

The Political Situation in the Tidikelt Region at the End of the Nineteenth Century and the Beginning of the Twentieth Century

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Abstract:

Since the French occupation of El-mania area in 1884, France began the actual planning to occupy the region of Tidikelt. It sent many expeditions to check and investigate the situation there, such as the Flamand. One of the motives that made France plan to take control over Tidikelt was the important geographical location, trade and security importance. The region witnessed many battles fought by the inhabitants of the surrounding areas against the French colonizer with limited means and traditional equipments; such as the battles

key words: Tidikelt French colonialism, Ain Saleh, Inger, Ould Zanan, Bajouda

Introduction

Tidikelt is considered one of the three regions that constitute the Province of Adrar, alongside Touat and Gourara. Like other Saharan regions, Tidikelt came under French colonial occupation at the

beginning of the twentieth century and suffered significant losses in both lives and property. Accordingly, this paper highlights the political conditions of the Tidikelt region before and during its submission to French rule, while seeking to answer the following questions: What was the political situation in Tidikelt at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century? What role did the tribes of Ouled Zenane and Ouled Bajouda play during this period? What were the principal motives and factors that led France to occupy the region?

To address these questions, the study is organized around the following themes:

Defining Tidikelt.

Its astronomical and geographical location.

The major French expeditions to the region at the end of the nineteenth century.

The political role of the Ouled Zenane and Ouled Bajouda tribes during this period.

The factors leading to the occupation of Tidikelt.

Tidikelt under French control.

Conclusion.

This study aims to shed light on a significant and decisive period in the history of the Tidikelt region, representing the early stages and preliminary developments that culminated in the French occupation and domination of the area. It also seeks to uncover aspects of the sacrifices and efforts made by the inhabitants of the region in defense of their homeland, while clarifying and correcting numerous historical facts that have remained obscure or misunderstood.

Definition of Tidikelt (Origin of the Name)

The term Tidikelt is of Amazigh (Berber) origin and consists of two parts: Tidi, meaning “hand,” and Dokelt, meaning “low-lying land.” Thus, among the Berbers, the term Tidikelt signifies “the palm of the hand.” This designation is a metaphorical reference to the geographical configuration of the region, characterized by its vast and

low-lying terrain. This geographical feature also explains the proximity of groundwater to the surface.

The name Tidikelt may also refer to plains lacking water. Another interpretation suggests that the region was named after the mountain range surrounding it, beginning approximately 30 kilometers northeast of Aoulef and extending toward Libya. It should also be noted that there is a region in the Niger Desert, north and south of Ben Agret, known as Tidikelt as well.¹

The region is composed of major districts such as Ain Salah, Foggaret Ezzaouia, In Ghar, Tit, Aougrout (Aqbli), Ouledf (Aoulef), Timokten, Ain Belbel, and many scattered ksour (fortified villages) and oases, numbering more than forty-five (45) ksour, including Kasbah Hinoun, Aoulef Ech-Cherfa, Miliana, and Iguesten, among others.

Tidikelt is divided into two parts: Eastern Tidikelt, whose capital is Ain Salah, currently belonging to Tamanrasset Province, and comprising the municipalities of Ain Salah, In Ghar, and Foggaret Ezzaouia; and Western Tidikelt, whose capital is Aoulef, currently belonging to Adrar Province, and including the municipalities of Tit, Aqbli, Aoulef, and Timokten. Both regions formerly belonged to Ouargla Province (the Oasis Province).

Astronomical and Geographical Location

Astronomically, Tidikelt lies between latitudes 26° and 30° North and longitudes 1° West and 3° East, at an elevation of approximately 290 meters above sea level.²

Geographically, it is located in the heart of the Sahara in southern Algeria. It is bounded to the east by the Tinghert Plateau in Illizi Province; to the northeast by the Great Eastern Erg and the district of Hassi Messaoud; to the north by the district of El Meniaa; to the northwest by the Great Western Erg and the district of Timimoun; to

¹ Mohammed Bay Belalam, *Al-Rihla Al-'Aliyya ila Mintaqat Touat li Dhikr Ba'd al-A'lam wa al-Athar wa al-Makhtutat wa al-'Adat wa Ma Yarbut Touat min al-Jihat* (The Sublime Journey to the Touat Region: Mentioning Notable Figures, Monuments, Manuscripts, Customs, and the Connections of Touat with Neighboring Regions), Vol. 1, Dar Al-Ma'rifa Al-Dawliyya for Publishing and Distribution, Algeria, Special Edition, 2011, p. 72.

