

	Science, Education and Innovations in the Context of Modern Problems Issue 2, Vol. 9, 2026	
	RESEARCH ARTICLE 	
	Traditional methods of education in Algeria: specializations and zawiya	
Mohamed Khobeizi	Professor Research center for Islamic sciences and civilisation – Laghouat Algeria Email: m.khobeizi@crsic.dz ; Orcid: 0009-0003-1991-7636	
	Professor University of Tamanghasset Algeria Email: mohamedlabiad@univ-tam.dz; Orcid: 0009-0004-6765-8496	
Mohamed Alabiad	Professor Research center for Islamic sciences and civilisation – Laghouat Algeria Email: b.omrani@crsic.dz; Orcid: 0000-0001-9318-9751	
Omrani Belkhir	Professor Research center for Islamic sciences and civilisation – Laghouat Algeria Email: b.omrani@crsic.dz; Orcid: 0000-0001-9318-9751	
Issue web link	https://imcra-az.org/archive/392-science-education-and-innovations-in-the-context-of-modern-problems-issue-2-vol-9-2026.html	
Keywords	Education, Algeria , Culture, Society, Teacher	
Abstract Traditional education in Algeria was mainly based on learning reading and writing through traditional methods, starting with learning letters by writing them on wooden tablets. Educational schools were simple and modest at first, but they developed over time and became educational institutions with their own curricula and specializations, and came to be known as “zawiyas.” These institutions attracted students of different ages to study and benefit from their knowledge. Later, they expanded and established branches, and began to provide food for students and the needy, as well as accommodation. Their role also became social and cultural, as they served as a means to resolve internal conflicts and strengthen bonds of brotherhood and compassion among people. In this article, we will attempt to shed light on traditional educational methods in Algeria.		
Citation Mohamed Khobeizi; Mohamed Alabiad; Omrani Belkhir. (2026). Traditional methods of education in Algeria: specializations and zawiya. <i>Science, Education and Innovations in the Context of Modern Problems</i> , 9(2), 1-9. https://doi.org/10.56334/sci/9.2.29		
Licensed © 2026 The Author(s). Published by Science, Education and Innovations in the context of modern problems (SEI) by IMCRA - International Meetings and Journals Research Association (Azerbaijan). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).		
Received: 07.07.2025	Accepted: 05.11.2026	Published: 18.01.2026 (available online)

Introduction :

Discussing zawiya in Algeria opens before us a set of historical questions concerning their early beginnings, activities, and affiliations. However, this article seeks to focus on a specific aspect, namely their civilizational role in preserving national identity, after providing a brief overview of their nature and emergence. The zāwiya is usually associated with Sufism, which is considered one of the branches of education that spread across various regions, including the Central Maghreb (Algeria), which witnessed a significant scholarly movement in many fields. Many of its cities became renowned for knowledge and education, and various educational institutions emerged therein, with waqf

playing a major role in their growth, prosperity, and continuity. These cities thus came to include institutes, zawiyas, and schools. (Khobeizi, 2020, p. 100)

Zawiyas are found throughout all regions of Algeria and are not limited to major urban centers; they also exist in villages, hamlets, and rural areas. They were supported by endowments donated by the wealthy, which sustained their buildings as well as the livelihoods of their students and teachers. They were often supervised by a shaykh who managed their affairs. Zawiyas were concerned with teaching children the basics of reading and writing and memorization of the Holy Qur'an, while also instructing adults in various religious sciences.

Despite the widespread presence of zawiyas in Algeria and their great role in society across many dimensions—making them a fundamental component of national identity and its preservation—they functioned, in times of peace and security, as educational and social centers for students, the needy, and the poor, and in times of fear and war as safe havens for people and for freedom fighters. Despite differences in their Sufi orders and affiliations, they contributed greatly, and their role on the social, religious, and cultural levels cannot be denied. To what extent, then, did zawiyas in Algeria contribute to the preservation of national identity?

General Concepts:

Sufism:

Sufism is a religious phenomenon and a particular conception of Islam known in Islamic history. Its essence lies in a spiritual philosophy based on remembrance (*dhikr*) and retreat (*itikaf*), according to rigorous educational methods that discipline the soul and compel it to obedience so that it may be purified and ascend to higher ranks of faith (Al-Ajili, 1992, p. 25). It is a historical outcome of a set of social, political, intellectual, and religious factors and manifestations that shaped this religious phenomenon and developed through the interaction and blending of different cultures (Khobeizi, 2020, p. 56).

Its origin lies in devotion to worship, withdrawal to God, turning away from the adornments and embellishments of worldly life, asceticism regarding what the masses pursue in terms of pleasure, wealth, and status, and seclusion from people in retreat for worship (Khaldun, 2005, p. 391). That is, it entails abandoning the fleeting pleasures of this world in aspiration for the eternal pleasures of the Hereafter (Nassif, 1992, p. 07). It has also been understood as the quest for truth through the purification of the soul that became tainted by material impurities upon entering the body after having been pure and noble, and preparing it to receive divine inspiration. There is no way for it to return to purity except by subduing the body, humbling it, and depriving it of its worldly desires and inclinations through devotion to worship, the practice of prayer, and austerity. Once this is achieved, the soul ascends toward God, draws from Him true knowledge, and follows the path to Paradise (Nassif, 1992, p. 97).

