitun also did not require judicial assistants such as notaries, clerks, or enforcers to carry out their legal duties, unlike the formal judges in urban settings. All their followers acted as their assistants. They would carry out their orders without the need for official appointments or financial compensation. Their rulings were not written in official documents, so there was no need for scribes. Their commands were obeyed by everyone, without the use of force or intermediaries to enforce them.

This is clearly reflected in historical sources, which state that the Murabitun did not need to instruct their followers to obey the law. It was enough for them to say, “May God curse whoever does this,” or, “May God curse whoever fails to do that,” and the followers would immediately comply. They would fulfill the command without delay. When necessary, the Murabitun used strong and commanding language that resembled the tone of a supreme and powerful authority<sup>11</sup>.

Since most of these Murabitun were impostors and opportunists, they pretended to be devout and ascetic. They took advantage of people’s naivety and claimed to be Murabitun, although they were not. In this regard, Al-Eid Masoud states: “The growing attention people gave to the Murabitun, and their belief in their sainthood, led many impostors and exploiters to take advantage of people’s simplicity. They claimed sainthood and pretended to be pious and ascetic. They called themselves—or were called by their followers—Murabit. As a result, the number of Murabitun increased, and so did the ribats in Algeria, some of which were genuine, while others were false”<sup>12</sup>.

We find that they were unfamiliar with the rulings of Islamic law, even though some historical sources describe them as often performing religious roles or teaching Islamic subjects in religious institutions. These included places such as the zawiya, the dome, the mosque, or the ‘umra, which often bore their names or the names of their ancestors.<sup>13</sup> This is especially true in cases where some became Murabitun through inheritance. People accepted them as Murabitun in place of their deceased fathers or grandfathers. They were given the title “Sidi,” followed by the name of the most well-known figure in the family, even if they did not follow the path of their ancestors.<sup>14</sup>

This had a negative impact on their role. The fact that a father or grandfather was known for spiritual gifts or for knowledge in religion and leadership did not necessarily mean that the son or grandson shared the same qualities. However, this truth was often lost on the rural Bedouin communities.

This leads us to believe that, when settling disputes, such figures likely felt no hesitation in issuing rulings based on personal desires or preferences, even if those rulings contradicted Islamic law. Their followers still accepted these decisions as divine judgments or commands revealed to them.

Nonetheless, as Hamdan Khodja puts it, the presence of these Murabitun in remote areas beyond the reach of central authority—where no formal institutions such as the judiciary existed—

was, in itself, a blessing. They were able to prevent bloodshed in those regions and silence conflict through the influence and authority they held over the population<sup>15</sup>.

**2- The Judiciary of Sufi Orders:** Sufism refers to the withdrawal of the soul from worldly attractions and material pleasures. It is a form of renunciation, where one turns away from wealth, status, and desires that people usually seek, with the aim of devoting oneself fully to God. It involves seclusion from others, retreat, and continuous worship<sup>16</sup>.

Sufi angles and orders abound<sup>17</sup> Its religious authority and cultural, social, and political influence grew stronger in Algeria toward the end of the Ottoman period. This was due to the impact of Sufi orders in Asia Minor, to which the ruling Ottoman Turks had already been exposed before their arrival in Algeria<sup>18</sup>.

All of these Sufi orders chose the countryside as the main field and center for their activities. The rural environment was more suitable for attracting followers, due to the intellectual level of its inhabitants. It was also a favorable setting for spreading their teachings, being far from the seat of power, beyond the reach of Turkish surveillance, and not subject to any authority except that of the Murabitun.

Some of these Murabitun began to neglect religious guidance and the call to God in these areas. They abandoned asceticism and simplicity, and turned instead to a life of comfort, enjoying the resources passed down to them by their ancestors. As a result, the Sufi orders gradually replaced them and, in time, absorbed most of them completely<sup>19</sup>.

