

Muhammad ibn Abi al-Qasim al-Hamli and his cultural role in Algeria during the nineteenth century AD.

Dr. Amel maouchi

University Mohamed Boudiaf of M'Sila-Algeria

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Email: amel.maouchi@univ-msila.dz

Received: 01/04/2025

Accepted: 18/09/2025

Published: 15/12/2025

Summary:

Muhammad ibn Abi al-Qasim al-Hamli contributed to enriching the cultural life in the Bousaada region. He took upon himself the task of spreading knowledge and teaching Islamic sciences. He founded the Zawiya of al-Hamel, whose fame extended beyond Algeria, and it became one of the largest scientific centers. It brought together the best scholars of the period, and students of knowledge and learning gathered in its presence from everywhere. Through it, he led a cultural resistance and confronted the French colonial project, which was to keep the Algerian people ignorant and Christian. Thus, he became one of the most prominent scholars of the nineteenth century in Algeria. This article aims to introduce the scholar Muhammad ibn Abi al-Qasim and to highlight the role he played on the cultural level.

Introduction:

Throughout its history, M'Sila has been home to a number of scholars and reformers who left their mark on the cultural life of the region and beyond. Among them was the scholar Muhammad ibn Abi al-Qasim al-Hamli, who disseminated knowledge among the people, taught Islamic sciences, and supported cultural life in Algeria in general and Bousaada in particular. His reputation grew, and his scholarly council became prominent, rivaling the higher education institutions in Algerian cities. He remains in the collective memory of the region's inhabitants to this day, and his famous zawiya (Sufi lodge), which he founded himself, immortalizes his memory. At the time, it was considered the largest religious institution, undertaking a significant social and cultural mission. It served as a spiritual, cultural, and social center for the people of Bousaada and beyond. Despite Muhammad ibn Abi al-Qasim's association with the al-Hamli zawiya and the dissemination of knowledge, and despite his well-known neutrality and lack of interest in politics, he maintained contact with Emir Abdelkader, one of the most important leaders of the popular resistance in Algeria, and supported him. Thus, his roles were multifaceted, encompassing both the cultural resistance he led, confronting the campaign of Christianization and ignorance waged by France, and his support for Emir Abdelkader's popular resistance, opening doors... His corner was a refuge for refugees and families affected by colonialism and popular revolutions. Although he did not bear arms, he was against the French occupation and did not serve France. This article seeks to encompass his cultural role by introducing him and answering the following question: What were his efforts in spreading science and knowledge? By passing through several points: First, his birth and upbringing, second, his death, third, his cultural role, in which we explained his scientific contributions through teaching, writing, and his establishment of the scientific edifice, the Zawiya of El Hamel, the headquarters of scholars and a meeting place for students of knowledge. We also clarified his relationship with the popular resistances that took place against the French occupation. Among the most important conclusions we reached is that Sheikh Muhammad bin Abi al-Qasim al-Hamli was one of the most important scholars and reformers of Algeria during

the nineteenth century. He chose cultural jihad, the revival of scientific councils, and the training of students. He stood against the cultural war that French colonialism waged against Algeria.

1. His birth and upbringing:

The lineage of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abi al-Qasim, of the Maliki school of thought, the Rahmani Sufi order, residing in Hamli, and of Algerian origin, is: Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Abi al-Qasim ibn Rabih ibn Muhammad ibn Abd al-Rahim ibn Sa'ib ibn al-Mansur

¹Ibn Abd al-Rahim ibn Ayyub ibn Abd al-Rahim ibn Ali ibn Rabah ibn Ahmad ibn Abd al-Rahim ibn Abd al-Karim ibn Musa ibn Sulayman ibn Yasar ibn Sulayman ibn Musa ibn Isa ibn Muhammad ibn Isa ibn Idris al-Asghar ibn Idris al-Akbar ibn Abdallah al-Kamil ibn al-Hasan al-Muthanna ibn al-Hasan al-Sibt ibn Sayyida Fatima bint Rasul Allah, may God bless him and grant him peace. He is from a noble and distinguished scholarly family ². Some accounts regarding the noble lineage rely on the story of two Moroccan Sharifs settling in Bousaada in the year 900 AH, one of whom is the grandfather of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abi al-Qasim ³. While some researchers have reservations about his noble lineage, despite his family tree being displayed inside the Zawiya al-Hamel Mosque, the argument is that many families trace their lineage back to the Prophet's household, claiming descent from the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) through his daughter, Lady Fatima al-Zahra (may God be pleased with her). The sheer number of these families makes it difficult to believe all of them. Perhaps this phenomenon is linked to these families' desire to gain the respect and esteem of the community, given the high regard in which the Prophet's family is held ⁴. But even though al-Hamli was not of noble birth, his knowledge and piety earned him a distinguished position in his community. Many emulated and followed him. He was described as a great scholar, a man of miracles, eloquent, a mufti, a teacher, a brilliant scholar of the Maliki school of thought, extremely intelligent, possessing the ability to argue and debate, and a Sufi among the righteous ⁵.