Sufi orders multiplied according to their shaykhs. A Sufi order is a set of foundations and principles laid down by the shaykh of the order for his followers and adherents as a path they follow to attain knowledge of God and His pleasure (Al-Ajili, 1992, p. 35). It is the connection of the disciple (*murid*) to the shaykh and his attachment to him in life and after death, through a litany of remembrances performed by the disciple with the permission of the shaykh at the beginning and end of the day, to which he commits by virtue of a covenant between him and the shaykh. This covenant is known as the *'ahd*. Its form is that the first party, the shaykh, undertakes to deliver the disciple from every hardship and rescue him from every trial whenever he calls upon him for help, and to intercede for him on the Day of Resurrection for entry into Paradise. The second party, the disciple, undertakes to adhere to the litany and its etiquettes and never abandon it throughout his life, as well as to remain committed to the order and not replace it with any other order (Al-Jazairi, 1990, p. 23). Among the most important Sufi orders in Algeria are:

- **The Qadiriyya Order:**

This is the oldest Sufi order to appear in the Islamic world and the earliest to exist in Algeria as well (Aljat, 2001, p. 34). It is attributed to "Shaykh Muhyi al-Din Abu Muhammad 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani ibn Abi Musa al-Hasani," one of the eminent ascetics and Sufis. He was born in Jilan Mountain near Baghdad in 471 AH / 1066 AD and grew up there (Shalabi, 1986, p. 211). It spread to many countries, most notably Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, Turkey, Egypt, the Maghreb, and West Africa, and reached as far as India and China, with a strong emphasis on spreading knowledge and learning (Al-Khatib, 1985, p. 57).

- **The Tijaniyya Order:**

It is known as the Tijaniyya, Ahmadiyya, Muhammadiyya, Ibrahimiyah, and Hanifiyya, names derived from its founder, Shaykh Ahmad al-Tijani* (Al-Sayeh, 1993, p. 81). The Tijani zawiya in Boussemghoum is considered the first retreat of al-Tijani, from which he set out to spread the principles of his new order. It thus occupies a leading position among the zawiyas of western and southwestern Algeria, followed directly by the zawiya of 'Ayn Madi in Laghouat (Hadibi, 2012, p. 41).

- **The Sanusiyya Order:**

It is attributed to Shaykh Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Sanusi al-Khattabi al-Hasani al-Idrisi, who was born in 1202 AH / 1787 AD in the town of Yellel near Mostaganem. His being known as al-Sanusi goes back to his grandfather, who

named himself Shaykh Imam Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Sanusi, the author of well-known works and a scholar of Tlemcen (Al-Aqbi, 2002, p. 182).

• The Darqawiyya Order:

It is attributed to its first founder, Shaykh Muhammad al-'Arabi ibn Ahmad ibn al-Husayn ibn Muhammad ibn Yusuf, known as Abu Darqawi al-Sharif al-Idrisi (Filali, 1976, p. 53). This order spread in western Algeria near the birthplace of its founder in Mostaganem, as well as in eastern Algeria and in the Sahara (Al-Jilali, 1965, p. 232).

This outlines the concept of Sufism in general and the most important Sufi orders that spread in Algeria. Associated with Sufism are a number of terms that must be mentioned in this context, as follows:

Ribat:

The *ribat* is considered one of the most important places in which a high level of spiritual *التربية* is imparted, instilling in the *murabit* noble morals and fine qualities, directing him toward virtues and away from vices, and helping him to closely monitor himself so as to avoid places of destruction and immersion in the mire of desires. It also accustoms him to the love of sacrifice and selflessness in the performance of duty and devotion to its service (Al-Aqbi, 2002, p. 323). Originally, it referred to residence for the purpose of *jihad* against the enemy through warfare, the tying and preparation of horses (Al-Jawhari, 1999, p. 363). Its emergence initially coincided with the beginning of military confrontation between Muslims and the Persians and Romans, as the Islamic conquests made frontier duties and *ribat* part of military mobilization (Ismail, 1982, p. 11).

Zawiya:

The *zawiyat al-bayt* is its corner, and the plural is *zawaya*. *Tazawwa* means to be within it, and one says *zawa fulan al-mal* 'an *warithihi* meaning he concealed it from his heir (Manzur, 1986, p. 81). A *zawiya* is singular and its plural is *zawayas*. *Zawa al-shay* 'yazwihi *zayyan* means he gathered and seized it. In the hadith: "The earth was folded for me, and I was shown its east and west." The skin shrinks in fire, meaning it contracts and tightens (Al-Razi, 1999, p. 117). To *zawa* property and the like is to take possession of it; to *zawa* someone's right from him is to withhold it; and a man *zawa* the inheritance from his heirs, meaning he diverted it from them. *Inzawayta* 'anna means you withdrew and became reserved, so do not engage with us openly (Al-Zamakhshari, 1998, p. 427).