These Sufi orders and their lodges have played significant roles in political, religious, cultural, and especially social life within their areas of influence. They did not merely remove social and economic barriers among different segments of the population. Rather, they brought the poor and the wealthy closer, as well as the educated and the illiterate, the noble and the commoner. They fostered unity among them all, in light of the Qur'anic verse: "Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you"<sup>20</sup> These orders also served as a form of judicial authority. They worked to resolve disputes and reduce conflicts and tensions among individuals and groups within the population. This role was made possible by the respected status of their sheikhs, deputies, and representatives. As a result, the local communities enjoyed a sense of stability, psychological comfort, and moral security. Many began to see these sheikhs as their true leaders, in place of official judges or civil authorities, whose decisions and behavior failed to meet their expectations or earn their trust..<sup>21</sup>

An example of this in the late Ottoman period is the muqaddam (leader) of the Rahmaniyya order<sup>22</sup>, In the mountains of Jarjara Sidi Ali Ben Issa<sup>23</sup>, who lived in the village of Froma<sup>24</sup>, He used to visit the markets located within the area of his influence to act as a judge in various commercial disputes. His rulings were binding on all and accepted by everyone, due to the power of his words, which his followers believed to be sacred. They also believed that anyone who disobeyed or ignored his decisions would be subject to God's curse<sup>25</sup>.

It is not surprising that the rulings issued by these Sufi figures were final, binding, and not subject to appeal. They required neither explanation nor clarification. This is because Sufi orders

believe their sheikhs possess true knowledge, are fully aware of it, and are the spiritual heirs of the Prophet—peace be upon him. They are not in need of formal instruction in jurisprudence. Instead, they derive their rulings directly from the Qur'an and from the prophets and messengers of God, with whom they are believed to communicate according to their spiritual state and rank<sup>26</sup>. They were presented to the people on this basis. As a result, these sheikhs were seen as souls held in high regard by God. They were viewed as sacred figures, deeply connected to spiritual forces. Everything they said or did was believed to carry a hidden meaning. It was something that every believing Muslim was expected to accept in silence and humility<sup>27</sup>.

Unlike the *murābiṭīn*, who often issued rulings in disputes according to their personal desires and interests—as previously noted—the Sufi orders set clear penalties for each type of incident. These included fights, quarrels, verbal or physical assaults, the tools used in such acts, and the resulting harm, whether permanent injury or death. They also addressed offenses such as adultery and similar acts, assigning specific punishments. This extended to behaviors like standing at others' doors, crowding women, or mixing with them. Based on these punishments, the sheikhs of these orders issued their judgments. In fact, these penalties formed part of the internal code that governed student life within the lodges under their supervision<sup>28</sup>.

Although the Sufi orders had an administrative system similar to that of the governments of the time—particularly in regard to positions of authority—their judicial roles differed significantly. Sufi orders did not require the appointment of judicial assistants such as notaries, clerks, or bailiffs, as was the case in official judicial institutions. It was enough for the sheikh of the order, or one of his disciples, to be present when settling disputes within the area under the order's influence. In such cases, all the residents acted as his assistants and were at his service, carrying out whatever he requested. This becomes clear in the incident involving 'Ali Redha Effendi, son of Hamdan Khodja, in the Djurdjura Mountains. He was accompanying his father on a journey from Algiers to Constantine in the year 1248 AH / 1832 CE. While walking through the markets of Kabylia, he came face to face with the man who had stolen his mule—whom he immediately recognized—and said to him: "You judged me by the French method. Today, I will judge you by the Kabyle method<sup>29</sup>". At that moment, he found himself surrounded by a large group of tribesmen who wanted to take revenge on him. Their reaction might have turned violent had it not been for the intervention of the accompanying shaykh—appointed by the leader of the Rahmaniyya order, Sidi 'Ali bin 'Issa.

The shaykh raised his voice and shouted: "Oh Arabs! Oh tribes! Destruction awaits anyone who lays a hand on these men. Know that they have come from Shaykh bin 'Issa, and they are under my protection. If you harm them, even by a single hair, we will take far more from you in return."

He repeated his warning, saying: "If you touch these men, all the mountain dwellers you see before you will fall upon you and wipe you out." One by one, the tribesmen withdrew, until only the thief remained alone<sup>30</sup>.

Similar to the formal judges in the cities—some of whom taught in mosques alongside their judicial duties, as we will see later—and similar to governors who oversaw various affairs of their subjects while also adjudicating criminal cases, the leaders of the Sufi orders combined these roles

within their areas of influence. They even took on additional responsibilities, such as spreading Islam among Christian captives, declaring war on the enemy, or making peace agreements.

