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Sheikh Abdelaziz bin Mohammed Al-Hashemi Al-Sharif and His Intellectual, Religious, and Political Influence in Southeastern Algeria: A Historical Study of His Role in Sufi Networks, Reformist Movements, and the Algerian National Struggle (1898–1938)		
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Keywords Sheikh Abdelaziz bin Mohammed Al-Hashemi; Qadiriyya Order; Oued Souf; Algerian National Movement; Sufi Networks; Colonial Education Policy; Reformist Ulama; Amiche Revolt.		
Abstract Sheikh Abdelaziz bin Mohammed Al-Hashemi Al-Sharif (1898–1938) stands out as one of the most influential religious, economic, and political figures in southeastern Algeria during the early twentieth century. As head of the Qadiriyya Sufi order in the Oued Souf region and a prominent reformist intellectual, he played a decisive role in shaping local resistance to French colonial policy. His influence extended across Laghouat, the M'zab Valley, Ouargla, Biskra, and Touggourt, making him a central figure within both spiritual and national movements. This study examines his educational background, relationships with reformist and political currents, and his engagement with colonial authorities. It also analyzes the 1938 Colonial Education Decree and the events known as the 'Second Amiche Revolt.'		
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1. Introduction

During the twentieth century, Algeria witnessed the emergence of numerous prominent figures from the southeastern regions that played active roles in shaping the country's political and cultural landscape through their engagement with national movements and political parties. Among these figures was Sheikh *Abdelaziz bin Mohammed Al-Hashemi Al-Sharif*, the head of the Qadiriyya Sufi order in the Oued Souf region. His influence

extended to other areas such as Laghouat, the M'zab region, Ouargla, Biskra, and Touggourt, making him one of the most influential personalities in southeastern Algeria as a whole.

Due to the importance and wide influence of the Qadiriyya order in Algerian society, its followers and sheikhs became a focal point of interest for national movements, particularly the *Association of Algerian Muslim Ulama*, which was able to expand its presence in southeastern Algeria after Sheikh Abdelaziz joined its ranks. From this perspective, the present study raises the following main research question: What characterized Sheikh Abdelaziz bin Mohammed Al-Hashemi's activity during the period of the Algerian national movement, and what was his role within it?

This central question leads to several sub-questions:

- Who was Sheikh Abdelaziz bin Mohammed Al-Hashemi Al-Sharif?
- How was he raised and educated?
- What role did he play within the national movement?
- How were his relations with the different active currents of the national movement?
- What was his position regarding the French colonial policy?

To answer these questions, the research is divided into four main sections: The first section introduces Sheikh Abdelaziz bin Mohammed Al-Hashemi, tracing his upbringing and education up to his appointment as head of the Qadiriyya zawiya (Sufi lodge). The second section explores his activities during the national movement and his relationships with major political and reformist currents. The third section discusses the Decree of March 8, 1938, issued by the French colonial authorities as part of their colonial education policy, along with Sheikh Abdelaziz's stance toward it. Finally, the fourth section examines the uprising led by Sheikh Abdelaziz, known in local memory as the "*Second Amiche Revolt*" (*Haddat Amiche ath-Thaniya*), which was primarily triggered by the issuance of the 1938 decree.

2. Sheikh Abdelaziz bin Mohammed Al-Hashemi: Upbringing and Education

Sheikh Abdelaziz bin Mohammed Al-Hashemi bin Ibrahim bin Ahmed Al-Sharif bin Mohammed bin Atiyya bin Ibrahim was born in 1898 in his father's zawiya in the village of *Al-Bayadha*, located in the town of *Amiche* in Oued Souf. He was a twin, and the third son of Sheikh Mohammed Al-Hashemi Al-Sharif. His mother, *Khadija bint Al-Tayyib*, was of Tunisian origin. He descended from the Bouzid tribe, an Arab Hilalian lineage that had settled between Toulga and Biskra (see: Ashouri Qamoun, *The Role of the Family of Sheikh Ibrahim bin Ahmed Al-Sharif in the Algerian National Movement, Journal of Research and Studies*, No. 3, June 2006, p. 72).

The family of Sheikh Abdelaziz was known for its deep spiritual affiliation with the Qadiriyya order. His grandfather, Sheikh *Ibrahim*, known as *Ibrahim al-Nafti*, was one of the leading propagators of the Qadiriyya in southeastern Algeria and southwestern Tunisia. He established several zawiyyas to spread the order and attract disciples. His father, Sheikh *Mohammed Al-Hashemi*, continued this path after returning from Tunisia to Algeria in 1892, founding a zawiya in *Al-Bayadha*. It became a center of Qadiriyya influence whose impact reached as far as Western Sudan, Ghadames, and Ghat, thanks to the trade caravans traveling from Souf to Libya (Ibrahim Miyassi, *Issues in the Modern History of Algeria*, University Publications Office, Algeria, 1999, pp. 221-222).