In terminological usage, the *zawiya* was initially applied to the cell of a Christian monk, then to a small mosque or prayer space. This meaning still exists among Muslims in the East, where a distinction is made between it and the mosque, which holds a higher status and is also known as the *jami'*. However, in the Maghreb this concept acquired a broader meaning (Jadallah, 1997, p. 128). It was so named because those who first conceived its construction among the Sufis and *murabitun* chose to withdraw to its location, distancing themselves from the bustle and noise of urban life in search of calm and tranquility, which aid contemplation and spiritual discipline and suit the atmosphere of remembrance and worship—functions for which the *zawiya* was established (Al-Aqbi, 2002, p. 301).

Khalwa (Retreat):

Among Sufis, *khalwa* is the place where the Sufi withdraws for worship, intimate supplication, spiritual discipline, and the confidential discourse with the Truth, where there is no one else (Al-Qayshani, 1981, p. 161). *Khalwa* is individual devotion and continuous remembrance under known conditions regarding place, type of food, and duration of seclusion. *Jalwa*, on the other hand, is the presence of the Sufi among people. Both the one in seclusion and the one in exposure are on the path of Truth. Ibn 'Arabi said: "Khalwa is the servant's departure with divine attributes, and *jalwa* is the confidential discourse with the Truth where there is neither angel nor anyone." There are many types of *khalwa* (Brika, 2006, p. 232). They describe it as the gardens of lovers, the orchard of contemplatives, and the spring pasture of those who remember. They also said: whoever is overcome by intimacy seeks nothing but withdrawal and seclusion (Al-Khatib L. A.-D., 1970, p. 463).

Kuttab:

The *kuttab* is the place where the pupil receives his first lessons and basic upbringing at the hands of the shaykh (Al-Azraq, 2002, p. 27). It is well established that the *kuttab* is among the oldest scientific institutions known to the profession of teaching. Its scholarly role is mentioned throughout the Islamic world from the earliest periods of Islam to the present day. No street or quarter in cities and villages was without it, as it constituted the first nucleus of the educational process alongside mosques and congregational mosques. Through it, the earliest beginnings of knowledge and learning emerged (Hawala, 2000, p. 226). *Kuttab*s spread across all regions of the Central Maghreb and became widespread in villages, towns, and rural areas, appearing in Wargla, Souf, Tahert, the land of Righ, and other renowned cities (Al-Din, 2019, p. 48).

As for the method of instruction in the *kuttab*, it is based on two main activities: dictation and memorization. Each pupil possesses a wooden tablet suited to his level, with one side dedicated to a portion of the Qur'an and the other to the daily lesson. In the morning, Qur'an memorization takes place, while the evening is devoted to other sciences such as grammar and the like. Many criticized this method, among them Ibn Khaldun, who said: "How negligent are

the people of our lands in that a child begins with the Book of God at the beginning of his life, reading what he does not understand, and exerting himself in something other than what is more important to him.”

Sciences Studied in Zawiyas:

Historical sources inform us that the Central Maghreb was a land of knowledge and culture. What confirms this is its richness in educational institutions such as kuttabs, zawiyas, and schools across all its regions. Such institutions even spread to villages, rural areas, mountains, and hamlets. People were keen on education in all historical periods, even under conditions of war, instability, chaos, or natural disasters such as famines (Khobeizi, 2020, p. 100).

The educational branches taught in zawiyas were diverse and not limited to the Holy Qur'an alone. Education extended to other religious sciences, as well as to various linguistic and literary sciences, all with the aim of providing sound and comprehensive training for graduates of zawiyas. Among the most important sciences are the following:

The Holy Qur'an:

All educational institutions in the Central Maghreb focused on teaching the Holy Qur'an, as it is the primary source of Islam and the constitution that regulates Muslims' religious and worldly affairs. Thus, the first emphasis of the teacher was on the learner's memorization of the Qur'an. Methods of instruction varied from one teacher to another and from one level to another. After memorization, or what is known as the *khatma*, the student would progress to studying the sciences related to the Qur'an, namely:

- **The Science of Readings (*Ilm al-Qira'at*):**

This science concerns knowledge of how letters are articulated, orthography, symbols, and the positions of the letters of the Holy Qur'an in the *muṣṣḥaf* and its script (Al-Mughni, p. 10). The aim of this science is to consolidate memorization and reach a level of mastery in recitation.

- **The Science of Exegesis (*Tafsir*):**

It is among the greatest of religious sciences in scope and the highest in rank and guidance, as it is the principal religious science and its foundation, and the basis of the rules of Islamic law (Al-Maliki, 1934, p. 02).

