

Institutional work in the ideology of Cheikh Fodil El Ouartilani, “clubs” as an example

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Abstract:

Cheikh Fodil El Ouartilani was one of the earliest advocates of reformist ideology within Cheikh Abdelhamid Ibn Badis's battalion. He promoted reformist principles through both discourse and action. Ibn Badis sent him with the first groups to confront France on its own turf in an effort to protect Algerian immigrants from Westernization, Francization and a loss of identity. Consequently, El Ouartilani laid the groundwork for institutional work within the diaspora through the El Tahdhib club, which quickly spread to various French cities. El Ouartilani was a pioneer of the El Taraki Club, the first bastion of reform in Algeria. He recognized the significant impact of this approach in raising awareness among Algerians, and in a short period, he made a big impact in France through his knowledge of the Algerian diaspora. He went on to attract Europeans, as well as various Arab and Muslim communities in France.

Keywords: Cheikh Fodil El Ouartilani, El Tahdhib club, Reform, Algerian Muslim Scholars Association

1. Introduction:

Intellectuals, scholars, and preachers are regarded as the guiding lights of a nation, illuminating the path toward the eradication of illiteracy. “Writing is life, and whoever writes about a believer has revived him” (BELGHIT, p: 15), asserts Mr. Mohamed Amin Belghit. Scholars are the heirs of the prophets, and it is our duty to remember their qualities and share them with the current generation. Furthermore, it is crucial to acknowledge the significant sacrifices they made for the independence of Algeria and the Arab and Islamic world. They clarified the tenets of colonialism and its underlying policies. Thus, their biographies, lives, and all their efforts in combating the colonial phenomenon, particularly that of France, must be revived and brought to the forefront, as it is responsible for the implementation of the Westernization, subversion, and Christianization project.

“The Algerian nation is fertile and generous, having remained vibrant” (HILAL, 2010) throughout the ages and successive generations, particularly during the French occupation. This legacy of intellectual and cultural excellence is exemplified by numerous figures, including Ibn El Anabi, El Kababti, Hamdan Khodja, L’Emir Abdelkader, Hajj Ahmed Bey, El Moqrani, Cheikh El Haddad, Bouamama, and many others. At the beginning of the twentieth century, many reformist figures emerged, such as Cheikh Abdelhamid Ibn Badis, Cheikh El Ibrahimi (ABU EL-EID 1971), El Tayeb El Okbi, Abu El Yaqdan (AOUIMER, 2020), Abu Ishaq El Tafich (NACER, 2011), Cheikh Bayoud, and Cheikh Fodil El Ouartilani.

This article answers the following problem: **How much do El Tahdhib clubs contribute to promoting the Algerian cause in France?**

we will explore the activities of Cheikh El Ouartilani through El Tahdhib club (Discipline Club) in France. He was educated in a reform school and championed the ideals of science, work, jihad, and sacrifice to revive the glory of the Algerian nation and confront the greatest forces of oppression, tyranny (EL OTAIBI, 2010, p: 20), and destruction, namely France, which has fought against everything authentically Algerian and obstructed its path since it desecrated the sacred, pure land of the mujahedeen.

2. El Ouartilani’s career:

2.1 His origins and education:

He was born on February 06th 1900 (AIT BAAZIZ, 2015-2016, p: 437) in the village of Ano, situated on the peaks of Mount Ouartilan, which currently falls under the province of Sétif. He hails from an ancient family renowned for its contributions to science, having produced numerous scholars and jurists, including his paternal grandfather, the scholar and traveler Hussein El Ouartilani, who authored many works on Sufism, such as El Ouartilani’s Journey, A walk for the Spotlight in the Merit of the Science of History and News 1768. He noted that his grandfather Yahia possessed a library filled with many

manuscripts, while his father, Ahmed El Charif, was a jurist and scholar who ran a corner that attracted students from various regions of the country.