References differ slightly in determining the date of his birth; some indicate that he was born in Ramadan of the year 1239 AH, corresponding to 1823 AD ⁶. While another date indicates 1240 AH (1824 CE). He was born in the desert near Hassi Bahbah (in the present-day Wilaya of Djelfa) in the northern Sahara, in a place known as Al-Hamidiyah, to a well-to-do and distinguished family renowned for its scholarship and piety. His great-grandfather, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Rahim, was a respected scholar of his time, who bequeathed his family a library of books. His father, although not a famous scholar, was a lover of knowledge and diligently worked to educate his son and instill in him a strong connection to religion and Islamic law ⁷. The environment and place in which the Sheikh grew up, especially the desert, had a positive impact on his future, as he grew up with a clear mind and a love for knowledge .. Hamel. In -Hamli, after the village of al-Qasim was known as al-Muhammad ibn Abi al ⁸ Algerian colloquial Arabic, "al-Hamel" means "the lost one," referring to someone who has strayed from the right path or from the path of God. The village was named so because it provided refuge for those who had exhausted all other options, offering them shelter, generosity, and knowledge. It is unlikely that Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abi al-Qasim himself named the village, but he accepted the name, and it became the name of both himself and the zawiya (Sufi lodge). The general intention behind it was to guide every lost soul back to the straight path by spreading religion and knowledge ⁹. Our sheikh received a religious education and possessed excellent character and broad knowledge. He learned the basics of reading and writing in his hometown, and after memorizing the Quran at the age of thirteen, he went in 1836 AD to the zawiya of Sheikh Ali al-Tayyar in al-Bibani, which was his first zawiya, where he prepared himself for the sciences by memorizing texts ¹⁰. Within two years, he mastered the

seven readings and the rules of Tajweed. In 1838, he moved to the zawiya (Sufi lodge) of Sheikh Said bin Abi Daoud in Aqbu. There, al-Hamli expanded his pursuit of Islamic knowledge, as well as logic, theology, astronomy, and arithmetic. His sheikh, Abi Daoud, was impressed with him and appointed him as a teacher and preacher in the zawiya's mosque. He was twenty years old at the time. In 1844, his sheikh granted him permission to return and pursue his studies independently¹¹. After some of the notables of the Al-Hamel tribe met with Sheikh Ahmed bin Abi Daoud, they asked him to allow the student Muhammad bin Abi Al-Qasim to return with them to their village and spread knowledge there, and they got what they wanted¹².

Sheikh Hamli spent eight years at the renowned scholarly zawiya of Said ibn Abi Daoud in the Akbou region, both as a student and a teacher. He acquired a vast knowledge of linguistics and religion. It is noteworthy that his presence in Kabylia kept him away from the French, as the region had not yet been occupied. Hamli graduated around 1844 and returned to his homeland. It is uncertain whether he received the Rahmaniyya Sufi order at the zawiya of Ibn Abi Daoud, as it was more famous for its scholarship than its Sufism. In fact, the entire region was under the influence of the Rahmaniyya order, which embraced jihad in Kabylia under the banner of the Emir and his successor, Ahmed al-Tayeb ibn Salem. Between 1844 and 1859, Sheikh Hamli had to find his place in his region and choose his path in life. He chose to establish a zawiya for teaching, following in the footsteps of his teacher, Ahmed ibn Abi Daoud, and his neighbors, Sheikh al-Mukhtar and Sheikh Ali ibn Othman. He was not one of the wealthy or powerful, nor one of the opportunists and imitators, nor one of the passive Sufis. He chose to spread science and knowledge. With a strong and intelligent personality, and as a strategist against the French occupation, he managed to protect his zawiya (religious lodge) from all danger and avoid political involvement. He would travel from time to time throughout Algeria, either to visit scholars, or to learn or teach, and he was highly regarded wherever he went. All of this is attributed to his family and his good upbringing, and to his sheikhs who honed his scholarly character, most notably the Quran teacher in the village of El Hamel, Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abd al-Qadir al-Hamli, known as Krirish; Sheikh al-Sadiq al-Bibani at the zawiya of Sidi Ali al-Tayyar in al-Bibani; Sheikh Ahmad ibn Abi Daoud; and Sheikh al-Mukhtar ibn Khalifa, known as al-Jalali after the region of Awlad Jalal¹³.

The name of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abi al-Qasim is associated with his zawiya, Zawiya al-Hamel, near Bousaada, which was historically one of the most famous zawiyyas of its time. He was not the originator or founder of a Sufi order of his own, but rather a preserver of the Rahmaniyya order, which he received from some of its leaders. He frequently visited the zawiya of Awlad Jalal, where he studied under its sheikh, al-Mukhtar ibn Khalifa, and received the Rahmaniyya litany, moderating his Sufism. However, society attributed many miracles to him, which were far from the truth. This is due to the general environment and people's perception of the righteous. As for the sheikh, he was a scholar of his time, whose life was predominantly characterized by scholarship and intellectual pursuits. He mastered the Arabic language and religious studies due to his environment and his education in zawiyyas specializing in the dissemination of knowledge. Unfortunately, he was promoted as possessing miraculous powers and supernatural abilities, thus obscuring his scholarly history and intellectual struggles¹⁴.