Hadith Sciences:

Hadith and the Prophetic Sunnah comprise everything transmitted from the Prophet ﷺ in terms of sayings, actions, or approvals. Hadith refers to speech, while Sunnah refers to action or refraining from action. It is the second source of Islamic legislation after the Holy Qur'an.

Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence):

Fiqh is the knowledge of God's rulings concerning the actions of those legally responsible, in terms of obligation, prohibition, recommendation, reprehensibility, and permissibility. These rulings are derived from the Qur'an and the Prophetic Sunnah, and from the evidences established by the Lawgiver for knowing them. When rulings are extracted from these evidences, they are termed *fiqh* (Khaldun, 2005, p. 495).

Sufism:

Many schools taught Sufism and studied Sufi writings. Indeed, many jurists and scholars belonged to this current and sought to preserve and spread it in various regions through their educational mission. Zawiyas, however, were established specifically for this science, which is fundamental to them and represents their core, with other sciences following it.

In addition, there were other sciences such as linguistics, history, astronomy, and arithmetic. However, zawiyas, or most of them, focused primarily on the aforementioned sciences. This is evident from the manuscripts found in their libraries, which provide a clear picture of the books studied by students under the guidance of teachers and shaykhs. It is also known that many manuscripts were lost during wars or due to the cessation of activity of some zawiyas, after which their properties were inherited by families. As a result of such division—especially when the heirs were not people of knowledge—manuscripts, books, and documents were often lost.

Models of Centers of Scientific Influence in Algeria:

Algeria experienced a scholarly movement since the Islamic conquest, during which numerous institutes, zawiyas, and kuttabs emerged in various regions. With the historical political transformations that affected social, religious, and even economic life, these transformations had a significant impact on the spread of zawiyas. We will address some cultural and scientific capitals in Algeria through selected examples, not exhaustively, since the scholarly movement encompassed all its regions; however, as previously noted, it was concentrated in some of the major cities.

- **Bejaia:**

Bejaia is a well-known Algerian city located in eastern Algeria on the Mediterranean coast. It was founded in 460 AH / 1068 AD by al-Nasir ibn Al-Nas, one of the most famous and eminent kings of the Hammadid state. He later made it the capital of his kingdom and named it al-Nasiriya after himself (Al-Ghobrini, 1970, p. 07). Al-Hasan al-Wazzan said of it: “It is a city that combines a maritime and mountainous location and provides water.”

Speaking about scholarly life in Bejaia is to speak of the emergence of the first coastal metropolis and a center of scientific influence in the Central Maghreb, as it played an effective role in establishing sciences and attracting scholars, thinkers, and craftsmen (Salah, 2015, p. 55).

The princes of Bejaia were known for their appreciation of knowledge and scholars, and for encouraging men of letters by spreading security and reassurance among residents and newcomers alike. Added to this were the morals of the people of Bejaia, their love of knowledge and scholars, and their openness to learning from anyone who came to them, regardless of status (Hassani, 2011, p. 81).

The people of Bejaia were keen on teaching their children the Holy Qur'an, especially in kuttabs, and they took care to establish them, as these were the primary centers of education before moving on to zawiyas or institutes to complete their studies. Their scholars also pursued learning in shops and simple rooms. It is stated in 'Unwan al-Dirayah: "And the jurist Abu Muhammad 'Abd al-Haqq al-Ishbili and the learned jurist Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn 'Umar al-Qurashi, known as Ibn Quraysha, had a gathering— I believe—where they sat for hadith, and they often sat in the shop located at the edge of the Maqdisi quarter, opposite the entrance to the said quarter. That shop was called the City of Knowledge due to the gathering of these three there: the jurist Abu 'Ali al-Misili, the jurist Abu Muhammad 'Abd al-Haqq, and the jurist Abu 'Abd Allah al-Qurashi." (Al-Ghobrini, 1970, p. 36)

Many zawiyas spread throughout Bejaia in most of its areas. Indeed, some of the oldest zawiyas in Algeria are found there. Many Sufis became famous in Bejaia and were among the most renowned Sufis in the world, such as Abu Madyan Shu'ayb and Abu Muhammad 'Abd al-Haqq, known as Ibn Sab'in. Among the most important zawiyas in Bejaia are the Zawiya of Sidi Musa (or Yahya) and the Zawiya of Sidi al-Hajj Hassain, as well as the Zawiya of Abu Zakariya al-Zawawi, which was established at the end of the 6th century AH / 12th century AD.

– Tlemcen:

The establishment of the first school dates back to the reign of Sultan Abu Hammu Musa I, who founded it in 710 AH / 1310 AD for the two eminent scholars and famous jurists Abu Zayd 'Abd al-Rahman and Abu Musa 'Isa, the sons of Imam jurist Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah ibn al-Imam (Al-Tanasi, 2007).

Al-Hasan al-Wazzan mentioned: "In Tlemcen there are many beautiful mosques with imams and preachers, and five fine schools of good construction adorned with mosaics ...".