² Ibrahim Miasi, *The French Occupation of the Algerian Sahara (1837–1947)*, Dar Houmouma Publishing House, Algeria, 2009, p. 453.

the west by the region of Touat; and to the south by the Ahnet Mountains and the Mouydir Highlands. Tidikelt is situated approximately 1,278 km from the capital, Algiers, at an altitude of 283 meters above sea level, and covers a total area estimated at 101,763 km². It also consists of a vast erg (sand sea) extending over a distance of approximately 250 km.

A French report on Tidikelt notes that the region was referred to as “Aïn Chebbi”, a name derived from alum, a highly saline white mineral mass used in leather tanning, found in the area situated on the great escarpment separating the boundaries of Touat (Reggane) and Tidikelt (Aoulef).

Owing to this strategic location, Tidikelt has held considerable importance for centuries, serving as a vital link between Algeria and various African and Arab regions and urban centers, including Touat, Hoggar, Saoura, Gourara, Timbuktu, Marrakech, and Ghadames, among others. Consequently, major caravan routes passed through the region, facilitating trade in a wide range of goods and commodities such as dates, wheat, salt, ostrich feathers, slaves, silk, and other products. Caravans traveling from Tlemcen to Timbuktu in the Western Sudan, and from Tafilalt to Ghadames and Ghat, crossed the lands of Tidikelt. Likewise, pilgrims traveling to the Holy Places frequently stopped in Ain Salah and Aqbli.

The Political Role of the Ouled Zenane and Bajouda Tribes

During this period, the Tidikelt region was under the authority, influence, and prestige of the Ouled Bajouda in the east (Ain Salah) and the Ouled Zenane in the west (Aoulef). Each tribe enjoyed the support and loyalty of followers across the various ksour (fortified villages) and oases of Tidikelt. They established regulations, issued commands and prohibitions, and exercised control over the political, social, and economic affairs of the region. In contrast, the Sharifs and Marabouts were known for their weakness, submission, and confinement within a narrow religious sphere. They scarcely dared to oppose or challenge the Ouled Zenane, and interactions with them were characterized by profound respect and deference. As for the

Tuareg, they were renowned during this period for their frequent mobility and nomadic lifestyle, as well as their control over most commercial caravans. They also maintained strong ties and close relations with the Ouled Zenane.

Based on the foregoing, the Ouled Zenane are among the oldest and most prestigious tribes of Tidikelt and continue to occupy a distinguished position to this day, both in Tidikelt and throughout the Saharan regions. According to Louis Fano, their presence in Tidikelt dates back to 1101 AH/1690 CE, when forty members of the Ouled Zenane tribe, one of the branches of the Banu Hilal tribes, arrived from Tlemcen and Morocco and settled in Ksar El-Jadid, where their descendants still reside today. These descendants include the Ouled Es-Seddik and the Ouled Jelloul.

Aoulef El-Arab is considered the principal center of settlement and influence of the Ouled Zenane, particularly in the ksour of El-Jadid, Kasbah Oumanat, Kasbah Bilal, Kasbah Habbada, and Zaouia Hinoun. They are also present in Aqbour (In Ghar) and Erg Chach in Aougrou. Today, members of the Ouled Zenane bear several family names, including Zenani, Oumani, Ben Jelloul, Ben Ba, Ennoui, Bouguerara, and others. They are found in several countries, notably Algeria, Mali, and Niger.

It thus becomes evident that the Ouled Zenane tribe has long occupied, and continues to occupy, a prominent social, economic, and security-related position, owing to its historical legacy and struggles in the region. The tribe served as a stronghold and safe haven for oppressed tribes. Numerous oral traditions indicate that it repeatedly defended the region and repelled many incursions that threatened it throughout the nineteenth century (thirteenth century AH). Its influence was considerable, leaving a lasting imprint on the inhabitants of Tidikelt. During this period, the name “Aoulef” became almost synonymous with “Ouled Zenane.” Indeed, the French military commander Colomb divided Tidikelt into two administrative commands:

First: Ouled Zenane, comprising fifteen ksour, including Timokten, Aoulef, Zaouia Hinoun, Akabli, Tit, and others.

Second: Ain Salah, which included In Ghar, Foggaret Ez-Zoua, Ighesten, and other settlements.