He studied in the village’s Katatib (Quranic Schools) from his earliest childhood. At the age of six, he enrolled in a French school after completing the memorization of the Holy Quran under the guidance of his father and uncles, who alternated in providing instruction at the mosque. In this environment, he gained an understanding of the foundational principles of faith, Quranic sciences, jurisprudence, grammar, morphology, and arithmetic. He later moved to the workshops of notable figures in the region, including Cheikh Said El Bahlouli and Yahia Hamoudi, who greatly influenced his intellectual and moral development, instilling in him a commitment to virtue, excellence, and a love for knowledge. After two years of postponement 1920-1922, he went to fulfil his mandatory military service with the French army (AIT BAAZIZ, 2015-2016, p: 437).

He later joined Constantine in 1920-1930. Before this, he brought Cheikh Said El Bahlouli at the mosque in his native village of Ano. There, he gathered a group of notable young individuals and selected them, then embarked on his journey to Constantine. It is likely that, under the guidance of his Cheikh. Who assessed and enrolled him in the second year of his students. He was notable for his eagerness to seek knowledge and his enthusiasm for learning, as well as his attendance at Cheikh Abdelhamid Ibn Badis's lessons. Furthermore, he engaged in reading and attended scientific meetings and seminars, completing his studies in 1934. Then he moved to El Zaytuna and returned after a while to accompany his Cheikh Ibn Badis and participate in his work, including supervising the organization of speech seminars for students on the weekend (BOURNAN, 2014, p:31/ BEN CHERNIKA, 2020).

At the start of the 1933-1934 school year, Cheikh Fodil El Ouartilani served as an assistant to Cheikh Abdelhamid Ibn Badis. In 1934, he was appointed as a teacher at the Islamic Education School, where he taught for two years. He distinguished himself in education by employing eloquent language to discuss various subjects, including literature, history, and politics. He encouraged students to study history, Arabic, and foreign languages, advising them to refrain from speaking any language other than their own, stating, “Whoever speaks another's language is enslaved to another”. Through this approach, he contributed to the education of many compatriots, enriching them with his profound knowledge and instilling a love for Algeria, aimed at its renaissance and liberation from the oppressive weight of French colonization. These remarkable qualities ultimately led Cheikh Abdelhamid Ibn Badis to rely on him in the future.

In Constantine, he frequently interacted with people in various settings, including cafés, restaurants, markets, public and private gatherings, and beyond. Cheikh Ibn Badis entrusted him with numerous responsibilities upon recognizing his prominence among his peers. These duties encompassed serving as the representative for El Chihab magazine and facilitating its publication in different locales within the villages and

towns of the Lesser Kabylie (YESLI, p: 212). His aim was to clarify the journal's objectives and broaden its readership during July. The following year, in 1933, he continued to promote the principles and goals of the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars. Furthermore, he encouraged students to attend Cheikh Ibn Badis's lessons, inspiring many to move to Constantine to study under the Cheikh's mentorship. He also accompanied his Cheikh on tours across the country, including a trip in May and June 1934 to Mila, Teleghma, Bordj Bou Arreridj, Sétif, Batna, and other locations. As a result, Cheikh Fodil El Ouartilani exhibited a deep concern for his nation from an early age.

In this context, the reformers (AMINE, 1990) in the Arab and Islamic world, particularly in Algeria, were in a frenzy of activity, employing various means and techniques for the advancement of the people (AL-HAFNAWI, 2007). They established newspapers (AOUIMER, 2010) and magazines, prioritized education, built schools, Katatib, mosques, and institutes (FILALI, 2011), sent student missions abroad, authored books, and founded associations and clubs. They left no stone unturned in their efforts to awaken (BEN ADDA, 2004-2005) the nation and eliminate colonialism in all its forms and manifestations. The Muslim Scholars Association recognized that change could not be achieved without science.

Cheikh Abdelhamid Ibn Badis (TURKI, 1971) and other reformers (CHERIFI, 2017) were deeply concerned about the Algerian individual, regardless of where he lived or traveled, as they understood that nurturing people (LAHRACH, p.:98) before establishing homelands was the essence of the post-independence rift, or the so-called postcolonial identity crisis. Although we regained our independence and France departed Algeria in defeat and shame, its influence still lingers among us today. Even after more than sixty years since that defeat, the simplest receipts and bills for electricity and gas that arrive at our homes are still printed in French. The signs on the streets, as well as on the doors of shops, restaurants, and markets, serve as compelling evidence of the urgent need to cultivate a normal human being who takes pride in his religion, language, history, customs, and traditions.