Tlemcen also witnessed the prominence of several shaykhs in the field of Sufism, such as Shaykh Abu 'Umar 'Uthman ibn 'Ali al-Hasan al-Tilimsani, known for righteousness and Qur'an recitation, who died in 540 AH / 1146 AD. There was also the Sufi scholar Abu al-Qasim al-Bijayi, known as 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Yusuf ibn 'Abd al-Rahman, who authored a book on Sufism titled *Qutb al-'Arifin wa Maqamat lil-Abrar wa al-Asfiya' wa al-Siddiqin*, and died in 577 AH / 1182 AD (Allam, 1971, p. 65).

In Tlemcen, schools appeared for the first time in its historical trajectory as institutions that developed the scholarly movement previously structured around study circles in the Great Mosque of Tlemcen and the surrounding mosques. A large number of eminent scholars, jurists, and distinguished literati graduated from them, to the extent that its mosques and schools became a standard by which the growth of scholarly activity was measured and an indicator of the prosperity of culture, sciences, arts, and literature (Qorba, 2007, p. 135).

1. The School of Awlad al-Imam:

It is the first school established by the Zayyanids and was known as the Old School. It was founded by the Zayyanid Sultan Abu Hammu Musa I (707-714 AH / 1308-1318 AD) in the Central Maghreb in 710 AH / 1310 AD. The two sons of Imam Abu Zayd 'Abd al-Rahman (d. 743 AH / 1342 AD) and Abu Musa 'Isa (d. 749 AH / 1349 AD) were appointed to teach there, and it became known by their names. It was located near Bab Kashuta to the west of Tlemcen (Khaldun A. Z., 1903, p. 130). The subjects taught there included various sciences such as jurisprudence, exegesis, hadith, Qur'anic recitation, as well as other subjects like logic and arithmetic, and the level of education there was very high (Qorba, 2007, p. 143).

2. The Tashfiniyya School:

It was built by Abu Tashfin 'Abd al-Rahman I (718-737 AH / 1318-1337 AD), who was fond of construction (Khaldun A. Z., 1903, p. 216). During his lifetime it was named after him, then it was called the New School after his death, perhaps to distinguish it from the School of Awlad al-Imam that preceded it. It was built beside the Great Mosque in honor of the jurist Abu Musa 'Imran al-Mashdali (Al-Tanasi, 2007, p. 141). Its architectural plan is extant.

3. The Ya'qubiyya School:

It was constructed by Sultan Abu Hammu Musa II in 765 AH / 1363 AD near the Mosque of Sidi Ibrahim al-Masmudi, and he named it al-Ya'qubiyya after his father Abu Ya'qub. Abu Hammu celebrated it greatly, endowed it generously, arranged stipends for it, and appointed the scholar Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Sharif al-Hasani to teach there (Khaldun A. Z., 1903, p. 120). The Ya'qubiyya played a major role in revitalizing the scientific and cultural movement in Tlemcen, as evidenced by its hosting of regular study circles, especially given its proximity

to the Great Mosque, forming one of its affiliated circles. Eminent scholars taught there, such as Abu ‘Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Sharif al-Tilimsani, the first to teach there (Al-Khatib A. , 1985, p. 234).

4. The School of Sidi Abu Madyan:

It was built by Sultan Abu al-Hasan al-Marini, who was keen on bringing scholars and honoring them, as he did with the sons of the Imam and others. He also built the Mosque of Abu Madyan and spent large sums on it (Al-Tilimsani, 1981, p. 403). It is a school composed of multiple residences, lofty in stature and exquisite in description, with doors opening onto dwellings of complete utility (Al-Namiri, 1990, p. 279).

5. The School of Sidi al-Halawi:

It was constructed by Sultan Abu ‘Inan al-Marini in 754 AH / 1353 AD. It is located near the shrine of the righteous saint Abu ‘Abd Allah al-Shudhi al-Ishbili, known as al-Halawi. This shrine is situated in the northern part of the city where the mosque stands (Borouiba, 1984, p. 301).

Touat Region:

Throughout its long history, and in view of its strategic location situated between major Arab and Islamic cultural capitals, the Touat region constituted a link of communication and exchange among different peoples. This was positively reflected in the reality of the region, as its inhabitants knew how to exploit circumstances and invest these elements to participate with the northern pole—namely northern Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt—and the southern pole with its major historical capitals such as Timbuktu, Kano, Chinguetti, and Araouane (Jaafari, 2011, p. 53). This region is rich in its scientific and religious heritage, in its scholars and authors, in its zawiyas, and also in its monuments and libraries (Saadallah, p. 142).

Across different periods, a large number of scholars and shaykhs came to Touat and, together with scholars native to the region, contributed to building zawiyas, spreading Sufi orders, promoting cultural life, and disseminating Islam and the Arabic language. Among the most famous of them are (Alia, p. 229): Moulay Sulayman ibn ‘Ali al-Idrisi, ‘Isa ibn Muhammad al-Battawi, Muhammad al-Muniyari, and Yahya ibn Yadir al-Tadallisi (Alia, p. 229).