As for the Ouled Bajouda, they were among the most important tribes of Eastern Tidikelt (Ain Salah). The Tuareg referred to them as Aït Bakhmou or Daq Bajouda. Their chief was Sidi El-Hadj Abdelkader, son of Sidi El-Hadj Mohamed Ben Bajouda El-Omari, commonly known as Abdelkader Ben Bajouda. Owing to his wisdom, intelligence, and political acumen, he exerted considerable influence throughout Tidikelt and the Sahara. He passed away in the early days of Ramadan 1306 AH (May 1889 CE).

French Interest in the Tidikelt Region

As part of its expansionist colonial policy, France sought to establish control over the Tidikelt region. To this end, it dispatched numerous exploratory missions and intelligence agents to study the area from geographical, social, economic, and political perspectives. Among the most significant of these missions were:

The First and Second Flatters Missions

The First Flatters Mission (1879):

On 7 February 1879, under orders from the French Governor-General, the expedition departed from Biskra toward Ain Salah. However, it failed to achieve the objectives expected by the French colonial authorities.

The Second Mission: It took place on 18 November 1881, departing from the city of Laghouat towards In Salah accompanied by a military detachment. This prompted the local population to seek assistance from Sultan Hassan I of Morocco. Following an emergency meeting between El Hadj Abdelkader Bajouda, leader of Tidikelt, and the Ouled Sidi Cheikh, an ambush was set for the expedition at Bir El Ghrama, where it was annihilated after violent clashes with the local inhabitants on 16 February 1881.¹

The Mission of the French Officer Palat

¹ Ahmed Al-Omari, *Touat in the French Expansion Project in Morocco from Approximately 1850 to 1902*, 1st ed., Al-Najah Al-Jadida Press, Casablanca, Morocco, 1988, p. 76.

Palat undertook a scientific exploratory expedition in 1886, accompanied by a military force, through the oases of Touat. He traveled under guarantees and instructions issued by Sultan Hassan I, who recommended that no harm be inflicted upon the French. Consequently, Palat received a warm welcome in the region and succeeded in producing several important maps that later greatly facilitated the French occupation of the area. Nevertheless, he was eventually assassinated.

The First and Second Flamand Missions

The First Mission: Conducted in the spring of 1896, it was among the most significant expeditions to carry out a comprehensive study of the Tidikelt region from geographical, topographical, hydrological, economic, and social perspectives. The mission passed through the centers of Tinerkouk, Amguiden, and Tadmait, accompanied by a substantial military contingent. During the expedition, Flamand supervised the drilling of a series of wells in the Erg area north of Touat as part of his investigations into the artesian water system of the region.¹ Consequently, this mission constituted one of the most important exploratory events of that period.

The Second Mission: Conducted in 1899, it proved decisive. It departed from Ouargla on 28 November 1899, reinforced by military units under the command of Captain Pein, who ultimately succeeded in overcoming local resistance, breaking through the ranks of the Mujahideen, and entering the capital of Tidikelt, In Salah, which fell on 28 December 1899, thirteen years after the fall of El Meniaa in 1886.² Although the mission ostensibly had a scientific purpose aimed at exploring Tadmait and identifying its geological and environmental characteristics, it was in reality a military reconnaissance and intelligence-gathering expedition.

The Expedition of Heinrich Barth

Heinrich Barth undertook two journeys: the first in 1849 and the second in 1855, traveling from Tripoli through Ghadames and Ghat

¹Ibid., p. 147.

² Saidan Al-Toumi, *The Ancient Inhabitants of Tidikelt and Self-Reliance*, Dar Houmouma, Algeria, 2005, p. 179.

toward Timbuktu and Chad, passing through Touat and Tidikelt. Barth provided valuable information concerning the Tidikelt region.

The Expedition of Camille Doulé

The explorer Camille Doulé was assassinated by the Tuareg at Hassi Ilyighen, near the Zawiya of Sheikh Abi Naama Aqabli.

De Colomb Mission took place during January 1857.

Consequently, the findings of all these missions were transmitted successively to France, whether concerning the social, natural, human, or geographical aspects of the region. France was closely awaiting a favorable opportunity to occupy the area, particularly during the last decade of the nineteenth century, and more precisely after the death of the Moroccan Sultan Hassan I in 1894. During this period, France intensified the dispatch of agents and spies to prepare public opinion for the acceptance of French influence. This is confirmed by Abd al-Salam al-Wazzani, who stated that in April 1894, following the death of Sultan Hassan I, France sent a secret envoy to Touat with the mission of preparing the local population to receive French influence, considering the Sultan's death a suitable opportunity for the occupation of Touat.¹