The sheikh had one daughter known for her piety¹⁵. Lalla Zineb (1897-1905) assumed leadership of the zawiya after his father's death, marking a revolution against the prevailing custom of excluding women from this role. She thus became the most prominent representative of Sufi women in Algerian society. Known for her intelligence in managing the zawiya, her character was shaped by her father, who taught her the Quran and its sciences, commentaries

on the two Sahihs (Bukhari and Muslim), and Qadi Iyad's "Kitab al-Shifa." She also studied theology and jurisprudence, and familiarized herself with seminal Sufi texts such as "Al-Risalah al-Qushayriyyah," "Ihya Ulum al-Din," and "Al-Hikam al-Ata'iyyah," thus acquiring a wealth of knowledge in matters of Islamic law. Because Lalla Zineb was the first woman to manage a zawiya of that size, some foreign researchers considered her a prominent figure in the cultural resistance in Algeria at the end of the 19th century¹⁶..

2.His death in 1897 AD:

Some researchers indicated that he died on his way back from Algeria to Bousaada, where he received a reply from his students summoning him to come. He then died at their place at two o'clock in the afternoon on Wednesday, the first of Muharram 1315 AH, corresponding to June 2, 1897 AD, at the age of 73. He was buried on Thursday morning at ten o'clock, and Sheikh Muhammad bin Al-Hajj Muhammad led the prayer for him, and he was buried in his mosque in Al-Hamel that he died in 1897 AD while Other sources indicate¹⁷. traveling to Algiers to give lessons in a place called Bouira Sahari, from a heart attack. It is rumored that the French colonial authorities poisoned him, like many scholars of his timeOn¹⁸. July 14, 1897, an official memorial service was held for him at the Imamayn Mosque in Bousaada. The memorial service was attended by French officers, official civilians, educated people, students, and the general public. His virtues were mentioned, and a feast was held for the poor and needy¹⁹.

3.His Cultural Role:

3.1Diverse Scholarly Contributions:

Since Muhammad ibn Abi al-Qasim returned to al-Hamel in 1848 CE, he dedicated himself to spreading Islamic knowledge and learning. He combined several roles: he was an imam and mufti of the Maliki school of thought, a preacher, and a teacher of Islamic sciences. Many scholars graduated under his tutelage. He had numerous followers among Sufi sheikhs, and students of knowledge and visitors from all over sought him out. He was known for his asceticism in food, clothing, and drink, as well as his humility and good character²⁰. He taught in his village for about nine years, and taught at the Al-Shurafa Mosque, also known as the Upper Mosque. His lessons became famous in the surrounding areas, and eighty students gathered around him in his circle of jurisprudence. He did not leave the mosque until August 1855. From that year onward, the Sheikh moved for three years between his village and the zawiya (Sufi lodge) of Sheikh Al-Mukhtar in Awlad Jalal to study there. Then, he stayed there as a teacher for a full year, fulfilling the wish of Sheikh Al-Mukhtar, who asked him to remain with him until he prayed over him on the day of his death. He also appointed him as his deputy and entrusted him with the upbringing of his sons and the handing over of the zawiya's affairs to one of them after him, as he considered him one of his best students. During this period he spent at the zawiya, Muhammad ibn Abi al-Qasim received the litanies of the Rahmaniyya Sufi order from Sheikh Al-Mukhtar and received his authorization (ijazah) from him. After the death of Sheikh Al-Mukhtar, he organized the affairs of the zawiya and entrusted the spiritual management of the shrine to Mustafa ibn Sheikh Al-Mukhtar, and returned to Al-Hamel to continue his scholarly and religious activities²¹..

The Hamel region flourished thanks to Hamli's efforts, and students of knowledge gathered around him. In addition to teaching them, he took care of their provisions²². Upon his return to El Hamel, he established his zawiya (Sufi lodge) with generous donations from the local people. He devoted himself to teaching the sciences he had mastered. He was eloquent, perceptive, and possessed vast knowledge. He did not limit himself to what he had memorized from his teachers but read many books, convinced that knowledge lies not only in

memorization but also in understanding truths through contemplation, questioning, dialogue, and doubt. His region was thirsty for education, and students flocked to him from everywhere until he became renowned. People then believed in his blessedness and sanctity, given the nature of the time, and the sheikh did not reject this belief, as was common practice then. Moreover, the French authorities only permitted education within the confines of Sufism that served their interests²³.