“Tamentit” experienced, over many centuries, an intellectual and scientific flourishing during which sciences and arts prospered. Its scholars specialized more than others in religious and linguistic sciences, and their scholarly production in this field was abundant, with numerous works composed and flourishing libraries formed containing large numbers of manuscripts covering various branches of knowledge (Mohammed, 2008, p. 54). Among the most prominent scholarly figures was Shaykh ‘Abd Allah al-‘Asmouni, who settled in Tamentit after coming from Tlemcen in 863 AH / 1459 AD accompanied by his nephew Salim al-‘Asmouni. He assumed the office of judge there after the death of his shaykh Yahya Idir and died in 995 AH / 1509 AD. Shaykh Salim al-‘Asmouni later assumed the position of judge after his uncle ‘Abd Allah al-‘Asmouni (Bakri, 2005, p. 77). Also notable were Shaykh Maymun ibn ‘Amr ibn al-Baz and Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Karim (Alia, p. 229), known as al-Maghili, who is considered one of the outstanding scholars endowed with vast knowledge, authority in hisba, and religious standing. Disputes and debates occurred between him and a group of scholars in Tamentit, due to what he denounced regarding the Jews of Touat and the conditions he imposed upon them for living within the Muslim community (Maryam, 1908, p. 235).

The Touat region has historically been described as a land of security and reassurance, where the righteous and ascetics were numerous. They came from all Arab and Islamic regions, of various lineages, and settled there, both influencing and being influenced by those around them (Jaafari, 2011, p. 51).

The scholarly movement witnessed, beginning in the second half of the 9th century AH / 15th century AD, a flourishing in various literary, linguistic, and other sciences. This scientific boom continued until the 13th century AH / 19th century AD. One of the clearest indications of this is the large number of scholars who became renowned during this period, some of whom gained fame beyond the region in which they lived (Mohammed, 2008, p. 86).

Given the region’s particular economic, social, and cultural characteristics, Touat was deeply influenced by the positive phenomena brought by Islamic law. Its strategic location made it a destination for merchants, travelers, wayfarers, and seekers of knowledge. It therefore became necessary for the ksour of Touat to find optimal ways to accommodate guests and feed others, which led to the establishment of facilities for the benefit of the needy and the poor, to sustain them, shelter wayfarers among them, and suffice those in need so as to prevent them from resorting to begging, and to preserve the dignity of these groups. Thus, endowments were established at the level of each ksar (Houtiya, 2001, p. 171).

Various names were used for educational institutions in the Touat regions. They were sometimes called kuttabs, and at other times called “Aqrabish,” a local term of Zenata origin, usually referring to a room adjacent to the mosque where children gathered to memorize the Qur’an (Ahmed, 2003, p. 45). It was customary in the Touat region, when a child reached the age of four or five, to enroll in the Qur’anic school, or what is called the kuttab. The kuttab is the place where the pupil receives his first lessons and basic upbringing at the hands of the shaykh (Al-Azraq, Quranic Kuttabs in Algeria, 2002, p. 27).

The emergence of zawiyas in the Touat region dates back to the end of the 5th century AH / 11th century AD. Initially, they were centers for providing food and shelter for wayfarers, especially pilgrims. With the emergence of

local scholars and the arrival of others, zawiya and Sufi orders arose and spread throughout the region (Alia, p. 129). Some local documents, however, indicate that the appearance of zawiya in their current sense in the region dates to the 6th century AH / 12th century AD (Alia, p. 230).

Touat zawiya are divided into two types according to their mode of establishment. The first type comprises zawiya built on land purchased by the founder of the zawiya outside the village or ksar. Examples include the Zawiya of Sidi al-Bakri built near the city of Tamentit, as well as the Zawiya of Tinilan. This type represents the majority. The second type consists of zawiya built within the ksar, with their properties distributed inside and outside it, such as the Zawiya of Zajlou, south of the Zawiya of Kenta (Mohammed, 2008, p. 99).

Throughout its long history rich in cultural events, the Touat region has constituted one of the most important areas and centers of zawiya and Qur'anic schools in Algeria as a whole. From the 6th century AH / 12th century AD, corresponding to the arrival of Shaykh Moulay Sulayman ibn 'Ali and his founding of the first zawiya in the region—most likely in the year (581 AH / 1186 AD)—the establishment of zawiya followed successively, reaching, by the beginning of the 5th century AH / 11th century AD, more than fifty major zawiya and Qur'anic schools (Jaafari, 2011, p. 235).

Numerous zawiya were established in the Touat region by scholars and jurists, who adopted them for retreat and worship as well as for teaching, instruction, and the dissemination of religious knowledge. Students from all directions flocked to them, seeking these scholarly institutions to acquire religious and literary sciences.