Sheikh Abdelaziz grew up in a religious and scholarly environment, in a family deeply rooted in Sufism and knowledge. He memorized the Holy Qur'an at an early age at his father's zawiya, mastering it perfectly, and studied fiqh, Arabic grammar, and the foundations of knowledge. Under his father's guidance, he traveled in 1913, along with his brother *Abderrazzaq*, to study at the Zaytuna Mosque-University in Tunisia, where their father covered their expenses. Sheikh Abdelaziz earned the Certificate of Excellence (Tatawi') with distinction, ranking first in his class—an achievement that reflected his intellectual brilliance and dedication (ibid., p. 223).

During his stay at Zaytuna, he met several notable scholars and students, including Sheikh Mubarak Al-Mili, Abdelkader Al-Yajouri, and others. After graduating, he returned to his father's zawiya in Oued Souf, where he found that his father had endowed the zawiya's property to his three sons, stipulating in his will that the position of sheikh would go to whoever obtained the Zaytuna certificate (A.N.O.M., 9 H24, *Mohamed el Hachemi, HOBOUS, El Oued*).

After the death of his father on September 23, 1923, and the death of his brother *Abderrazzaq* three months later, Sheikh Abdelaziz assumed leadership of the zawiya, alongside his brother *Sheikh Mohammed Al-Saleh*, who had also earned the Zaytuna certificate (*Abdelhamid Ben Badis, "On the Tragic Disaster of Souf: Sheikh Abdelaziz bin Al-Hashemi and Reform," Al-Basa'ir Newspaper, Year 3, Issue 123, July 22, 1938, p. 271*).

In 1929, Sheikh Abdelaziz considered resigning from the leadership of the zawiya, but his followers and disciples strongly opposed the idea, convincing him to continue. Alongside his religious duties and supervision of the zawiya's branches in Sidi Amrane, Skikda, Laghouat, and Algiers, Sheikh Abdelaziz paid great attention to expanding his family's properties and investments. He achieved remarkable success in agriculture and trade, earning him the nickname "King of Dates" among his contemporaries (*Anmar Hilal, Research and Studies in Modern Algerian History (1830-1962)*, 2nd ed., University Publications Office, Algeria, 2016, p. 324).

2. His Activity in the National Movement and His Relations with Political and Reformist Currents

Sheikh Abdelaziz bin Mohammed Al-Hashemi was widely known for his dynamic activity during the period of the Algerian national movement, particularly in the field of education. He invited several of his friends who had graduated from *Al-Zaytuna University* in Tunis and appointed them as teachers at the Qadiriyya zawiya in Oued Souf or its affiliated branches. Among them were Sheikh Al-Saeed Al-Zahiri and Sheikh Mubarak Al-Mili, who were assigned to teach at the Qadiriyya zawiya in Laghouat, while Sheikh Abdelkader Al-Yajouri and Sheikh Ali bin Saad were appointed to the main zawiya (*Abdelhamid Ben Badis, On the Tragic Disaster of Souf: Sheikh Abdelaziz bin Al-Hashemi and Reform, Al-Basa'ir Newspaper, Year 3, Issue 123, July 22, 1938, p. 271*).

In 1937, Sheikh Abdelaziz submitted a formal request to Sheikh Abdelhamid Ben Badis to join the *Association of Algerian Muslim Ulama*, following the *Islamic Congress of 1936*. His candidacy was presented during a meeting of the Association's administrative council, and it was almost unanimously approved. Sheikh Ben Badis wrote on this occasion:

"Last year, before the General Assembly, Sheikh Abdelaziz wrote to me expressing his desire to join the Association of Ulama. I replied that the Association's doors were open to all Muslims—especially to men like him, scholars of great standing. During the General Assembly, he was nominated to the administrative council as a scholar and as the Sheikh of the Qadiriyya order, and he was elected with near unanimity." (*Ibid.*)

Sheikh Mohammed Khair Eddine describes another aspect of Sheikh Abdelaziz's character:

"He was of a nervous temperament, impulsive and quick to react—sometimes even reckless and rash. His behavior often angered the French administrator of the region." (*Mohammed Khair Eddine, Memoirs of Sheikh Mohammed Khair Eddine, Dahleb Press, 1985, p. 281*)

This temperament strongly influenced his political attitudes and reactions toward surrounding events. Sheikh Abdelaziz played a key role in the expansion of the Association of Ulama's influence in Oued Souf and neighboring regions (Ben Badis, *Ibid.*, p. 271).