This conclusion is drawn from our review of historical sources documenting the daily activities of Shaykh Sidi ‘Ali bin ‘Issa. In addition to resolving disputes and conflicts in the marketplaces, he held evening meetings before his mosque with neighbors, including Jews, to consult on commercial, economic, property, and French institutional matters. He also received two Christian prisoners, Wendelin Schlosser and his companion, at designated hours during the day to teach them the declaration of faith. Furthermore, he issued orders to gather fighters to launch attacks against the French enemy<sup>31</sup>.

Here, the significant role played by these Sufi orders becomes clear. Through their sheikhs and followers, they compensated for the absence of official institutions and even governments in these remote rural and mountainous areas. The sheikh of the order found refuge with the tribe, which granted him authority that often exceeded that of the tribal sheikh himself, and even surpassed the influence of the Dey and the Bey—according to Hamida ‘Umayrawi<sup>32</sup>. He assisted in reconciling people and settling their disputes through judicial methods and procedures that official judicial institutions in the cities lacked.

**3. The Judiciary of Tribal Sheikhs and the Community:** While the Sufi orders and the Murabitun carried out the role of judicial authorities in rural and mountainous areas beyond the control of the Ottoman Turks, there were also tribal sheikhs who shared in performing this task<sup>33</sup>. In those regions, these sheikhs derived the legitimacy of their authority from their wisdom, good judgment, and exemplary conduct—both religiously and socially—as well as from the approval of the people.<sup>34</sup> They fulfilled the role of judges based on their social status and position. They traveled to the weekly markets within their area of influence to receive complaints, private cases, and disputes for consideration and resolution. On days when no weekly market was held in the region, they accepted complaints and disputes in their homes. Minor disputes were often resolved immediately, while more complex cases were postponed for later judgment<sup>35</sup>.

However, what can be criticized about these sheikhs is their occasional disregard—at least in some cases—of strict adherence to Islamic law in the judgments they issued after resolving disputes and conflicts. Supporting this claim is an incident involving the sheikh of the Bani Abbas tribe, located in the Djurdjura Mountains. When the boy who had stolen Hamdan Khuja’s wallet was brought before him—at a time when Hamdan Khuja was visiting this tribe as a mediator between the French and Ahmed Bey—the sheikh ordered the immediate beheading of the boy. This would have been carried out if not for Hamdan Khuja’s intervention and intercession on behalf of the boy with the marabout<sup>36</sup>.

Here, the sheikh violated Islamic law twice. First, he ordered the boy’s head to be cut off instead of amputating his hand, as clearly stated in the noble verse where the Almighty says: "The male and female thief, cut off their hands as a punishment for what they have committed..."<sup>37</sup>. On one occasion, Hamdan Khuja’s intercession was accepted for this boy. This, too, contradicts Islamic law, which does not allow intercession in cases of hudud (legal punishments).



Unlike the marabouts and Sufi orders, whose authority often extended over several tribes or large regions within the Regency—as is the case with many Sufi orders—the tribal sheikhs' power was limited strictly to their own tribe. This means that the resolution of disputes by these sheikhs occurred within the tribal framework and did not extend to neighboring tribes.

This limitation led these tribes to develop a mechanism to resolve conflicts and disputes that went beyond the boundaries of a single tribe and occurred between different tribes. This mechanism took the form of a council composed of a group of men. These men were chosen from among the wise elders of all the tribes. They were called the “community” (al-jama‘a). This council was responsible for settling all disputes and conflicts that arose between the various tribes. It also handled matters such as marriage contracts and the division of inheritances. These affairs were conducted according to specific laws prepared for this purpose, known as the ‘Awā'id or ‘Al-‘Awā'id<sup>38</sup>.

This is evident from the document mentioned by Jamal Qenan, which contains the laws—referred to as “Awā'id”—of the Tourirt Abdullah community alongside the Adghagh Amlal Arsh Wadya community. Among its provisions are the following: “Also included are the fas, the qadum, and the dabouz, which are studded with nails. Whoever strikes with the iron tool known as azdoud must pay three riyals. If someone harms another or deceives them with a wooden tool between sunset and dawn, whether the person is asleep or awake, they must pay ten riyals... If someone steals legumes, gourds, or fruits such as watermelon or onions, they must pay five riyals, whether the theft occurs during the day or night. However, if they steal legumes during the day, the fine is a quarter [of something]. If a woman strikes a man, she must pay four riyals, and likewise, if a man strikes a woman, he must pay four riyals...”<sup>39</sup>.