The Touat region, with its three districts, was distinguished by the abundance of zawiya and Qur'anic schools. It played a major role in spreading authentic intellectual and cultural awareness derived from the spirit of Islamic civilization. These zawiya and Qur'anic schools preserved for the nation its national identity embodied in Islam, the Arabic language, and the unity of its territory (Bekraoui, p. 395).

The oldest of these zawiya is the Zawiya of Moulay Sulayman ibn 'Ali, who settled in Awlad Awshan in 580 AH / 1184 AD and founded his zawiya there in 585 AH / 1189 AD. This was followed by the Zawiya of Kenta, founded by Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Raqqad al-Kanti in 999 AH / 1590 AD. In the Gourara region, Shaykh Abu Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Jazuli founded the Zawiya of Badrayan in 1004 AH / 1596 AD. The Zawiya of Tinilan was founded by Shaykh Ahmad ibn Yusuf al-Wanqali in 1058 AH / 1648 AD, and the Bakri Zawiya was founded in 1112 AH / 1700 AD by Shaykh Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Rahman Abu Na'ama. Then came the Zawiya of Shaykh Abu al-Anwar in Tidikelt, founded by Shaykh Abu al-Anwar ibn 'Abd al-Karim al-Tinilani in 1168 AH / 1755 AD. In addition to these zawiya, free schools resembling institutes appeared in the Touat region during the 14th century AH / 20th century AD, devoted to teaching the Qur'an, fiqh, and hadith (Alia, p. 230).

Conclusion:

In conclusion, it can be said that the zawiya is among the most important educational channels and social institutions that have greatly contributed to preserving the Arabic language and religious sciences in Algeria. It functioned as a social center that sheltered the poor and the needy, and as a safety valve for thought and knowledge. It also played a role as a military stronghold and ribat for protecting both freedom fighters and the general population alike. Thus, zawiya represent centers of scientific and cultural influence and embody a civilizational dimension that begins with their early manifestations in kuttabs and culminates in advanced institutions known as zawiya. To this day, they continue to perform their educational, social, and religious functions.

Ethical Considerations

This study is based on historical analysis, documentary sources, and descriptive examination of traditional educational institutions in Algeria. It does not involve human participants, personal data, experiments, or interventions. Therefore, formal ethical approval was not required. All sources used in this research were handled in accordance with academic integrity principles, and appropriate care was taken to ensure accurate representation of historical facts, cultural practices, and scholarly interpretations.

Authors' Contributions

- Mohamed Khobeizi: Conceptualization of the study, development of the theoretical framework, historical analysis of traditional education and zawiya, and overall supervision of the manuscript.
- Mohamed Alabiad: Data collection, literature review, contextual analysis of regional educational practices, and contribution to drafting and revising the manuscript.
- Omrani Belkhir: Methodological support, critical review of the manuscript, interpretation of cultural and social dimensions of zawiya, and final editing.

All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to colleagues and researchers at the Research Center for Islamic Sciences and Civilization (Laghout) and the University of Tamanrasset for their academic support and constructive discussions, which contributed to the enrichment of this study.