He lived for more than seventy years, fifty-five of which were spent in education. He was known for being practical and writing little. Among his works is a poem called "Al-Asma'iyya," which was explained by Muhammad bin Abdul Rahman Al-Deesi under the title "Fawz Al-Ghanayim." His nephew, Muhammad bin Abi Al-Qasim, wrote a book about him called "Al-Zahr Al-Basim fi Tarjamat Al-Imam Muhammad bin Abi Al-Qasim"²⁴. Al-Hamli also left a treatise on migration, a treatise on the prohibition of smoking, a treatise on the interpretation of Surat Al-Qadr, a treatise on the fact that the Rahmaniyya and Shadhiliyya paths are one and the same path, and a treatise on the seven stations of the soulsA treatise on²⁵. the permissibility of breaking the fast during Ramadan for the purpose of spiritual guidance, under the established conditions; a treatise on movement during remembrance of God. Although his scholarly output is limited, his training of students was extensive, and his zawiya (Sufi lodge) surpassed other Rahmaniyya zawiyyas in its preparation of young people. His followers expanded and spread throughout the country, occupying important positions such as judgeship, issuing religious rulings, and teaching. Among his most famous students were Sheikh al-Hasan ibn Ahmad al-Bazidi, who completed his studies at Al-Azhar University and obtained the highest degrees there; Sheikh Abd al-Rahman al-Disi; and Muhammad ibn Abi al-Qasim al-Hafnawi²⁶. In his book, "Introducing the Successors to the Men of the Predecessors," al-Hafnawi mentioned his sheikh and expressed his admiration for him, but he attributed many extraordinary miracles to him, considering that God had honored his sheikh by combining for him the knowledge of Sharia and Sufism²⁷. And others were his students, and his fame spread as a distinguished scholar, just as his fame spread as a warrior, and his brothers multiplied in Zawawa, the Tell, the Sahara, and Tunisia²⁸.

The foundation of his educational approach was the memorization of the Holy Quran. Students were required to memorize the entire Quran, and its instruction took place in the mosque affiliated with the zawiya (Sufi lodge). In doing so, he rendered a great service to Arabic education, exempting students from paying any fees. He dispelled the darkness of ignorance spread by France, and his fame contributed to attracting visitors and students of knowledge from all over, seeking scholarly certifications²⁹. The sheikh generously shared his knowledge, not only in his hometown but also beyond. He traveled to the capital to teach Islamic sciences, waging a cultural battle to educate people in Arabic and Islam. He stood against the French colonial policy of ignorance and Christianization.

Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abi al-Qasim's dedication to cultural life did not make him forget the plight of his country, which was under French occupation. He worked tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of his people and was renowned for his patriotism and unwavering faith. This is attested to by many oral traditions passed down about him. Even as a student at the zawiya (religious lodge) in the Kabylie region, he urged people to engage in jihad, followed the resistance of Emir Abdelkader with keen interest, and prayed for his victory. He even expressed a desire to volunteer in his ranksHis relationship with him remained friendly and good even³⁰. after the Emir was exiled to the Levant. It is known that Sheikh Muhammad bin Abi al-Qasim came in his prime with a group of the nobles of al-Hamel to the city of Bousaada in 1837 AD, to pledge allegiance to Emir Abdelkader for obedience and jihad, in order to liberate the country. On May 30, 1837 AD, when the Emir signed the famous Treaty of Tafna with the

French occupation, it allowed him to complete the building of his state, and during it the Emir was able to subdue most of the tribes to his authority, and he organized his emirate administratively and militarily. Some foreign references indicated that Emir Abdelkader arrived in the Bousaada region, and there its people and nobles pledged allegiance to him and rallied around him, including Sheikh Muhammad bin Abi al-Qasim³¹.

Sheikh Hamli witnessed many popular resistance movements: the resistance of Emir Abdelkader in western Algeria, the revolts of Sharif Boubaghla in Kabylia, Sharif Muhammad ibn Abdullah in the south, the revolt of Sadiq ibn al-Hajj in the Aures Mountains, the Zaatcha revolt which shook Bousaada and in which its people and scholars participated, the Ouled Djellal revolt, and the Zawiya of Sheikh al-Mukhtar. These popular uprisings against the French occupation led to the closure of many zawiyyas (religious lodges) and the destruction of some, and students took up arms. The scholars were both ascetics and mujahideen, for "knowledge, Sufism, and jihad were one and the same, inseparable from one anotherThe³²". Zawiya of El Hamel was a pioneer of science and knowledge, preserving the Islamic sciences that colonialism sought to eradicate in Algeria. It was also a refuge for those fleeing the injustice and evil of colonialism, as well as for orphans and the poor³³....

Sheikh al-Hamli chose to remain reserved and not directly involved in the popular uprisings. Despite his marriage into the al-Muqrani family, he did not join the revolution they declared in 1871. Although he was a Rahmani, he did not support Sheikh al-Haddad either. Even after Sheikh al-Haddad's emissaries arrived in al-Hamel carrying messages and a call to action, he did not join them and remained neutral³⁴. However, this did not prevent him from receiving refugees at his zawiya from both the Al-Muqrani and Al-Haddad families. It is possible that the sheikh used knowledge as a cover for Sufism and Sufism as a cover for knowledge, just as he used both together as a cover for politics. This is considered a maneuver on his part to cope with the circumstances of the era in which he found himself, and some researchers have considered it a form of cultural resistance³⁵. Some attributed his stance to the influence of prevailing circumstances and his realization that direct involvement in popular uprisings would not be in his zawiya's best interest, and might even have negative repercussions, leading to its destruction and ruin, as happened to many zawiyyas that openly supported the revolutions. Thus, the Algerian people would lose an important institution that had shouldered the responsibility of educating and protecting people from ignorance and Christianization, and which had also served as a refuge and sanctuary for all those in need. In 1887, al-Hamli submitted a request to the Governor-General, seeking exemption from the taxes imposed on him and the zawiya, especially since he posed no threat to France. It is clear here that the sheikh focused on the zawiya and did not engage in direct confrontation with French colonialism. He demonstrated foresight in distancing himself from the French administration, which came to see him as a tolerant man with good intentions³⁶..