Mohamed El-Arabi El-Zubāiri believes that this body—the community—was not limited to rural and mountainous areas. Rather, it was also present in cities that had official judicial institutions.<sup>40</sup> This indicates that the council played a major role in resolving disputes and conflicts that occasionally arose among the inhabitants of the Regency, regardless of their affiliations.

In any case, it can be said that this council represented the highest judicial authority in those rural and mountainous regions. It held a significant status among the tribes and was respected by all. The reason lies in the fact that its members were among the most notable figures of their tribes. This led the local population to fully accept their selection. As a result, the council became a unifying force for the people of those areas, at a time when all conditions favored division and fragmentation.

## CONCLUSION:

After presenting and analyzing the research topic: Judiciary in Rural Algeria during the Ottoman Period, we arrived at a set of important findings, summarized as follows:

– The marabouts, Sufi leaders, and tribal elders in Algerian society during the Ottoman era held a distinguished position. This allowed them to play an important social role. This is evident in the judicial privileges they enjoyed. They were permitted to act as judges in areas where no formal

judicial institutions of the central authority existed, or in regions that were, by nature, outside Ottoman control, as was the case in much of rural Algeria at the time.

– The judicial authority held by the marabouts, Sufi leaders, and tribal sheikhs was absolute within their spheres of influence. They were authorized to hear and resolve various types of disputes and conflicts among the rural population. These included personal status issues, transactions, and even criminal cases.

– The legal systems in these rural areas were not unified. Each rural region had its own independent legal code, developed by the local judicial authority in charge.

– Judges in these regions often settled disputes based on their personal inclinations, desires, or political interests. They were frequently far removed from the rulings of Islamic law, especially since many of them—particularly the marabouts—lacked formal knowledge of Sharia.

– Judicial sessions to hear disputes and deliver rulings in rural Algeria during the Ottoman period were held in public spaces such as markets, or in private spaces like Sufi lodges (zawiyas) or the judges' homes. No dedicated places were set aside for this function.

– Judges in rural areas did not employ scribes or assistants. The local population acted as their helpers and remained at their service. This was due to the spiritual and moral authority they held in the eyes of the people.

## References :

---

<sup>1</sup>- Nasser al-Din Saydouni and al-Mahdi Bouabdelli, *Algeria in History (The Ottoman Period)*, Vol. 4, National Book Institution, Algiers, 1984, p. 23.

2- Mahmoud Ihsan al-Hindi, *Algerian Annals: A History of Institutions in Algeria from the Ottoman Period to the Era of Revolution and Independence*, Al-Arabi for Publishing and Printing, Damascus, 1977, p. 64.

3 -Hamdan bin Uthman Khodja, *Al-Mir'āt*, edited, translated, and introduced by Muhammad al-Arabi al-Zubayri, SNED, Algiers, 1975, p. 57.

4 -Al-'Id Mas'oud, "Al-Murabitun and the Sufi Orders in Algeria during the Ottoman Period," *Sirta*, Issue 10, Institute of Social Sciences, University of Constantine, Algeria, 1988, p. 8.

Some historians believe that 'Abdallah bin Yasin, one of the founders of the Almoravid movement, was the first to use the term "Murabit" for his companions stationed in military ribats. Since the beginning of the Marinid period, the term Murabit came to refer specifically to religious figures—noble descendants of al-Hasan bin 'Abdallah bin Fatimah, may God be pleased with them. Over time, the term evolved and became synonymous with honorifics such as Moulay, Sidi, and Lalla.

For more information, see: Yahya Huwaydi, *The History of Islamic Philosophy in Africa*, Nahda Bookstore, Egypt, 1966, pp. 357–359; also see: Ahmida 'Umayrawi, *The Qadiriyya Sufi Order in Algeria*, Dar al-Huda for Publishing and Distribution, Aïn M'lila, Algeria (no date), p. 17.