Factors Behind French Interest in Tidikelt

There is little doubt among researchers and historians that France's interest in the Algerian Sahara, including Tidikelt, dates back to its occupation of Algeria in 1830. This interest was driven by several factors, including:

Geographical Location

The strategic geographical position of Tidikelt, situated in the heart of the Algerian Sahara, was one of the principal motives that encouraged France to establish control over the region. For centuries, Tidikelt had served as a vital link connecting Algeria with various African and Arab regions and urban centers, including Touat, Hoggar, Saoura, Gourara, Timbuktu, Marrakesh, and Ghadames. Consequently, France viewed Tidikelt as a gateway to the African countries and as a crucial connecting point between its North African and sub-Saharan colonies.

¹Ahmed Al-Amari, op. cit., p. 147.

It is worth noting that Tidikelt, and particularly its eastern capital In Salah, constituted one of the principal trans-Saharan routes leading toward sub-Saharan Africa as well as the eastern and western regions of the continent. Among these routes was the road linking the city of Algiers to Timbuktu, passing through Blida, Boghar, Laghouat, Ghardaïa, El Meniaa, In Salah, Akabli, and Bir Tir Ichoumine, where it joined the Touat–Timbuktu route. This route was followed by the officer Bala and was regarded as one of the most favorable trans-Saharan routes due to its numerous natural, commercial, and security advantages. These included the availability of water resources, its passage through two major Saharan centers—namely the Taoudenni Salt Mines and the commercial center of Arawan (Araouane)—and the security and protection provided by the Zawiya of Sidi Abi Naama, with the participation of the Ouled Zenane tribe.¹

It should be noted that Ain Salah, the capital of the region, occupies a central position among most of the surrounding countries as well as major scientific and commercial centers. It is located midway along the route connecting Algiers and Timbuktu. Ain Salah lies approximately 1,230 km from Algiers, 1,350 km from Timbuktu, and 1,170 km from Gabès. This geographical position clearly reflects the important status it enjoyed during the nineteenth century.

Commercial Importance

The Tidikelt region played a pivotal commercial role, which prompted France to employ various means to stimulate and encourage trade in the area. These measures included securing trade routes, facilitating transportation, reducing commodity prices, and ensuring the availability of essential goods such as dates, wheat, and barley. In 1880, France even established a specialized committee to organize, develop, and promote caravan trade between the markets of northern Algeria and those of Touat. The objective was to divert as many caravans as possible from their traditional routes toward Sijilmasa, Marrakesh, and Fez, and instead direct them toward French-controlled

¹Afif Mohammed, *Touat: Contribution to the Study of Oasis Societies and Their History*, Publications of the Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences, Mohammed V Agdal University, Abi Regreg Printing and Publishing Press, Rabat, First Edition, 2014, p. 126.

markets in Algeria.¹ During this period, Tidikelt became renowned for several prosperous and profitable markets that attracted merchants and visitors alike, notably the markets of Ain Salah and Aoulef.

This prominence, however, was not a phenomenon exclusive to the nineteenth century; rather, it dates back much earlier. In his book *Four Centuries*, Martin notes that in 1041 AH/1631 CE, the Tidikelt region received a commercial caravan arriving from Ghadames. The caravan included ten English merchants who had come to the region upon the recommendation of the Governor of Tripoli. Three of them subsequently traveled to Timi, where they were welcomed by Sheikh Bahya.² Nevertheless, the nature and extent of this commercial importance varied from one district to another.

As for Aoulef, the Ouled Zenane tribe became famous for raising large numbers of camels, which were used for travel between Tidikelt and Timbuktu and were rented to the most prominent caravans operating along this route. In Foggarat Ezzaouia, in addition to breeding camels, sheep, and donkeys, the principal commercial activity was linked to the slave trade. In In Ghar, the population was known for producing woolen textiles and household utensils, and the locality served as a compulsory stop for caravans traveling from Touat toward Ain Salah. Akabli functioned as the principal gateway for commercial caravans moving from Touat to Timbuktu, while also serving as a gathering and departure point for pilgrimage caravans. Tit, on the other hand, constituted an obligatory stopover for caravans traveling from Reggane to Ain Salah. Ain Salah itself was the most important town in Tidikelt, serving as a major transit center for trade between the north and the southeastern regions. Moreover, its commercial market attracted merchants and visitors from various regions and countries.

The Linking of France's Colonies

¹ Ahmed Al-Amari, op. cit., p. 69.