Funding

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

References

1. Abd al-Hamid Bakri. (2005). *A brief history of Touat and its notables from the ninth to the fourteenth century*. Dar Al-Huda.
2. Abd al-Rahman al-Jilali. (1965). *General history of Algeria*. Dar Maktabat Al-Hayat.
3. Abdallah Allam. (1971). *The Almohad state in the Maghreb during the reign of Abd al-Mu'min ibn Ali*. Dar Al-Ma'arif.
4. Abu al-Abbas, A. I. A. al-Ghobri. (1970). *Unwan al-dirayah fi man 'urifa min al-'ulama' fi al-mi'ah al-sabi'ah bi-Bijaya*. National Publishing and Distribution Company.
5. Abu al-Qasim, J. A. M. I. 'U. al-Zamakhshari. (1998). *Asas al-balaghah*. Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyyah.
6. Abu al-Qasim Saadallah. (n.d.). *The Algerian national movement*. Dar Al-Gharb Al-Islami.
7. Abu Bakr Jabir al-Jazairi. (1990). *To Sufism, O servants of God*. Dar Al-Basirah.
8. Abu Nasr, I. I. H. al-Jawhari. (1999). *Al-sihah*. Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyyah.
9. Abu Zakariya, Y. I. Khaldun. (1903). *Bughyat al-ruwwad fi dhikr muluk Bani 'Abd al-Wad*. Oriental Perfontana Press.
10. Ahmed Aba al-Safi Jaafari. (2011). *From the history of Touat: Research in heritage*. Al-Hadara Publications.
11. Ahmed al-Azraq. (2002). *Quranic kuttabs in Algeria*. Dar Al-Gharb.
12. Ahmed Ali Ismail. (1982). *Military mobilization in early Islam and the Umayyad period*. Dar Al-Shura.
13. Ahmed al-Khatib. (1985). *The Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars and its reformist impact in Algeria*. National Algeria.
14. Ahmed Mohammed al-Sawi al-Maliki. (1934). *Al-Sawi's glossary on Tafsir al-Jalalayn*. Mustafa Mohammed Press.
15. Ahmed Shalabi. (1986). *Encyclopedia of Islamic history and civilization*. Egyptian Renaissance Library.
16. Al-Sadiq al-Hajj Ahmed. (2003). *The cultural history of the Touat region from the 11th to the 14th century AH*. Author.
17. Al-Sharif ibn Maryam. (1908). *Al-bustan*. Al-Tha'alibi Press.
18. Al-Sharqi ben al-Sayeh. (1993). *Bughyat al-mustafid: Commentary on Munyat al-murid*. Al-Taqaddum Scientific Press.
19. Al-Talili al-Ajili. (1992). *Sufi orders and French colonialism*. Faculty of Arts Publications, University of Manouba.
20. Ben Souissi, M. (2008). *Islamic religious architecture in the Touat region: Tamentit as a model (6th-13th AH/12th-19th AD)*. Institute of Archaeology, University of Algiers.
21. Borouiba, R. (1984). *Algeria in history*. National Book Institution.
22. Emile Nassif. (1992). *The finest sayings on asceticism and Sufism*. Dar Al-Jeel.
23. Endowments of the Touat region: The endowments of Koussan Palace as a model. (2001, May 29-30). In *Endowment in Algeria: Proceedings of the Algerian Scientific Symposium*. Algeria.
24. Filali, M. A. T. (1976). *The emergence of the Murabitun and Sufi orders and their impact in Algeria during the Ottoman era*. Graphic Art Press.
25. Hawala, Y. B. A. (2000). *Scientific life in Ifriqiya (90-450 AH)*. Umm Al-Qura University.
26. Ibn Khaldun, A. R. (2005). *Al-muqaddimah*. Dar Ibn Al-Haytham.
27. Ibn Manzur. (1986). *Lisan al-'Arab*. Dar Sader.
28. Ibn Marzuq al-Tilimsani. (1981). *Al-musnad al-sahih al-hasan fi ma'athir wa mahasin Mawlana Abi al-Hassan*. National Publishing and Distribution Company.

29. Ibrahim ibn al-Hajj al-Namiri. (1990). *Fayd al-'abab wa ifadāt aqdhah al-adab fi al-sa'ida ila Qasantina wa al-Zab*. Dar Al-Gharb Al-Islami.
30. Ibrahim ben Mohammed al-Mughni. (n.d.). *Dalil al-hayran 'ala mawrid al-dam'an fi fann al-rasm wa al-dabt 'ala qira'at al-imam Nafi'*. Dar Al-Kutub.
31. Jadallah, M. A. M. (1997). *Sufism in the balance of Islam*. Al-Nahda Press.
32. Jaloul, S. (2015). *The impact of Bani Hammad fortress on Bijaya in the scientific and social fields*. University of Oran.
33. Khobeizi, M. (2020). *The development of zawiyas in the central Maghreb*. Institute of Archaeology, University of Algiers 2.
34. Moayad al-Aqbi, S. (2002). *Sufi orders and zawiyas in Algeria: Their history and activities*. Dar Al-Buraq.
35. Mohammed Abd al-Haqq Bekraoui. (n.d.). The role of Bakri zawiyas in preserving Algerian national identity. *Al-Haqiqa Journal*, (25), 395–396. University of Adrar.
36. Mohammed al-Salih Ait Aljat. (2001). *Journals of Algerian Sufism from 1920 to 1955*. National Office of University Publications.
37. Mohammed ben Abdallah al-Tanasi. (2007). *History of the Zayyanids, kings of Tlemcen*. Author.
38. Mohammed ben Brika. (2006). *Islamic Sufism: From symbol to gnosis*. Dar Al-Mutun.
39. Mohammed Houtiya. (2001). Endowments of the Touat region: The endowments of Koussan Palace as a model. In N. A. Saidouni (Ed.), *Endowment in Algeria: Proceedings of the Algerian Scientific Symposium* (p. 171). Algeria.
40. Mourad Hadibi. (2012). *Tijani zawiyas in southern Algeria: A historical and archaeological study*. Institute of Archaeology, Algiers.
41. Qayshani, K. A. A. A. R. (1981). *Terminology of the Sufis*. Egyptian General Book Authority.
42. Sayeh al-Din. (2019). *The educational movement in the central Maghreb during the third Hijri/ninth Gregorian century*. University of Djillali Liabes.
43. Wafaa Ben Alia. (n.d.). The role of Touat zawiyas in preserving national identity and Sufi orders. *Annals of History and Geography*, 5(9). Higher School for Teachers of Bouzareah.
44. Youssef al-Salih Ben Qorba. (2007). *History of Algeria in the medieval era*. National Center for Studies and Research on the National Movement and the November 1954 Revolution.