Cheikh Ibn Badis and his companions possessed a farsighted vision, believing that France would depart eventually, just as the night, no matter how long it lasts, would inevitably give way to dawn, as it did in less than half a century (ABKAR ALI).

2.2 His activities in France:

In light of the difficult circumstances faced by the Algerian people under French colonial rule, which devastated everything and imposed restrictions on their political, social, economic, and military activities, many sought to emigrate (ZOUZOU, 2007, p: 11). Numerous Algerians migrated to various countries worldwide, particularly neighboring nations such as Morocco, Tunisia, the Levant, Hejaz, and other regions of the Islamic world (ROCHDI, 2016). Additionally, many sought opportunities in European countries, especially France, in search of a better quality of life. They were employed in

various roles, including agriculture, farming, mining, and other forms of manual labor. Many students also joined them to pursue their studies. Residing, working, and living in France is not straightforward for Algerians, who often find themselves interacting with people of different faiths and languages. French society is a mosaic of races, religions, and beliefs, including Christians, Jews, Communists, and those who adhere to no religion. It was therefore crucial for reformers to recognize that Algerians were vulnerable to processes of Christianization, Judaization, Francization, Westernization, integration (DOUIDA, 2016), and assimilation into a foreign society. In Algeria, France tried to uproot the Algerian identity from the Algerians, let alone on its home turf.

In consequence of these circumstances, the reformists took (BOUABACH, 2016) on the responsibility of defending these immigrants, aiming to protect them from the aforementioned adversities. Consequently, many Algerians settled in France, with numerous individuals marrying European women and having children of both sexes. Given this context, it can be argued that if the fathers were to retain their identity and personality traits, the children would inevitably encounter a similar fate due to their upbringing in a different environment (as previously discussed). The Algerian diaspora in France has undergone processes of Westernization and Frenchification that have diminished the identity and heritage of their children. During a visit to France in 1936 as part of an Islamic conference delegation (EL MILLI, 2007, p: 127), Cheikh Abdel Hamid Ibn Badis was approached by workers who sought his help in preserving their identity and personality in a foreign society. They implored him to take on a protective role, facilitating the teaching of their religion and language to ensure their cultural and religious heritage would not be lost. In response, Cheikh Ibn Badis was eager to help and appointed an individual to undertake these challenging responsibilities. He chose Cheikh Fodil El Ouartilani from among his most devoted followers to fulfill this role.

Cheikh El Ouartilani went to France in mid-1936. According to what Cheikh Bachir El Ibrahimi said: “His goal was to restore to the seekers of his people the guidance of Islam, and to return to the youth what the middle has lost in terms of religion and language, and to instill in the hearts of both parents and children the love of religion, race, language, and homeland. To restore Algeria to its former glory and reclaim the hearts that have strayed from its traditions, replacing them with those that embrace Algeria's identity. To replant the roots of colonialism and ensure it does not thrive elsewhere, seeking sustenance and growth in other lands” (EL IBRAHIMI, 1950).

3. The clubs:

3.1 The formation of clubs:

Clubs and associations were first established in Algeria at the start of the 20th century, as the 1901 law permitted Algerians to form them under specific conditions. Before this, colonists had already initiated their establishment (KACHI, 2009, p: 86). This right was affirmed by the French Revolution in 1789 and later endorsed by the second royal constitution and the Constitution in 1848. These institutions are considered among the

pillars of civil society, introduced through the June 19th, 1841 law, which granted the government discretionary authority to establish organizations if necessary, provided such actions did not threaten public security (SAAD ALLAH, 2014, p: 21-23). France did not respond to the Algerians regarding their establishment of associations and clubs until 1901, despite the passage of over half a century. This suggests that the French were not motivated by goodwill towards the Algerians, especially considering that a significant portion of the Algerians were illiterate at the time. The policy of ignorance practiced for more than seven decades, along with the dismantling of traditional Arab education, save for a few remaining instances, resulted in the majority of the population being unable to read or write. Consequently, this law was aimed at its loyal elite of advocates of integration (LOUENNAS, 2017-2018, p: 78).