² Zajia Herbach, *The Economic Situation in the Touat Region through the Manuscript Al-Ghunya during the 12th and 13th Hijri Centuries (18th and 19th Centuries CE)*, Doctoral Dissertation in Modern and Contemporary History, Department of History and Archaeology, Faculty of Humanities and Islamic Civilization, University of Oran, supervised by Prof. Ben Amia Abdelmadjid, Academic Year 1432–1433 AH / 2011–2012 CE, p. 264.

France sought, from 1848 onward, to establish commercial centers in Senegal as a nucleus for building an empire stretching across Africa from west to east. To this end, it appointed Louis Faidherbe as Governor-General of Senegal between 1854 and 1861. He became renowned for his political acumen and strategic planning in implementing French colonial projects in Africa. Among these projects was the railway scheme linking Algeria to Timbuktu through the Touat region in 1878, which was supervised by the French engineer Duponchel.¹

Strategic Importance

France was fully aware that stability could not be achieved in the remaining Saharan regions—such as Ouargla, Saoura, El Meniaa, and others—unless it gained control over Tidikelt, which served as a strategic refuge for Algerian resistance fighters and revolutionaries. In this regard, the German traveler Rolf, who visited Tidikelt in 1864, stated:

“Above all, the French must extend their borders as far as Oued Saoura, for it is from there that the revolts, difficulties, and disturbances confronting the French actually originate. If they do not expand their influence and occupy these frontiers, there will be neither comprehensive peace nor genuine submission in the southern part of the Province of Oran.”²

This statement confirms that France clearly recognized the strategic security significance of the Tidikelt region and its crucial role in ensuring stability throughout the Algerian Sahara. Consequently, French authorities believed that lasting security could not be attained without bringing the region under their control.

Tidikelt under French Control

The Battle of Lefqiqira

This battle took place in the village of Lefqiqira, located approximately twenty kilometers east of In Salah. It constituted the first armed confrontation between French forces and the local

¹ Ahmed Al-Amari, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

² *Ibid.*, p. 66.

population. For this military campaign, France mobilized around seven hundred soldiers equipped with the most advanced weaponry and resources available at the time.¹

On 27 December 1899, Flamand's mission arrived near the Abdelkader Foggara in Ighistan. Upon learning of its arrival, the local inhabitants united to resist and repel the French expedition. Although the battle was very brief, it ended with the retreat of the people of In Salah and resulted in heavy losses estimated at fifty fatalities, one hundred and fifty wounded, and sixty-four prisoners. Among the casualties were prominent members of the Bajouda family, including El-Hadj El-Mahdi Bajouda, his brother Bouamama, and El-Hadj Mohamed Ben Cheikh, among others.²

On the French side, one soldier was killed and fourteen were wounded. Following the battle, French occupation forces entered In Salah and established their headquarters in the Kasbah of Bajouda.³

Battle of Dghamsha

The village of Dghamsha is located approximately four (4) kilometers south of Ain Salah. The battle began when the French forces arrived in Ain Salah. In response, local inhabitants hastened to support the resistance from all surrounding areas (Bouda, El-Hebla, Tsabit, Sali, Reggane, In Ghar, Aoulef, Tit, and others), assembling a force of approximately one thousand three hundred (1,300) fighters under the leadership of Sheikh Moulay Abdallah ibn Moulay El-Abbas Er-Reggani. Upon reaching the village of El-Baraka on 4 January 1900, they halted and sent a message to the French demanding their immediate departure from the country. Their force exceeded one thousand two hundred (1,200) fighters.⁴

The battle subsequently erupted on Friday, 5 January 1900, corresponding to 3 Ramadan 1317 AH, under the slogan: "Foreigners must return to where they came from, without delay." The

¹ Toumi Saidan, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

² Bouia Abdelkader, *Tidikelt: Documents and Manuscripts*, National Foundation for Fine Arts, Reghaïa Unit, Algeria, 2015, pp. 67–68.

³ Mohamed Bay Belalam, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁴ The Martyrs' Cemetery is currently located in Ain Salah.

confrontation lasted approximately two hours and resulted in the martyrdom of more than fifty (50) fighters, the wounding of two hundred (200), and the capture of another two hundred (200).¹ This outcome was largely due to the imbalance of forces, as the mujahideen of the region relied on simple and rudimentary weapons.

The first martyr of this battle was Ould Hamida from the Hinnoun Zawiya. Among the other martyrs were:²

Moulay Abdallah ibn Moulay El-Abbas Er-Reggani.

Abdelrahman ibn Mohammed.