5 -The reason these murabitun chose rural and mountainous areas for their activity lies in the nature of their approach. Their thinking and behavior aligned with the simple mindset of the tribal populations in those regions. These tribes deeply revered anyone they believed to be connected to divine power, or whose actions were seen as manifestations of it. Hamdan Khodja writes: "Their extraordinary power—the murabitun—



influenced the narrow thoughts of the Berbers, who came to believe that God Himself was guiding and commanding them.”

See: Hamdan Khodja, previous source, pp. 57–58

6 -Al-‘Id Mas‘oud, previous reference, pp. 8–9.

7 -According to Al-‘Id Mas‘oud, the Sufi orders replaced the murabitun for several reasons. Among them was the fact that many of the murabitun had turned toward serving the Ottoman military (wujāq) and neglected their tribal responsibilities. Additionally, Sufi sheikhs used persuasive methods to attract people. There was also a shift in tribal mentality, as individuals began to feel a stronger connection to the homeland rather than limiting their identity to the tribe alone.

See: Al-‘Id Mas‘oud, same reference, pp. 10–11.

8 -The murabitun managed to resist the spread of the Sufi orders due to the material and moral support they received from the Ottoman rulers. These rulers, toward the end of their rule in Algeria, supported noble murabitun in order to suppress rebellious Sufi groups such as the Darqawiyya.

See: Ahmida ‘Umayrawi, *Passages from Thought and History*, Dar al-Ba‘th, Constantine, Algeria, 2002, p. 113.

9 -Hamdan Khodja, previous reference, p. 57.

10 -Al-‘Id Mas‘oud, previous reference, p. 8.8

11 -Hamdan Khodja, previous reference, p. 58.

12 -Al-‘Id Mas‘oud, previous reference, p. 9.

13 -Al-‘Id Mas‘oud, same source, p. 8.

14 -Hamdan Khodja, previous reference, p. 57.

15 -Hamdan Khodja, same source, p. 57.

16 -Abu Bakr Muhammad al-Kalabadhi, *Al-Ta‘arruf li-Madhhab Ahl al-Tasawwuf*, ed. by ‘Abd al-Halim Mahmoud and Taha ‘Abd al-Baqi Sarour, Dar Ihya’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyya, Cairo, 1960, pp. 24–25; also see: Taher Bounabi, *Sufism in Algeria during the 6th and 7th Hijri Centuries / 12th and 13th CE*, Dar al-Huda for Printing and Distribution, Aïn M’lila, 2004, p. 34.

There has long been disagreement, both past and present, about the origin of the words tasawwuf (Sufism) and Sufi. Some scholars trace it to the wearing of wool (ṣūf). Among them is ‘Abd al-Qahir bin ‘Abdallah al-Suhrawardi, who considered this link to be natural from a linguistic point of view—just as one would say taqammas (put on a shirt), one could say tasawwafa (put on wool). He believed wool symbolized humility and encouraged self-effacement, retreat, and detachment. See: ‘Abd al-Qahir bin ‘Abdallah al-Suhrawardi, *‘Awārif al-Ma‘ārif*, 1st ed., Dar al-Kitab al-‘Arabi, Beirut, 1966, p. 60.

As for Zarruq, he believed the Sufis preferred woolen garments in imitation of the prophets and in contrast to the luxurious clothing of worldly people. See: Abu al-‘Abbas Ahmad bin Ahmad Zarruq, *Qawa‘id al-Tasawwuf*, ed. by Muhammad Zahri al-Bahhar, 3rd ed., Maktabat al-Kulliyāt al-Azhariyya, Cairo, 1396 AH / 1976 CE, pp. 6–8.

We believe the origin of the term goes back to Ahl al-Ṣuffah—the poor Companions of the Prophet who were devoted to worship and lived in a simple shelter attached to the mosque. Their lifestyle was marked by piety, hunger, poverty, coarse clothing, and rough woolen garments. For more, see: Abu al-Faraj ‘Abd al-Rahman bin al-Jawzi, *Talbis Iblis*, ed. by al-Sayyid al-Jumayli, 3rd ed., Dar al-Kitab al-‘Arabi, Beirut, 1409 AH / 1989 CE, p. 201.

Others have traced the word to Greek origins. It may be derived from two words: Theos (God) and Sophia (wisdom). In this sense, tasawwuf stands for divine rather than rational wisdom, contrasting it with philosophy. The Sufi, then, is seen as one who seeks wisdom through faith.