It thus became clear that Algerians could utilize these cultural institutions to enact a peaceful resistance to French colonialism. They transformed these institutions into venues for oratory, debate, and the study of various social, economic, cultural, and sporting conditions. El Taraki Club (Progress Club) in Algiers offers the most compelling evidence of this assertion, as it embraced all these activities and evolved into a hub of cultural and intellectual engagement, leading to its acquisition of several names, including 'the First Fortress of Reform' (LOUENNAS, 2013). Therefore, clubs and associations represent a form of institutional work that contributes to the structuring of society and its frameworks. The number of such associations and clubs in a country serves as a proxy for the level of societal development. These non-profit institutions have the dual purpose of serving the individual and the broader society while also fostering a sense of civic responsibility, which can be seen as a manifestation of the Algerian Renaissance (SAÂDALLAH, 1983, p: 147).

The foundation of clubs is seen as an expression of vigilance and renaissance, as well as a sign of heightened awareness and a crystallization of liberal thought. This phenomenon can be interpreted as one of the markers of society's awakening in its collective resistance to French colonialism (LOUENNAS, 2017-2018, p: 79).

It is clear that Cheikh Fodil El Ouartilani was profoundly influenced by the rise of clubs and association (AIT BAAZIZ, 2015-2016, p: 48) in Algeria. He regularly engaged in the events organized by these institutions, particularly El Taraki Club in Algiers and other clubs formed at various times, both before and after his own involvement. The reformers recognized the significant influence these clubs had on Algerian society (LOUENNAS, 2017-2018, p: 120). They acted as a vital link between the school and the mosque, catering to a large number of Algerian youths. The reformers understood that these clubs offered an effective platform for imparting Islamic teachings and Arab cultural knowledge to the younger generation. Their interest extended beyond Algeria; they also closely monitored the diaspora and adapted their reform activities accordingly.

He arrived in Paris (France) on July 22nd, 1936, and began his reform work. He connected with workers in various neighborhoods and suburbs of the city to develop a

solid plan for his advocacy program (AOUIMER, 2011, p:130); as he stated, “I studied the souls and tested the ideas by questioning those I met in different ways, in different languages, and with different dialects...” (BOURNAN, 2014, p :53). He moved between communities, engaging with the Algerian community in cafes and restaurants to understand their issues, mingling with the drunkards and gamblers, and through repeated meetings and discussions, getting to know them well and encouraging them to abandon these vices. In this way, he influenced many, and numerous wandering youths found repentance through his guidance. To further strengthen his relationship with them, he initiated the establishment of El Tahdhib club, which Mr. Abdelmadjid Benouda refers to as El “Tahdhib Movement” (BEN ADDA, 2004-2005, p:174).

3.2 Association of El Tahdhib club:

The association was founded in Paris and its suburbs, and to broaden its activities, it was incorporated into the statute that it would establish branches throughout France and open clubs for education and teaching (AIT BAAZIZ, 2015-2016, p: 101). In a relatively short period, Cheikh El Ouartilani successfully established six clubs in and around Paris. These were concentrated in several locations in the suburbs, including Clichy, Saint-Denis, Ménilmontant, Boulogne, Berlachez, and Talleyrand, along with a headquarters in the Besson district of the 20th arrondissement of Paris (BOURNAN, 2014, p :54).

After considerable effort by Cheikh El Ouartilani, who actively reached out to the Algerian community, encouraging them to establish these branches, and who engaged in cafes and housing complexes through lectures and consultations, these clubs were successfully formed. Carrying out reform work on colonialism's home turf and cooperating with workers from different regions, ethnicities, and dialects is not easy or simple (BEN ADDA, 2004-2005, p:174). Cheikh El Ouartilani exhibited exceptional persuasion, communication, and advocacy skills, arguably surpassing the capabilities of others in this environment. He also attended and lectured at the North African Star Gatherings, where he interacted more with the attendees and they got to know him and his goals and objectives (Ibid, p:109).