Despite the neutrality the Sheikh displayed and his apparent disinterest in politics, the French authorities remained wary of him. They monitored him, his activities, and his zawiya (Sufi lodge). Their reports consistently warned against him and the expansion of his influence. According to some accounts, the Sheikh's principles combined the dissemination of Islamic sciences and the memorization of the Holy Quran with constant contact with Emir Abdelkader and his successors in the Ouled Nail and Ziban regions. This relationship continued uninterrupted even after the Emir's move to the Levant, through the dispatch of emissaries and messengers, and the exchange of letters and gifts. A letter from Emir Abdelkader to Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abi al-Qasim is particularly significant in revealing the Sheikh's stance on the Emir's revolution. He supported it and pledged to remain loyal to the Emir until the Day of Judgment. The letter reads: "Praise be to God alone. From Abdelkader ibn Muhyiddin to my

brother in God, whom I love for His sake, Sayyid Muhammad ibn Abi al-Qasim. Peace, mercy, and blessings of God be upon you. We have been informed of your love for God in us, so we love you for the sake of God, for whose sake you love us. And we likewise love you." For souls are like assembled armies... and do not forget us in your prayers, and peace be upon you repeatedly from Abdul Qadir^{37"}.

3.2 Establishing the Zawiya of Al-Hamel:

The idea of establishing the zawiya was an old desire of Muhammad bin Abi Al-Qasim, which had been with him since his graduation from the Zawiya of Abu Daoud. It is possible that some of his teachers there advised him to do it, and his desire increased through his feeling that this zawiya would have great services in the community. Also, the need for such an institution had become urgent in light of the increasing number of students and their eagerness to learn. Most families in the region were unable, due to their limited means, to send their children far away to seek knowledge. So the idea of establishing the zawiya was to confront the danger of ignorance and fill the void represented by the lack of knowledge institutions³⁸.

The Zawiya of El Hamel can be considered the most famous zawiya in the region, and it was regarded as one of the largest scientific institutes in Algeria, supervised by men who dedicated themselves to serving Islamic culture and religion, until it became a stronghold of Arabism and Islam³⁹. It initially gained its fame from its founder, who was one of the most prominent scholars of his time among the Maliki sheikhs, and who laid its first foundation in 1849 AD in Bousaada⁴⁰. He then began its construction in its current location in 1862 CE (1279 AH), and completed it in July 1863 CE (Muhamarram 1280 AH). After the Sheikh settled in Al-Hamel, his students increased, as previously mentioned, and he began spreading knowledge with the help of some teachers, including Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdul Rahman Al-Disi and Ashour Al-Khanqi⁴¹. The establishment of the zawiya was essential to support cultural and social life and to gather its students, on the one hand, and on the other hand to confront the danger of ignorance and the Christianization policy pursued by French colonialism against the Algerians. It was accomplished in a short period, as construction was completed only one year after it began. The sheikh entered his zawiya, which was the only one in the region, accompanied by his family and brothers, on July 18, 1863 CE, corresponding to the first of Muhamarram 1280 AH. In 1864 CE, corresponding to 1281 AH, he began building a mosque for the students to study jurisprudence and other subjects, and he also built about 100 residences for the students⁴². It included halls for education, residences for visitors, strangers, and guests, and scholars and students of knowledge flocked to it from everywhere. The corner became a center for spreading knowledge and confronting the French policy aimed at obliterating identity and perpetuating ignorance and illiteracy among the youth⁴³.

The location of the Zawiya of El Hamel reflects the intelligence and good taste of the Sheikh. It is located in the southwest of the city of Bousaada in the northern Sahara in southern Algeria, seven and a half miles from Bousaada, and is at the foot of Mount Imran. We can say that the village of El Hamel combined the characteristics of the Sahara and the features of the North. It is a beautiful and quiet area that remained unknown until the establishment of the Zawiya there. It gained wide fame and became a destination for students and visitors, and became famous in Algeria and abroad in the Maghreb and the Mashreq. As for the architecture of the Zawiya, it is described as good and beautiful, and its mosque is an artistic masterpiece with its mihrab, arches, domes, marble and columns⁴⁴...It was an institute for students of science at various levels of liberal education. Its foundation is the teaching of the Holy Quran⁴⁵. and religious sciences, including jurisprudence, its principles, exegesis, and Arabic language. Narratives indicate that the cornerstone of the zawiya's establishment and the sheikh's commitment to cultural resistance can be traced back to Emir Abdelkader al-Jazairi, who

advised him to contribute to the revival of knowledge and leave the bearing of arms to the general public. Many could bear arms, but few could disseminate knowledge. This occurred when the Emir met Muhammad ibn Abi al-Qasim in the desert of Lam'idat in 1844 CE (1259 AH) in the Titteri region south of Algiers. This was Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abi al-Qasim's route to his family in the northern Sahara. After they sat together, the Emir learned of the sheikh's desire for jihad and also witnessed his knowledge, piety, good intentions, and determination in the field of education⁴⁶. Here the prince advised the sheikh to adhere to the faith and warned him against false Sufism and innovation in religion⁴⁷. The prince added that the stage the country was going through required his efforts in the field of science and knowledge, to confront the Christianization that France was spreading, and thus the sheikh responded to the advice of Prince Abdelkader. He chose cultural resistance⁴⁸.

Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abi al-Qasim employed a number of sheikhs in his teaching, unlike other zawiyyas where sheikhs relied solely on their senior students, creating a hierarchy of students who taught one another. Among the most prominent sheikhs he employed were his nephew Muhammad ibn al-Hajj, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Disi, and Ashur al-Khanqi, all distinguished scholars. In those difficult circumstances and amidst the ignorance spread by France, the zawiya of al-Hamel shone brightly, and the sheikh's scholarly and spiritual reputation was widespread. The zawiya adopted the then-prevalent curriculum for Arabic and Islamic studies. Sheikh Muhammad taught exegesis, jurisprudence, hadith, and theology, and did not neglect literature, history, or the Prophet's biography. Literary studies were strengthened by the addition of Sheikh Ashur, and the study of theology and logic was enhanced by the arrival of al-Disi. Manuscript and printed books reached the zawiya through donations and other means, eventually forming a significant library. The sheikh's fame led to a large influx of visitors and scholars seeking scholarly and Sufi authorizations. It was widely believed that the zawiya had around a thousand students, although this figure is somewhat exaggerated. This undoubtedly indicated a large number of students, as the zawiya had become a secondary school with a large student body, a well-structured program, and a robust system for supplies, cleaning, and order. The zawiya's provisions and funding came from visits, donations, and the generosity of benefactors. The zawiya also possessed properties and endowments that gradually grew in size⁴⁹.

Education at the Zawiya of El Hamel encompassed all segments of society. Part of it was directed towards the general public, and another part towards the students affiliated with the Zawiya. The education directed towards the general public included mosque lessons of preaching, guidance, and urging people towards virtuous morals and good deeds, as well as teaching them matters of religion, especially creed and jurisprudence. This task was undertaken by the sheikh of the Zawiya himself, assisted in his work by the Zawiya's teachers and senior students advanced in their studies⁵⁰.

The education provided to the students was more rigorous, encompassing a wide range of religious and intellectual knowledge. It focused on memorizing the Holy Quran, teaching Hadith and Maliki jurisprudence, in addition to Arabic language and Quranic sciences. The students of the zawiya (Sufi lodge) were governed by an internal system called "al-Safara" (the embassy), in which they were ranked according to their memorization progress. Those who had memorized the Holy Quran were ranked first, followed by those who had not yet memorized it, and then beginners⁵¹. Throughout its various historical phases, the zawiya provided free education, as well as free shelter, food, and clothing for students, from the beginning until the end of their studies, culminating in the diligent ones obtaining the "ijazah" or certificate that qualifies them to spread science and knowledge in their countries⁵². Or wherever they settled, and the references indicated that the educational program in the zawiya imitated the program of

the famous Zaytuna Mosque, as there were stages and levels from primary to advanced studies, and there were transitional courses. Also, the prescribed books were almost identical, and the sciences taught were religious and Arabic sciences, astronomy, arithmetic, logic, and prosody. The lessons of Sheikh Muhammad al-Qasimi and al-Disi took precedence as they were among the advanced studies. The zawiya continued its mission for generations, and it is no ⁵³. exaggeration to say that it was a beacon of knowledge whose influence extended almost to encompass all of Algeria.

One of the visitors to the El Hamel zawiya in 1926 confirmed that it was founded to spread the light of Islamic guidance and sound knowledge to all the students who frequented it from across the country. According to him, it housed more than 250 students who had memorized the Quran perfectly and received a sound religious and academic education. The students spent their days learning the Quran, its interpretation, Hadith, Maliki jurisprudence, Islamic history, mathematics, and some intellectual sciences. They held lectures and debates, and when the time for prayer came, the students would stand in congregation, followed by various supplications and litanies. Even in their designated rooms at night, they continued to review their lessons and memorize the Holy Quran, maintaining a state of constant devotion and reflection⁵⁴.