He was also known for his support of Tunisian nationalist activists, particularly members of the *Constitutional Liberal Party (Destour)*, offering them his full backing. It is not unlikely that the "Second Amiche Revolt" of 1938 was connected to the Tunisian protests of the same period, led by the Destour Party. Historical accounts mention that Sheikh Abdelaziz maintained contact with Dr. Al-Matari, a leader of the Tunisian Destour Party, who sought to coordinate revolutionary activities against French colonialism (*Anmar Hilal, op. cit., pp. 347-348*).

Moreover, his intense activity in 1937 and 1938 attracted the attention of several leaders of the Algerian People's Party (PPA), who considered recruiting him into their ranks, impressed by his activism and popularity. However,

the rapid succession of political events, the outbreak of World War II, and the dissolution of the PPA prevented this. It is even said that some of its members thought of hiring lawyers to defend him after his arrest (*Ibid.*, pp. 329-330).

3. Sheikh Abdelaziz's Position on the Chautemps Law of 1938

In line with its colonial policy to restrict Arabic education, the French administration issued the Law of March 8, 1938, known as the Chautemps Law, named after French Minister of the Interior *Camille Chautemps*. The decree ordered the closure of all schools operating without official authorization and classified Arabic as a "foreign language", an attempt to suppress Islamic and Arabic education.

Under this law, teaching in Arabic was only allowed with an official colonial permit, subject to two conditions:

1. The teacher must demonstrate academic competence and physical fitness.
2. The school premises must meet colonial health standards.

In reality, these conditions served merely as a pretext to ban Arabic education and close independent schools, under the guise of "legal" regulation (*Abdelkader Cherif, "The Chautemps Law of March 8, 1938, and Its Impact on Education and the Reform Movement in Algeria," Journal of Mahd Al-Lughat, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2020, p. 43*).

Sheikh Abdelaziz firmly rejected and resisted this colonial law. When the French local administrator in El Oued demanded that he present an official teaching license, the Sheikh retorted:

"Zawiyyas have always functioned without such licenses."

His refusal led to increased colonial harassment, and the resulting tensions directly contributed to the outbreak of the "Second Amiche Revolt" (Haddat Amiche al-Thaniya) in 1938. Following these events, Sheikh Abdelaziz was arrested and exiled by the French colonial authorities (*Ben Badis, op. cit., p. 271*).

4. The Second Amiche Revolt (1938)

The years 1937-1938 marked a decisive period in Sheikh Abdelaziz's national and reformist struggle. After joining the *Association of Ulama* and being elected to its administrative council, he used his position as a platform for political activism and opposition to French colonial policies. Several key factors contributed to his preparation for a popular uprising against the colonial administration:

- His active role within the Association of Ulama and his success in strengthening its influence in Oued Souf. He assigned scholars such as Sheikh Ali bin Saad and Sheikh Abdelkader Al-Yajouri to teach at the Qadiriyah zawiya, using part of it to apply the Association's educational curriculum (*Amniar Hilal, op. cit., pp. 328-329*).
- His petition to the colonial authorities demanding that they refrain from interfering in Muslim personal affairs. On February 26, 1938, he sent a telegram to the higher colonial authorities and launched a vigorous campaign against the local French administration (*Ibid., p. 330*).
- The issuance of the March 8, 1938 Chautemps Law, which sought to close unauthorized Arabic schools, and which Sheikh Abdelaziz strongly opposed (*Ben Badis, op. cit., p. 271*).

Another triggering factor was the visit of Louis Milliot, the French *Director-General of Native Affairs and Southern Territories*, to Oued Souf. Sheikh Abdelaziz seized this opportunity to protest colonial abuses in the region (*Ali Ghauabzia, Chapters and Studies on the History of the National Movement and the Liberation Revolution in Oued Souf, 1854-1954, Sami Publishing, El Oued, p. 39*).

Note on Louis Milliot: Born in Constantine in 1885, Milliot studied law at the University of Algiers, then completed his doctorate in Paris with a thesis on Maghrebi law. He worked with Marshal Lyautey in Morocco and

became a leading expert on Islamic law. Appointed Professor of Islamic Law in 1930 and Dean of the Faculty of Law in Algiers in 1934, he served as Director-General of Native Affairs (1935–1940). He later resumed teaching until his death in 1961. (*Paul Esmein, "Le professeur Louis Milliot," Revue internationale de droit comparé, Vol. 15, No. 1, Jan-Mar 1963, pp. 185–186*.)