Upon arriving in France, the reform advocates, led by Cheikh Fodil El Ouartilani discovered few activities taking place at the Paris Mosque (BOURNAN, 2008-2009, p :31), despite the existence of multiple organizations before the foundation of El Tahdhib clubs. There was a noticeable absence of religious activities for expatriate workers. Mubarak Djalouah emphasized the challenges faced by Algerians, particularly regarding mixed marriages; noting: “We are currently navigating this French environment with three individuals. One has betrayed his vulnerable Arab family by abandoning them to face this challenging society by their own. Another left his wife and children to bring them a livelihood, so he started a new family in this country, and he is spending the rest of his life with her for the sake of her happiness. The third is a young man with limited experience, struggling to resist the temptations of his surroundings. He may eventually

become susceptible to the charms and seductions of the seductresses...” (BOURNAN, 2008-2009, p: 33).

France embodies a distinctive blend of opposites. As a result, reform advocates aimed to highlight the benefits while avoiding the harmful. The martyr Rabie Bouchama remarked: “We, the brothers in Paris, a city renowned for its contrasts, can discern both positive and negative aspects in any situation. By acknowledging the positive, we can align ourselves with the description of a true believer given by the Prophet Mohammed -may Allah bless him and grant him peace- by saying: (The believer is like a bee; he eats only what is good and feeds only what is good). We leave its toxins and germs to it so that we are not like the fly that pollutes and breeds in filth, nor a beetle that thrives in garbage...” (BOUCHAMA, 1952).

In light of the expanding activities of these clubs (El Tahdhib), it became crucial to consolidate resources and distribute responsibilities among several individuals. Accordingly, the Algerian Muslim Scholars Association sent Cheikh Said Salhi, who arrived in Paris in mid-September 1936. The two men worked together on initiatives concerning advocacy, reform, and education across various clubs, which gained increasing popularity among migrant workers and extended to other regions in France, including Lyon, Marseille, and Saint-Étienne. There was a rising demand for additional professors, teachers, and advocates.

Subsequently, the following individuals joined the clubs in Paris: Mohamed El Salah Benatiq, Said El Bibani, Said Salhi (BEN ADDA, 2004-2005, p: 174), Mohamed El Zahi El Mili, Rabie Bouchama, Mubarak Djalouah, and El Hadi Senoussi. For the Lyon club, Hamza Boukoucha (MORTAD, 1983, p: 494-495) became a member, Cheikh Mohamed Ali Hachmi joined the Saint-Etienne club, and Ferhat Ibn El Daradji became part of the Marseille club (BOURNAN, 2014, p: 54-55). Amin El Amoudi made a visit and returned (BEN ADDA, 2004-2005, p: 175). The number of clubs in the French capital, Paris, doubled (ZOUZOU, 2007, p: 135) reaching 11 clubs.

These clubs have become a significant aspect of the campus landscape, evolving from their initial role as lecture halls to include a suite dedicated to prayer, educational facilities, and even a designated area for halal drinks. This space is designed for social interaction, relaxation, discussion, and educational purposes to various categories of labors. Additionally, they offer instruction in the principles of the Islamic faith and the Arabic language.

These clubs are supported by donations from workers, the expatriate community, merchants, and the owners of restaurants and cafés. In the 1930s, these clubs were rented out to generate income. The global economic crisis of 1929 posed challenges for some, but it also created opportunities for others. Consequently, the organizers of these clubs were able to rent their premises without difficulty.

3.3 Activities of El Tahdhib club Association:

These clubs played a vital role (BEN ADDA, 2004-2005, p: 175) in education, especially for the children of expatriate workers. Their activities focused on imparting essential skills in writing, reading, Arabic language, and Islamic studies. The educational program was not confined to these subjects but also included history, geography, music, theater, and even sports. These subjects have been integrated and diversified, with programs modernized to meet the demands of the contemporary era. The subjects taught contribute to shaping the student's identity, fostering awareness, and developing both body and mind, as there is a connection between a healthy mind and a healthy body.

As a result, this program has achieved success thanks to the efforts of these reformers. Each of these modules contributes, directly or indirectly, to the development of intellectual and cultural resistance. Thus, fighting the enemy on its home turf. It is one of the most effective strategies the reformers employed to instill a strong identity in Algerians, both domestically and abroad. Whom France sought to Westernize, frenchify, and erase the features of his personality (LOUENNAS, 2019).