See: 'Abbas Mahmoud al-'Aqqad, *Thinking Is an Islamic Obligation*, Dar Nahdat Misr, Cairo (n.d.), pp. 107–108.

17 -Several scholars have counted seventeen Sufi orders in Algeria. Among the most well known, listed according to their dates of emergence, are:

Shadhiliyya (658 AH / 1258 CE),  
Aissawiyya (936 AH / 1529 CE),  
Kersaziya al-Ahmadiyya (1016 AH / 1607 CE),  
Sheikhiya (1026 AH / 1617 CE),  
Taybiya (1089 AH / 1678 CE),  
Hanassliya (1114 AH / 1702 CE),  
Qadiriyya (1125 AH / 1714 CE),  
Zayaniyya al-Qandusiya (1196 AH / 1791 CE),  
Rahmaniyya (1208 AH / 1793 CE),  
and Sanusiyya (1250 AH / 1834 CE).

For more details, see Ahmida Umayrawi, *Fragments of Thought and History*, p. 112. Also refer to Yahya Bouaziz, *Themes and Issues from the History of Algeria and the Arabs*, vol. 1, Dar al-Huda Publishing, Ain M'lila – Algeria, 2004, p. 221.

18 -Yahya Bouaziz, *Op. cit.*, p. 217.

19 -Al-'Id Mas'oud, *Op. cit.*, pp. 10–11.

20 -Surah Al-Hujurat, 13..

21 -Yahya Bouaziz, previous reference, p. 223.

22 -Known as the Rahmaniyya method, named after Muhammad ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Azhari, who is also known as al-Jurjari, al-Zawawi, and Bouqabrin from the It Ismail tribe of the Qashtula confederation. He is believed to have been born between the years 1126 AH / 1715 CE and 1133 AH / 1722 CE.

He studied in his early years at the Zawiya of Sheikh al-Siddiq ibn Arab in Al-Arba'a. Later, he moved to Cairo around 1152 AH / 1740 CE, where he completed his education at Al-Azhar Mosque. For this reason, he is often referred to as "Al-Azhari." While in the Mashriq region, he lived for nearly a quarter of a century and joined the Hafnawiya religious association, named after its leader, Sayyid Muhammad ibn Salih al-Hafnawi.

Around 1177 AH / 1763 CE, he returned to his hometown and established a Zawiya there, known by his name, Al-Rahmaniyya. He began to spread his ideas and method from this base.

He passed away around 1208 AH / 1794 CE. His death coincided with a miracle — according to his followers — which earned him the title "Bouqabrin."

For further information, see: Adrian Delpech, "Un diplôme de Mokeddem de la confrérie religieuse Rahmania," in: R.A, No. 18, pp. 418–420

Also consult: Abu al-Qasim Muhammad al-Hafnawi, *Definition of the Successors by the Men of the Pious Predecessors*, vol. 2, 2nd edition, Al-Risalah Foundation, Beirut, Lebanon, 1405 AH / 1985 CE, pp. 457–474.

Also see: Edward Donoghue, *The Brotherhoods (An Ethnological Study of Religious Groups Among Algerian Muslims)*, translated and edited by Kamal Filali, Dar Al-Huda Printing, Publishing, and Distribution Company, Ain M'lila, Algeria, 2003, pp. 69–73.

Additionally, refer to: Abu Imran al-Sheikh and a group of authors, *Previous Reference*, pp. 37–38.

23- He is Sheikh Sidi Ali bin Issa, who was appointed by the founder of the Rahmani order, Muhammad bin Abd al-Rahman al-Azhari, before his death, as his successor to the administration of the Rahmaniyyah Zawiyya, and left him his library and the endowments of the Zawiya and the people of his country testified to this, and Ibn Issa managed it from (1208 AH / 1794 AD) to (1251 AH / 1836 AD), and he was the one who after the French invasion of Algeria mediated to conclude peace between the French and the tribes, and his influence extends into Tunisia, he was married to a woman known as Lala Khadija who remained Loyal to him and his corner after his death, as she did not leave this corner and remained in it. For more information, see: Hamdan Khoja, *op. cit.*, p.58-59. See also Edward Donoghue, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-106. 69-73. Also, Abu 'Imran al-Shaykh and a group of authors, *op. cit.*, p.38.

