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# **The contributions of the Mujahideen of the Wadi Souf region to the liberation revolution through the supply of weapons: A historical reading of the struggle of the Mujahid Ali Lamqadem**

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## **Abstract:**

In this paper, we aim to shed light on the contribution of one of the men of the village of El Jadida to armament efforts and the Liberation Revolution. The village was known for the involvement of certain families—entire households—in revolutionary activity, among them the family of Taleb Ali Lemqadem (who, to my knowledge, has not been specifically addressed in academic studies). He contributed to raising awareness and promoting education in his region and encouraged his sons to join the national movement after the Second World War, including Ahmed, Ammar, and Mabrouk. The latter, together with the leader Mohamed El Akhdar (Hamma

Lakhdar), formed a group with revolutionaries to coordinate within the plans of the “Secret Organization” to carry out the armed revolution.

Following my communication with one of the *الشيخ*'s grandchildren, Mohamed ben Ali ben Abdelaziz ben Ali Lemqaddem, and my access to the oral accounts he recorded, which he transmitted from his relatives and from those who lived through and witnessed the events of that period, I attempted to present a reading of what was documented—even if only part of the history of this man and his struggle. This work enables younger generations and those interested in local history to become acquainted with the militant history of the men of the village of El Jadida in their struggle against French colonial occupation.

### **Introduction:**

The province of El Oued, like other provinces of the nation, abounds with men whose lives and deeds have been recorded by history. Among them are those whose activities and biographies have been brought to light, and others whose traces have remained forgotten, confined to popular memory despite their rich careers and the great works and achievements they accomplished. From their efforts emerged an intellectual and educational influence in their region as well as in neighboring areas. Therefore, it has become incumbent upon us to investigate and search for all possible historical material related to the *أبناء* of the Souf region, by probing popular memory in order to rescue what can be rescued, so that subsequent generations may take lessons from what previous generations have recorded for them.

Among these men who were not given their due by historical writings, and who did not receive their share of research and scrutiny, is the subject of our study: Sheikh Ali bin Abdullah Lemqaddem. He played a major role in education, religious preaching, and revolutionary activity in the region, to the extent that the French administration regarded him with great concern. It subjected him and his family to repression, ultimately resorting to burning his house and the houses of his sons, and executing him as well as some of his sons.

The central research problem revolves around the nature of the support provided by Sheikh Ali to the Algerian Revolution through oral narratives and the available handwritten documents, and the extent to which this contribution helped ensure the success of the revolution in the El Oued region.

### **First: The environment in which Taleb Ali lived**

## **1. The geographical location of El Oued Province<sup>1</sup>:**

El Oued Province is located in the Eastern Erg of the Greater Algerian Sahara. Its territory extends between latitudes 31–34° north and longitudes 6–8° east, covering an area of approximately 82,800 square kilometers.

It is bordered to the north by Tébessa, Biskra, and Khenchela, represented by the Aurès–Nemencha mountain range extending along the Negrine–Eastern Zab line; to the east by Tunisia; to the southeast by Libya; and to the southwest by Touggourt and Ouargla<sup>2</sup>.

## **2. The geographical location of the village of El Jadida<sup>3</sup>:**

The village of El Jadida<sup>4</sup> is located at longitude 6.57° east and latitude 33.33° north. It lies to the northeast of the city of El Oued and extends from north to south over a distance of 2.4 km, and from east to west over approximately 3.5 km<sup>5</sup>. Its total area is about 8 square kilometers. It is bordered to the south by the village of Darmeni and the municipality of Debila; to the west by the municipality of El Meghaier and the village of Deqouj; to the north by the villages of Oum Ez-Zbed and Blila; and to the east by the municipality of Hassi Khalifa<sup>6</sup>.