The adult learners attend classes in the evenings after work and other commitments. The curriculum includes reading, writing, and basic Islamic sciences in Arabic and French. These courses have proven to be extremely popular among the expatriate workforce. The number of illiterate individuals began to decline, with many successfully acquiring literacy skills.

These clubs were very active, with numerous activities occurring daily. A weekly lecture was organized at each club to guide the principles of Islam as well as on transactions, worship, and social solidarity. The speakers also addressed the attendees in Arabic, French, Kabyle, and English, reinforcing the principle of unity among immigrants, bringing them together and strengthening their ranks to achieve greater awareness of the threats posed by Westernization, Christianization, and social evils such as alcohol, gambling, adultery, and more.

These clubs serve as a platform for celebrating religious occasions and holidays, as well as an opportunity for members to take the initiative. These days hold significant meaning for Algerian expatriates, offering them a chance to recharge and reconnect with their heritage.

Cheikh El Ouartilani led the activists in these clubs, collaborating with the Mission of the Algerian Muslim Scholars Association. Other students from the Arab and Islamic communities also played crucial roles, including Mohamed Abdellah Daraz (BEN ADDA, 2004-2005, p: 173), a member of the Egyptian El- Azhar Mission in Paris, Abderrahmane Tadj (later Cheikh El-Azhar), Omar Bahaa El Amiri, Mohamed El Mubarak, two students from Syria, Amir El Bayan Chakib Araslan, and others.

Additionally, there were French individuals who converted to Islam, including Mohamed El Mahdi and Mohamed Ali (BOURNAN, 2014, p: 58-59).

El Tahdhib clubs 'activities extended beyond education, preaching, and guidance. They also addressed the needs of the Algerian community in France, including political issues. Additionally, and the necessity of standing up to the French intransigence that was practicing a policy of persecution. This was accomplished through regular meetings and prompt action when necessary. For instance, at the end of 1936, around 6,000 pioneering members and supporters of the El Tahdhib club gathered to voice their concerns regarding the detention of Cheikh El Tayeb El Okbi (MARIOUCH, 2007, p: 197 /EL TAHAR FADLLA, 1968, p: 207) in Algeria. Furthermore, protests were organized against French restrictions on religious institutions, the searches of El Tahdhib clubs in Paris by the French police, and the prohibition of Eid prayers outside mosques. On April 9th, 1938, they also raised concerns over the harassment of A.M.S.A. teachers in Algeria and the arbitrary enforcement of laws against scholars' clubs, which the French authorities applied to similar establishments, such as cafes. Supporters of the latter in France also voiced their concerns regarding the harassment of Cheikh El Tayeb El Okbi, despite his acquittal by the relevant French court (BOURNAN, 2014, p: 61).

Cheikh El Ouartilani dedicated considerable time and effort to spreading his ideas and propaganda. During the day, he taught, and at night, he connected with key individuals to influence and coordinate with them. Despite his ties to El Tahdhib club, he participated in numerous events organized by various groups in France. This included appearances at associations and political parties, such as the Algerian People's Party, where he was invited to deliver lectures. However, a conflict emerged between the Algerian People's Party and the clubs' management, stemming from the latter attracting a significant number of expatriates and migrant workers. In 1937, El Amir Chakib Araslan (ARASLAN, 2003) took action to resolve the dispute and improve relations between the scholars and the Algerian People's Party (ZOUZOU, 2007, p: 137-138). Consequently, a rapprochement occurred through activities organized by the North African Muslim Students Association, attended by representatives from both parties (A.M.S.A and the Algerian People's Party). Cheikh Fodil El Ouartilani was similarly involved with the French Islamic Association for Friendship and Cooperation, including the meeting on April 2nd, 1938. At this event, he emphasized the deprivation and persecution faced by the Algerian people due to the unfair French policy over more than a century. He engaged in the activities of the French Communist Party.