The Zawiya of El Hamel was able to occupy a leading position among other scholarly institutions, thanks to its sheikhs and scholars renowned for their vast knowledge and learning. Their combined efforts were dedicated to the education of students, and they devoted their lives to the responsibilities of teaching. Foremost among these scholars were the founder of the Zawiya, Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abi al-Qasim, Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Disi, Sheikh Ashur al-Khanqi, and Sheikh Muhammad al-Makki ibn Azzouz. Scholars from outside the country also contributed to the teaching, as the sheikhs of the Zawiya would seize the opportunity of visiting scholars to request that they deliver various lessons to benefit the students. Examples of these scholars include Sheikh Abd al-Hayy al-Kattani al-Maghribi, a professor at the University of Fez and head of the Kattani Zawiya in Morocco; al-Hajwa, the Minister of Education in the Moroccan government; Sheikh al-Abid al-Jilali; Sheikh al-Tahir al-Abisi; and others⁵⁵. It truly became a beacon for spreading knowledge and learning among the general public and scholars alike. It stood against the colonial policies aimed at erasing Islamic identity, keeping society ignorant, and distancing it from the Arabic language and the Islamic faith. Several scholars graduated from it, including Sheikh Muhammad ibn al-Hajj Muhammad, Sheikh al-Mukhtar al-Qasimi, and Abu al-Qasim al-Hafnawi. Among its students was also Sheikh Ashur ibn Muhammad al-Mas'udi al-Hilali al-Khanqi, a Sufi scholar, writer, and poet. A large number of scholars from within Algeria and abroad visited the zawiya, most notably scholars from the Association of Muslim Scholars such as Sheikh Abdul Hamid ibn Badis, al-Bashir al-Ibrahimi, Ahmad Tawfiq al-Madani, Sheikh Atfayish, Ibrahim Bayoud, and many others⁵⁶.

Conclusion:

-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abi al-Qasim contributed significantly to cultural life and made numerous efforts in this field, both through his personal endeavors and through the institution he established, the Zawiya of al-Hamel, which served as a beacon of knowledge throughout Algeria.

-Muhammad ibn Abi al-Qasim can be considered primarily a scholarly figure. He settled at the Zawiya of al-Hamel, which he founded himself, and through it, he disseminated various religious and literary sciences. He was not a Sufi in the negative sense of the term, someone

who secluded himself, claimed miracles and extraordinary feats, or was driven by a love of prestige and power.

-The Zawiya of al-Hamel occupied a leading position among scholarly institutions. The Sheikh's lessons there were comparable to postgraduate studies, and he, along with other scholars, formed an enlightened elite dedicated to spreading knowledge at a time when academic institutions were neglected and society was threatened by ignorance and illiteracy.

-The Zawiya of al-Hamel contributed to the upbringing of the youth and the dissemination of knowledge. It followed a sound educational approach, focusing on memorizing the Holy Quran, teaching Arabic, religious sciences, and other disciplines. It defied the French policy that aimed to spread ignorance and eradicate Algerian identity. - Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abi al-Qasim's generally accepted stance was that he remained neutral when several groups declared jihad and resistance. He did not engage in direct confrontation with French colonialism, but despite this, he aided and protected those affected by the horrors of war, offering them assistance.

-Sheikh al-Hamli and Emir Abdelkader shared a strong relationship built on loyalty and respect. Although the Sheikh did not take up arms with the Emir's armies, he provided moral support to his resistance.

-The Sheikh chose cultural jihad, which is no less important than armed struggle, especially considering that French colonialism combined military and cultural warfare in its war against Algeria.

Footnotes:

¹ Abu al-Qasim Muhammad al-Hafnawi, *Introduction to the Successors of the Predecessors*, printed at the Pierre Fontana Oriental Press, Algeria, 1906, pp. 336-337

² Taqi al-Din Boukaber, "Lalla Zaynab al-Hamliya and her role in cultural resistance: A reading of a manuscript poem by Sheikh Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Qamari," *Journal of Historical Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 2, University of Algiers 2, December 2015, pp. 263-264

³ Abu al-Qasim Saadallah, *Cultural History of Algeria*, Vol. 4, 1st ed., Alam al-Ma'rifah, Algeria, 2011, p. 159

⁴ Issa bin Qubay, "Muhammad bin Abi al-Qasim al-Hamli: His Formation and Role in Spreading Science and Knowledge," *Algerian Historical Journal*, No. 9, University of M'sila, September 9, 2018, pp. 162-163

⁵ Abu al-Qasim Muhammad al-Hafnawi, previous source, pp. 336, 339

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 339

⁷ Isa ibn Qubay, previous article, p. 154

⁸ Abu al-Qasim Saadallah, *Cultural History of Algeria*, Vol. 4, p. 159

⁹ Muhammad Ali Dabouz, *The Renaissance of Modern Algeria and its Blessed Revolution*, Vol. 1, 1st ed., Alam al-Ma'rifah, Algeria, 2013, p. 63

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 68

¹¹ Abu Imran al-Sheikh et al., *Dictionary of Famous Maghrebi Figures*, University of Algiers, 1995, p. 545

¹² Taqi al-Din Boukaber, the previous article, p. 264

¹³ Khamissi Saadi, *Boussaada in the Colonial Era 1849-1939*, PhD dissertation, Department of History, University of Algiers 2, 2016-2017, pp. 166-167

¹⁴ Abu al-Qasim Saadallah, *Cultural History of Algeria*, Vol. 4, the previous reference, pp. 158-159, 161, 162, 163