24 -Fruma is a small village located on the outskirts of the town of Lakhdaria, in Bouira Province. Lakhdaria lies seventy-five kilometers east of the capital, Algiers..

25 -Wendelin Schlosser, *Op. cit.*, p. 21. The strong influence of this shaykh extended beyond his followers. Even those outside his faith were affected. The Christian captive Wendelin Schlosser was deeply moved by him. He confessed that the shaykh restored his hope in life after captivity had led him to despair. In his words: “The sight of this pious and venerable shaykh left a profound impression on us from the very first moment. He revived our hope of survival after we had lost it.” Wendelin Schlosser, *Ibid.*, p. 20.

26 -Sa'id Khamis, “Fiqh and Sufism,” *Sirta*, Issue 11, Institute of Social Sciences, University of Constantine – Algeria, 1998, p. 21

27 -Al-'Id Mas'oud, *Op. cit.*, p. 12.

28 -Al-'Id Mas'oud, *Ibid.*, p. 25.

29 -Ali Rida Effendi bin Hamdan Khodja al-Jaza'iri, *A Description of the Journey from Algiers to Constantine through the Mountains* (1832), translated by Ahmida Umayrawi, revised by Ibrahim Bahaz, 1st ed., University Library, Gharyan – Libya, 2003, p. 45.

30 -Ali Rida Effendi bin Hamdan Khodja, *Op. cit.*, p. 46.

31 -Wendelin Schlosser, *Ibid.*, pp. 20–21.

32 -Ahmida Umayrawi, *Historical Studies*, Dar al-Ba'th, Constantine, 2001, pp. 83–84.

33 -The word “shaykhs” (shuyūkh) is the plural of “shaykh.” In the Maghreb, it refers to an elderly and wise man whose word carries authority. He is often the final decision-maker in administrative matters. See: Mustafa Ahmad bin Hammush, *The City and Authority in Islam: The Case of Algeria in the Ottoman Era*, 1st ed., Dar al-Bashā'ir for Printing, Publishing, and Distribution, Damascus, 1999, p. 133.

34 -Ali Khanouf, *Power in the Northern Countryside of the Eastern Beylik of Algeria (End of the Ottoman Era and Beginning of the French Era)*, Al-'Anasir Press, Algiers (n.d.), p. 47..

35 -Ali Khanouf, *Ibid.*, p. 49.

36 -Ali Rida Effendi bin Hamdan Khodja al-Jaza'iri, *Op. cit.*, p. 55.

37 -Surah al-Ma'idah, 40..

38 - Ali Khanouf, *Ibid.*, p. 25.

39 -Jamal Qennan, *Texts and Documents in the Modern History of Algeria (1500–1830)*, Algerian Printing Institution, Algiers, 1987, pp. 182–183.

40 -Muhammad al-Arabi al-Zubayri, *Introduction to the Modern History of the Maghreb*, 2nd ed., Algerian Printing Institution, Algiers, 1985, p. 64.

The presence of this institution in both rural and urban areas supports the view held by some historians that the actual authority of the Dey did not extend beyond one-sixth of the country's total territory.

See: Roland Mousnier and Ernest Labrousse, *General History of Civilizations: The Eighteenth Century, Age of Enlightenment*, trans. Yusuf As'ad Daghir and Farid M. Daghir, Vol. 5, 1st ed., 'Uwaydat Publications, Beirut–Lebanon, 1968, p. 314.

### Sources and References:

- The Holy Qur'an.

1. Abu Al-'Abbas, Ahmad bin Ahmad Zarrouq. *The Principles of Sufism*, edited by Mohamed Zahri Al-Bahar, 3rd edition, Al-Azhar Colleges Library, Cairo, 1396 AH / 1976 CE.

2. Al-'Aqqad, Abbas Mahmoud. *Thinking Is an Islamic Obligation*, Dar Nahdat Misr for Publishing, Cairo, n.d.

3. Al-Hafnawi, Abu Al-Qasim Muhammad. *Ta'rīf al-Khalaf bi-Rijāl al-Salaf*, Vol. 2, 2nd edition, Al-Risalah Foundation, Beirut – Lebanon, 1405 AH / 1985 CE.