One of the outcomes of establishing El Tahdhib clubs (LOUENNAS, 2017) in France and the increased activity initiated by the A.M.S.A under the leadership of Cheikh Fodil El Ouartilani and his colleagues was the reunification of Algerians in the diaspora, particularly in France. Their objective was to educate, enlighten, and protect them from Westernization, Francization, and social evils, including alcohol, gambling, adultery, theft, homelessness, and more. Furthermore, it strengthened familial and kinship ties,

collaboration, and social cohesion. It also promoted an Arab-Islamic identity and character.

Cheikh El Ouartilani demonstrated proficiency in Arabic, Amazight, and French, enabling him to effectively communicate with a diverse expatriate population, including Algerians and others.

The establishment of clubs and associations and the allocation of financial resources for renting premises to deliver educational content through lessons and lectures have been significant. Cheikh Said Salhi explains how El Tahdhib clubs have made a difference to the expatriate community in France by stating, “Before today, the Algerian community in Paris showed a lack of sensitivity and emotion. Additionally, they exhibited a misunderstanding of the true nature of religion, which involved perceptions of debauchery, disobedience, alcohol, and gambling. However, today they have felt, and reform has spread, propaganda has been spread, souls have been educated, morals have been refined, associations have been established, and clubs and mosques have been opened. Thank Allah for the state of Algerians in Paris today and its renaissance and reform movement...” (BOURNAN, 2014, p: 68).

Cheikh Fodil El Ouartilani reflects on the impact that El Tahdhib clubs have had on the community abroad, contrasting the situation before his arrival with the mission of the A.M.S.A. “The current circumstances are significantly different from what they were before the implementation of systematic and thoughtful educational initiatives by a group of young scholars at our clubs. Our colleagues have gained a deeper awareness of their rights and responsibilities, fostering a sense of self-worth and respect. This has resulted in a noticeable transformation, with labors taking the initiative to learn, organize themselves, and engage with one another. The establishment of strong bonds of friendship and brotherhood among those simple, brave men who previously were only fighting and quarreling over the smallest of things” (Ibid, p:69).

There has been extensive coverage in the press regarding El Tahdhib clubs and their activities in France, with numerous newspaper articles and reports published on the topic. These clubs have attracted Egyptian, Muslim, and other communities from various countries. In Paris alone, 15 clubs were established, drawing a diverse group of individuals, including Europeans, French, and others, notably the wives of Algerians. Cheikh El Ouartilani commented on this phenomenon, stating, “Some convert to Islam, while others express interest in it and inquire about its principles and teachings, influenced by their husband's culture and level of knowledge or ignorance...” (El-Ommah newspaper, 1939).

At a ceremony held at El Tahdhib club in Paris on May 14th, 1938 in the 7th section, a French woman remarked, “I was convinced of the merits of Islam only thanks to the many interactions I had with the club's professors, who embody the values of this religion full of humanity...” (BOURNAN, 2014, p: 72).

Furthermore, several French intellectuals and politicians, including Louis Massenius, Régis Blacher, Maurice Viollet, Joseph Lagossière, and the communist Léonoir, visited El Tahdhib clubs across France (AOUIMER, 2017, p: 240).

Cheikh Fodil El Ouartilani and the Algerian Muslim Scholars Association faced a tumultuous journey. His tenure was fraught with challenges, including conflicts with the Sufi orders (AIT BAAZIZ, 2015-2016, p: 492), opposition from Kaddour Benghabrit regarding the activities of El Tahdhib clubs, and the latter's revelation of these activities to France (Ibid, p: 123).

France was aware of this activity by El Ouartilani and El Tahdhib clubs in France, which did not align with the reform movement. Furthermore, some economists were adversely affected by the strikers' abstention from alcohol, gambling, nightlife, obscenity, and other pursuits. Consequently, they shifted their focus to the activities of the A.M.S.A., plotting to assassinate El Ouartilani, arrest him, or re-recruit him. However, El Ouartilani was cognizant of their intentions and discreetly left France at the end of 1938 or 1940 (Ibid, p: 144), aided by El Amir Chakib Araslan, who provided him with a false passport. He then traveled to Italy and Egypt (AOUIMER, 2017, p: 90) before continuing to various countries across the Arab (AMIMOUR, 2010), European, and Asian continents.