¹⁵ Abu al-Qasim Muhammad al-Hafnawi, the previous source, p. 342

¹⁶ Bilal Kashida, "The Efforts of Sufi Women in Algerian Society: Sayyida Lalla Zaynab al-Qasimiya as a Model," *Rawafid Journal for Research and Studies*, No. 3, University of Ghardaia, December 2017, pp. 81-82

-
- ¹⁷ *Taqi al-Din Boukaber*, previous article, p. 265
- ¹⁸ *Abu Imran al-Sheikh et al.*, previous reference, p. 546
- ¹⁹ *Abu al-Qasim Saadallah*, *Cultural History of Algeria*, Vol. 4, p. 162
- ²⁰ *Abu al-Qasim Muhammad al-Hafnawi*, pp. 337-338
- ²¹ *Taqi al-Din Boukaber*, previous article, pp. 264-265
- ²² *Abu al-Qasim Muhammad al-Hafnawi*, previous source, pp. 339-340
- ²³ *Abu al-Qasim Saadallah*, **Cultural History of Algeria**, vol. 3, 1st ed., *Alam al-Ma'rifah*, Algeria, 2011, p. 219
- ²⁴ *Abu Imran al-Sheikh et al.*, **The Previous Reference**, p. 546
- ²⁵ *Mansouri al-Hawas*, "Muhammad ibn Abi al-Qasim al-Hamli: One of Algeria's Scholars and Reformers in the 19th Century," **Journal of Historical Studies**, vol. 20, no. 1, University of Algiers 2, October 2019, p. 217
- ²⁶ *Issa bin Qubay*, previous article, pp. 160-161
- ²⁷ *Abu al-Qasim Muhammad al-Hafnawi*, previous source, pp. 337-338
- ²⁸ *Abu al-Qasim Saadallah*, *Cultural History of Algeria*, vol. 4, previous reference, p. 161
- ²⁹ *Abu al-Qasim Saadallah*, *Cultural History of Algeria*, vol. 3, p. 221
- ³⁰ *Muhammad Ali Dabouz*, previous reference, p. 72
- ³¹ *Muhammad Ali Musa'id*, "The Role of Zawiyyas in the Resistance and the Liberation Revolution: The Relationship of the Zawiya of al-Hamel to the Resistance of Emir Abdelkader," extracted from the proceedings of the Seventh National Conference under the theme "Zawiyyas: Identity and Cultural Influence," Ministry of Culture, 2018, pp. 86-87
- ³² *Abu al-Qasim Saadallah*, **Cultural History of Algeria**, vol. 3, op. cit., pp. 218-219
- ³³ *Muhammad Ali Dabouz*, op. cit., pp. 78, 81
- ³⁴ *Khamissi Saadi*, op. cit., p. 171
- ³⁵ *Abu al-Qasim Saadallah*, **Cultural History of Algeria**, vol. 3, op. cit., p. 219
- ³⁶ *Khamissi Saadi*, op. cit., pp. 171-172
- ³⁷ *Muhammad Ali Musaid*, op. cit., pp. 88-89
- ³⁸ *Issa bin Qubay*, previous article, p. 158
- ³⁹ *Ahmed Tawfiq al-Madani*, *A Life of Struggle (Memoirs) 1925-1954*, Vol. 2, Special Edition, *Alam al-Ma'rifah*, Algeria, 2010, p. 145
- ⁴⁰ *Abu al-Qasim Saadallah*, *The Cultural History of Algeria*, Vol. 3, p. 218
- ⁴¹ *Lakhdar bin Bouzid*, "The Zawiya of al-Hamel and its Role in Preserving Algerian Heritage," *Al-Insan wa al-Majal Journal*, No. 5, Institute of Human and Social Sciences, University Center, Nour al-Bashir al-Bayd, Algeria, 2017, p. 215
- ⁴² *Taqi al-Din Boukaber*, previous article, pp. 265-266
- ⁴³ *Lakhdar Ben Bouzid*, previous article, pp. 211-215
- ⁴⁴ *Muhammad Ali Debbouz*, previous reference, pp. 62-63, 75
- ⁴⁵ *Abu Imran al-Sheikh et al.*, previous reference, p. 545
- ⁴⁶ *Muhammad Ali Debbouz*, previous reference, p. 72
- ⁴⁷ *Abu Imran al-Sheikh et al.*, previous reference, p. 545
- ⁴⁸ *Issa Ben Qabi*, previous article, p. 158
- ⁴⁹ *Abu al-Qasim Saadallah*, *Cultural History of Algeria*, vol. 3, previous reference, pp. 221-222
- ⁵⁰ *Khamissi Saadi*, op. cit., p. 194
- ⁵¹ *Lakhdar Ben Bouzid*, op. cit., p. 215
- ⁵² *Ahmed Tawfiq Al-Madani*, op. cit., p. 149
- ⁵³ *Abu Al-Qasim Saadallah*, *Cultural History of Algeria*, vol. 3, op. cit., p. 222
- ⁵⁴ *Ahmed Tawfiq Al-Madani*, op. cit., pp. 145-146
- ⁵⁵ *Khamissi Saadi*, op. cit., p. 195
- ⁵⁶ *Lakhdar Ben Bouzid*, op. cit., pp. 218-219