4. Al-Hindi, Mahmoud Ihsan. *The Algerian Annals (History of Institutions in Algeria from the Ottoman Period to the Revolution and Independence)*, Al-Arabi for Publishing and Printing, Damascus, 1977.

5. Ali Redha Effendi bin Hamdan Khuja Al-Jazairi. *A Description of a Journey from Algiers to Constantine through the Mountains (1832)*, translated by Ahmida Omirawi, revised by Ibrahim Bahaz, 1st edition, University Library, Gharyan – Libya, 2003.

6. Al-Kalabadhi, Abu Bakr Muhammad. *Al-Ta'arruf li Madhhab Ahl al-Tasawwuf*, edited by Abdel Halim Mahmoud and Taha Abdel Baqi Sarour, Dar Ihya' Al-Kutub Al-Arabiyya, Cairo, 1960.

7. Al-Suhrawardi, Abdul Qahir bin Abdullah. *'Awarif Al-Ma'arif*, 1st edition, Dar Al-Kitab Al-Arabi, Beirut, 1966.

8. Al-Zubairi, Mohamed El-Arabi. *Introduction to the Modern History of the Maghreb*, 2nd edition, Algerian Printing Institution, Algiers, 1985.

9. Ben Hammouch, Mustafa Ahmed. *City and Authority in Islam: The Case of Algeria during the Ottoman Period*, 1st edition, Dar Al-Basha'ir for Printing, Publishing, and Distribution, Damascus, 1999.

10. Bouaziz, Yahia. *Topics and Issues from the History of Algeria and the Arabs*, Vol. 1, Dar Al-Huda for Printing, Publishing, and Distribution, Ain M'lila – Algeria, 2004.

11. Bounabi, Taher. *Sufism in Algeria during the 6th and 7th Hijri Centuries / 12th and 13th Gregorian Centuries*, Dar Al-Huda for Printing and Publishing, Ain M'lila, 2004.

12. Doneux, Edouard. *The Brotherhoods: An Ethnological Study on Religious Groups among Algerian Muslims*, translated and edited by Kamal Filali, Dar Al-Huda for Printing and Publishing, Ain M'lila – Algeria, 2003.

13. Houeidi, Yahia. *History of Islamic Philosophy in the African Continent*, Nahdat Misr Library, 1966.

14. Ibn Al-Jawzi, Abdul Rahman (Abu Farah). *Talbis Iblis*, edited by Al-Sayyid Al-Jumayli, 3rd edition, Dar Al-Kitab Al-Arabi, Beirut, 1409 AH / 1989 CE.

- 15.Khamis, Saad. “Jurisprudence and Sufism,” *Sirta Journal*, Issue 11, Institute of Social Sciences, University of Constantine – Algeria, 1998.
- 16.Khanouf, Ali. *Authority in the Northern Countryside of the Eastern Beylik of Algeria (End of the Ottoman Period and Beginning of the French Era)*, Al-Ansar Press, Algiers, n.d.
- 17.Khuja, Hamdan bin Othman. *Al-Mir’ah*, presented, translated, and edited by Mohamed El-Arabi El-Zubairi, SNED, Algiers, 1975.
- 18.Massoud, El-Eid. “The Marabouts and Sufi Orders in Algeria during the Ottoman Period,” *Sirta Journal*, Issue 10, Institute of Social Sciences, University of Constantine, Algeria, 1988.
- 19.Mousnier, Roland & Labrousse, Ernest. *General History of Civilizations: The Eighteenth Century, the Age of Enlightenment*, Arabic translation by Youssef Asaad Dagher and Farid M. Dagher, Vol. 5, 1st edition, Awidat Publications, Beirut – Lebanon, 1968.
- 20.Omirawi, Ahmida. *Fragments of Thought and History*, Dar Al-Baath, Constantine – Algeria, 2002.
- 21.Omirawi, Ahmida. *The Qadiriyya Order in Algeria*, Dar Al-Huda for Printing and Publishing, Ain M’lila – Algeria, n.d.
- 22.Qenan, Jamal. *Texts and Documents in the Modern History of Algeria (1500–1830)*, Algerian Printing Institution, Algiers, 1987.
- 23.Saïdouni, Nacer Eddine & Bouabdelli, El-Mahdi. *Algeria in History (The Ottoman Period)*, Vol. 4, National Publishing House, Algiers, 1984.