Upon learning of Milliot's visit, Sheikh Abdelaziz returned from Algiers to Oued Souf, postponing a planned trip to France for medical treatment. When warned by the local French administrator of the risks of holding demonstrations, the Sheikh replied firmly:

"The demonstration will take place on the scheduled day—no matter what." (*Anmar Hilal, op. cit., p. 331; Ali Ghanabzia, op. cit., p. 39*.)

On April 12, 1938, Sheikh Abdelaziz succeeded in gathering around 12,000 demonstrators—mostly followers of the Qadiriyya order—before the El Oued colonial administrative headquarters, to express their anger and discontent with the French colonial authorities. Overwhelmed by the massive turnout, the French representative agreed to meet the Sheikh privately. The meeting lasted nearly three hours, during which Sheikh Abdelaziz presented a list of demands reflecting the grievances and aspirations of the local population (*Rachid Qassiba, "The Attitude of Sufi Orders toward French Colonialism in Oued Souf - The Qadiriyya Order as a Model (1917-1962)," PhD thesis, University of Algiers 2 - Abu al-Qasim Saadallah, 2015-2016, pp. 315-316; "Protests," Al-Basa'ir Newspaper, Year 3, Issue 105, March 25, 1938, p. 131*).

These demands were summarized as follows:

During the meeting held on April 12, 1938, between Sheikh 'Abd al-'Azīz and the representative of the colonial administration, the Sheikh presented a series of demands reflecting the suffering of the local population and expressing their rejection of the discriminatory and restrictive policies imposed by the French authorities. The main points of these demands were as follows:

- Condemnation of the repeated and unlawful interference by the French administration in the religious and social affairs of Algerians, as such actions constituted an infringement on their religious and cultural independence.
- Objection to the unjustified closure of mosques and free Arabic schools in the region, a measure perceived as an attempt to impose colonial educational systems and policies.
- Demand to end the oppression and repressive practices inflicted upon the inhabitants of the region by the local colonial administration and its agents.
- Protest against the economic and social deterioration in the area, and a call for equal pay between Algerian imams and religious workers and their Christian counterparts among the *Pères Blancs* and priests serving in Algeria.
- Appeal for respect of religious and doctrinal freedoms, and condemnation of the systematic restrictions in the regions of Ouargla and Kabylia, while the colonial administration was at the same time facilitating and materially supporting missionary activities aimed at converting Algerian youth. (*Ammār Hilāl, Previous reference, pp. 331-332*).

Following his review of these demands, the representative of the colonial government expressed his willingness to submit them to his superiors for consideration. In an attempt to ease tensions, the representative Milliot offered immediate promises—most notably the provision of 7,000 quintals of grain to assist the poor and needy in Oued Souf, upon his return to Algiers. (*Rachid Qasība, Previous reference, p. 317*).

However, the Sheikh insisted that the amount be increased to 10,000 quintals, explaining that this was the quantity he personally used to provide from his own wealth. The colonial official accepted this request, prompting the Sheikh to address the protesters and reassure them—an act that initially brought relief to the local French administration.

(‘Arabī Bela’zūzī, *Activities of the Association of Algerian Muslim ‘Ulamā’ in Southern Algeria and the Events of Oued Souf (1937-1938)*, *New Ages Journal*, vol. 12, no. 1, May 2022, p. 396).

However, events soon took a different turn. On April 13, the government representative was surprised to find the crowd still gathered, preventing him from leaving the annex. This forced the administration to re-enter negotiations with the Sheikh, focusing again on issues specific to the Oued Souf region. The situation quickly escalated as protesters began throwing stones at the annex and harassing those inside, prompting the district governor to call for reinforcements from Biskra and Ouargla to break the siege and suppress the uprising. (‘Ammār Hilāl, *Previous reference*, p. 333).

Once French reinforcements arrived, the protesters began to disperse. Sheikh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz then sent a second telegram to the French authorities, protesting the measures taken against Islamic religious institutions and free Arabic education, and also sent a message to the leaders of the Tunisian Constitutional Party, expressing his solidarity with their struggle against French colonialism. (‘Alī Ghānābziya, *Previous reference*, p. 38).