Cherif ibn El-Arabi El-Haibawi.

Despite this severe defeat, the determination of the resistance fighters remained unshaken. They persisted in their struggle, resolved to continue resisting, seek retribution, and prepare for another confrontation, a determination that became evident in the Battle of In Ghar.

Battle of In Ghar

The Battle of In Ghar is regarded as one of the most significant and renowned battles fought in southern Algeria in general and in the Tidikelt region in particular. This battle took place after the end of the Battle of Dghamsha, when the French realized that they could not establish a stable presence in Ain Salah unless they first occupied In Ghar. Several factors contributed to this strategic necessity, including:
The availability of fertile agricultural lands suitable for grazing.

The Gathering Place of Mujahideen Arriving from Various Regions

A center where Mujahideen from different regions and countries assembled.

The strategic location of In Ghar (Ingr).

Thus, after the call for resistance reached the various regions neighboring In Ghar, approximately 1,300 fighters responded, supported by 600 rifles, 50 swords, and two cannons.³ They headed toward In Ghar on 26 February 1900 and were distributed between the

¹Kadi Abdelmadjid, Bright Pages from the History of the Ancient City of Aoulef, no publisher indicated, 2006, p. 44.

² Mohammed Bay Belalam, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 13.

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ksar of Ouled Hadga El-Mourabidine and the ksar of Ouled Djelloul El-Arab. The French forces, meanwhile, fortified their positions behind the sand dunes on the eastern side of In Ghar and deployed two cannons aimed at the two ksour. A fierce confrontation broke out between the two camps on 19 March 1900 and lasted throughout the night. The battle ended with the storming and destruction of the ksour, resulting in the martyrdom of 500 fighters and the wounding of 600 others, while the French forces suffered nine fatalities and forty-six wounded soldiers.¹

The Surrender of Tidikelt²

Following this defeat, the French conducted a triumphant tour through the oases of Tit, Akabli, and Aoulef. In Tit, Sidi Ali Ould Mohamed Essaleh, one of the people of Azzi, appeared before the French trembling with fear and bowing his head. The inhabitants of Akabli hid in the foggaras out of fear of an uncertain fate. In Aoulef, the Chorfa submitted, unlike the Ouled Zenane. Consequently, Tidikelt surrendered and came under French control.

After the occupation, the Tuareg of the Ahaggar offered the local population refuge among them and encouraged them to abandon the region to the French, considering the occupation inevitable on the one hand and recognizing the lack of sufficient strength, equipment, and

¹ When the French forces arrived to occupy Tidikelt in 1317 AH / 1900 CE, Sheikh Mohammed Abdelrahman Al-Sukuti witnessed firsthand the epic Battle of In Ghar. He composed a poem addressed to the people of In Ghar, urging them to remain patient, steadfast, and resolute in the face of their enemies. The poem, written in the Basit meter, consists of 41 verses. Its opening lines read:

O most steadfast of people in Islam and faith,
And foremost among people in the field of glory.
Through them, the noble town of In Ghar lives on forever;
I exclude no one from this praise.

A people of lofty aspirations and exalted virtues,
Whose pride has become crowns above all heads.

He later says:

O people of In Ghar, supporters of the true faith,
You have attained the highest honor and nobility.
Our brothers, defenders of the religion, rejoice,
For God's victory shall always be yours forever.
You have supported the faith of Islam; glad tidings to you,
O supporters of the religion of the Chosen Messenger, Muhammad.

² Voinot, Louis. *Tidikelt: A Study of the Geography, History, and Customs of the Region*. Jacques Gandini Editions., p. 95.

resources to confront it on the other. Some accepted the offer, while others refused.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Tidikelt region experienced a period of instability during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly in the political and social spheres. This occurred despite the effective leadership role played by the tribes of Ouled Zenane in Western Tidikelt (Aoulef) and Ouled Bajouda in Eastern Tidikelt (Ain Salah). The arrival or settlement of any tribe in the region required the approval of one of these two tribes; otherwise, it would be exposed to various security and economic threats.

Among the principal factors that contributed to the occupation of the region and its eventual submission to French control were its commercial importance, its highly strategic location, and its security significance. France also sought to establish a connection between its Arab and African colonies. These considerations prompted France to intensify its scientific and exploratory missions, such as those led by Flamand and Heinrich Barth, among others. These missions paved the way for the occupation of the region and turned it into a theater for numerous fierce battles, including those of El-Feggaguir, Dghamcha, and In Ghar, which caused considerable losses in both human lives and property.

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