Despite encountering significant opposition from various factions, including militants from the People's Party, the director of the Paris Mosque and Institute, Kaddour Benghabrit, certain sectarians, French security, and administrative authorities, extremist and racist groups, pressure organizations, interests, Jews, and individuals from other backgrounds. As well as internal disagreements among teaching Cheiks, particularly during El Ouartilani absence and regarding the funding of the clubs, he managed to persist in overseeing El Tahdhib clubs. Nevertheless, Cheikh El Ouartilani overcame all these challenges and obstacles, transforming these clubs into top-rated people's universities (AIT BAAZIZ, 2015-2016, p: 134) and attracting Algerians and other Arab and Muslim communities.

Cheikh El Bachir El Ibrahimy assessed El Ouartilani and his activities in France: “He rekindled the Algerian hearts that had previously become disillusioned with their homeland, drawing them back to their roots. Cheikh El Ouartilani followed these immigrants to their places of expatriation and facilitated their unification around the Islamic faith. He also fostered a sense of camaraderie and brotherhood among them and encouraged their children to learn the Arabic language. His success in Paris, France, positively affected the Muslim community and influenced the A.M.S.A., which enhanced her reputation and public image”. Additionally, he noted, “El Tahdhib clubs established by El Ouartilani in France were highly successful and well-attended. These centers attracted notable Arab figures, including the sons of his former students, who praised the work and its system, so the A.M.S.A. was an epitome among them” (AIT BAAZIZ, 2015-2016, p: 156).

El Ouartilani even ventured into the French countryside with the help of a Frenchman to spread the Islamic message more broadly. Professor Ait Baaziz describes El Ouartilani movement as an Arab-Islamic movement that promotes the ethos and civilization in France and Europe. Following the departure of El Ouartilani from France, the clubs lost their founder, activist, president, and many of his assistants and collaborators. The French authorities ganged up on them, and discord spread among them. Mubarak Djalouah claimed to be their president. Despite these challenges, the organization continued its efforts under the leadership of Cheikh Said Salhi. With the onset of the Second World War, the cultural movement in France came to a halt. Many scholars, thinkers, and intellectuals relocated to the Islamic Levant. In the early fifties, Rabie Bouchama and Said El Bibani took on the task of reviving the reform movement and reinstating El Tahdhib club in Paris in December 1952, with Rabie Bouchama leading the way. The club continued its activities in 1954, and additional branches were established in other French cities, including Lille and Marseille (BOURNAN, 2008-2009, p: 67).

4. Conclusion:

Cheikh Fodil El Ouartilani is a giant among men. He has been in constant motion since his early childhood, traversing regions, cities, countries, and continents. He has been a beehive of activity, gathering insights and experiences from diverse sources to create a rich tapestry of knowledge that he can share with Algeria, the Arab and Islamic world, and the global community. He leveraged mosques and clubs as media platforms to disseminate his message. He was an advocate of institutional work and was instrumental in the establishment of several clubs besides El Tahdhib club in France, where he was a deputy and was vice president of the Algerian Islamic Conference Club. He also formed committees to advocate for the conditions of Beni Ourtilane and the Kabyle region, as well as for the villages and clans from which these immigrants originated. Additionally, he contributed to the formation of the Higher Committee for the Defense of Algeria in 1942, the Algerian Community Association in 1942, and the Front for the Defense of North Africa was established under the leadership of Mohamed El Khodre El Hussein. He assumed the role of general secretary and Islamic Guidance Association, joined the Egyptian associations, the Muslim Brotherhood Movement, the Muslim Youth Associations and the Youth of the Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him. He founded the A.M.S.A office in Egypt in 1950. He also participated in the establishment of the Algerian Liberation Front in Cairo in January 1955 intending to unite Algerians of various sects in support of the Great Liberation Revolution. Cheikh El Ouartilani set aside his professional ambitions and personal interests to contribute to improving his country, Algeria, and to support the Arab and Islamic countries. As noted by Professor Mohamed El Akhal El Sherafa, El Ouartilani sold the land he inherited from his father in Beni Ourtilane. Additionally, he declined any grants or gifts. May Allah have mercy on Cheikh Fodil El Ouartilani and other honorable men of Algeria, and may they be granted a place in His vast paradise.

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