Sheikh ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Ben Bādīs described the situation in *Al-Basā’ir* newspaper as follows:

“Oued Souf resounded on April 18 with the noise of soldiers and weapons; its hills glittered with machine guns, and its skies thundered with the roar of airplanes. Its people, its children, its houses, and its palms were about to be destroyed by the bombs of the earth or the lightning of the sky. Thirty women miscarried out of terror....”

The entire region fell under a strict siege: life came to a standstill, markets were closed, and movement in and out of Oued Souf was completely prohibited. (‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Ben Bādīs, *On the Painful Catastrophe of Souf: Then Silence*, *Al-Basā’ir*, Year 3, no. 121, July 1938, p. 255).

The uprising and its aftermath had severe consequences for Sheikh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz and his supporters, which can be summarized as follows:

- The arrest of Sheikh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, following his attempt to revive the uprising on April 18 by visiting towns and villages in Oued Souf and urging people to join him. The colonial authorities arrested him before he could renew the movement. (‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Ben Bādīs, *ibid.*, p. 255).
- The arrest of the Sheikh’s followers and supporters, including Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Yājūrī, Sheikh ‘Alī bin Sa‘d, and ‘Abd al-Kāmil bin al-Hājj ‘Abd Allāh, along with many demonstrators who were detained at the administrative center. Punishments varied between exile, imprisonment, and financial fines. (Rachid Qasība, *Previous reference*, pp. 323-324).
- Imprisonment of Sheikh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Yājūrī, and Sheikh ‘Alī bin Sa‘d in El-Koudia Prison, followed by house arrest after completing their sentences. Sheikh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz was subsequently exiled to several Algerian cities, and finally to Tunisia, where he remained until his death. (A.N.O.M., 9 H 24, Extract from the journal *El-Bassair* No. 112, May 6 1938, *Military Territory of Touggourt, El-Oued Annex*, May 10 1938).
- The formation of a commission of inquiry into the causes of the uprising. According to Sheikh Ben Bādīs, the committee concluded that there had been no rebellion nor insurrection, which hastened the lifting of the siege after three weeks. (‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Ben Bādīs, *ibid.*, p. 255).

5. Conclusion

The main findings of this study can be summarized as follows:

- The French colonial government tightened its grip on free Arabic education through the promulgation of the Law of March 8, 1938, the effects of which reached Sheikh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, who had previously declared his alliance

with the *Association of Algerian Muslim 'Ulamā'*. This prompted the colonial authorities to demand that the Sheikh obtain a special permit to continue free education.

- The Qādiriyya order, represented by its leader Sheikh 'Abd al-'Azīz, played a prominent role in rejecting French colonial policy and in organizing the popular uprising against the French colonial administration in Oued Souf, in an effort to restore usurped rights and to put an end to the abuses committed by colonial agents against the local population, who had been unjustly dispossessed and punished.
- The “Second ‘Amīsh Uprising” confirmed that the French colonial authorities had not abandoned their repressive methods in response to any protest demanding justice. They continued to apply a policy of collective punishment against all voices calling for independence or opposing colonial rule.
- The Qādiriyya order maintained a strong presence in various revolts and uprisings against French colonialism. The stance of Sheikh 'Abd al-'Azīz and the Qādiriyya zawiya of Oued Souf is a clear example of this enduring commitment, which demonstrates both the consistency of its anti-colonial position and the deep influence this stance had on its followers and on the wider Algerian people, despite all forms of repression, exile, and persecution.
- The relationship between Sheikh 'Abd al-'Azīz and the reformist movement, represented by the *Association of Algerian Muslim 'Ulamā'*, was a key element in the resistance against colonial domination. This relationship is evidenced by the close cooperation between the Qādiriyya zawiya and the *Association*, as the former opened educational sections based on the Association's curriculum within its institutions in Oued Souf. This fact refutes the claims that attempt to pit the components of the Algerian nation against one another or to fabricate a false conflict between scholars who, in truth, all emerged from the same spiritual and intellectual tradition.

Methodology

This study employs a historical-analytical methodology, drawing upon archival records from A.N.O.M., zawiya documents, colonial administrative memoranda, and contemporary testimonies. Primary sources include writings of reformist scholars such as Sheikh Abdelhamid Ben Badis and memoirs of Sheikh Mohammed Khair Eddine. Secondary sources consist of academic works by researchers in modern Algerian history. Textual and contextual analysis was used to examine ideological orientations, social impact, and political interactions between Sufi networks and colonial authorities. Triangulation ensured reliability by verifying events across multiple sources.

Ethical Considerations

This study is based entirely on historical documents and published materials. No human subjects were involved, and no confidential or restricted information was used. All materials were cited appropriately in accordance with academic ethics.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest related to this study.

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