## **3. Definition of the village of El Jadida and its social structure:**

The name “El Jadida” traces back to the descendants of Sheikh Ali bin Khazan, who originally lived in the town of Debila<sup>7</sup>. When some of them

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<sup>1</sup>One of the most likely explanations given for the naming of Wadi Souf is that when caravans arrived in this region, people would say: “Those suyūf are inhabited,” suyūf being the plural of sayf, meaning an elongated sand dune with a sharp crest. It was named so by analogy with a sword (the cutting weapon). Over time, the letter yā’ was dropped from the word suyūf, and it became Souf. For more on the meaning of the name, see: Ibrahim Muhammad al-Sassi al-Awamer, Al-Şurūf fī Tārīkh al-Şāhrā’ wa Souf, Al-Ma’arif Printing Press, n.p., n.d., pp. 38–39.

<sup>2</sup> Ammar Awadi: The Imam and Mujahid Sheikh Muhammad al-‘Id al-Ghawar: A Life of Knowledge and Jihad 1921–2010, 1st ed., Sami Printing and Publishing House, El Oued / Algeria, 2022, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> It is also called al-Jadida al-Sharqiyya (New Eastern [Jadida]) or Jadidat al-Dabila to distinguish it from al-Jadida al-Gharbiyya (New Western [Jadida]), which is administratively التابعة to the municipality of Sidi Aoun.

<sup>4</sup> Linguistically, al-Jadida (the new) derives from jiddah, the verbal noun of jadīd (new). For more, see: Ibn Manzur, Lisān al-‘Arab, vol. 3, Dar Sader, Beirut, p. 111.

<sup>5</sup> Linguistically, al-Jadida derives from jiddah, the verbal noun of jadīd (new). For more, see: Ibn Manzūr, Lisān al-‘Arab, vol. 3, Dar Ṣādir, Beirut, p. 111.

<sup>6</sup> Rashid Qasība: The Leader Ḥamma Lakhḍar and His Role in the Liberation Revolution (1930–1955), Al-Rimāl Printing Press, El Oued / Algeria, 2019, p. 16.

<sup>7</sup> It is located to the northeast of the city of El Oued, situated between the town of Al-Zaqm and the town of Hassi Khalifa, and lies about twenty kilometers from the provincial capital. National Road No. 16 passes through it. Several accounts exist regarding the naming of al-Dabila, the most well-known being that when ‘Alī ibn Khazzān was heading from the town of Al-Zaqm toward the eastern direction, carrying his belongings on his back and accompanied by his wife and daughter, his daughter became tired and lagged behind. When he saw her walking

moved to Sahn Er-Ratm<sup>8</sup> (north of the town of Debila), they named this area “the new small Debila” (Debila as-Saghira al-Jadida). Over time, the words “Debila” and “small” were dropped, leaving only the name “El Jadida”<sup>9</sup>.

The majority of the population of El Jadida village consists of the ‘Arsh (tribal group) of Ouled Zaqqaw (from the Rbay‘a tribe) and the ‘Arsh of the Debayla (from the descendants of Ali bin Khazan), in addition to some families who, through neighborhood ties and intermarriage, became affiliated with these groups. Also included are the residents of the Jlama quarter, who arrived later in the village (and are few in number), coming from several tribes as previously mentioned<sup>10</sup>.

#### 4. Cultural conditions in the village of El Jadida:

The inhabitants of El Jadida village, like those of other villages in El Oued, placed great importance on Qur’anic education. Among the most renowned Qur’an teachers of that period were: Sheikh Nasr Shneiba Abbas (known as *Si Nasr*) at Al-Sharif Mosque<sup>11</sup>; Sheikh Mohamed Saghir Boukhazna (known

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slowly toward him, he began saying to her “dabbī lī, dabbī lī,” and his wife called out to her from behind, “dabbī lah, dabbī lah,” meaning “walk toward him.” Dabīb refers to very slow walking, and the place where he said this came to be called al-Dabila. This account is considered the most plausible explanation for its name. See: Ibrahim Muhammad al-Sassi al-Awamer, previously cited work, pp. 116–117.

It is narrated that ‘Alī ibn Khazzān (to whom the clan of al-Dabāyiyya is attributed) and ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Zaqqāw (to whom the clan of Awlād Zaqqāw is attributed) experienced an incident through which they agreed on maintaining good neighborly relations (around the year 1650 CE). The incident involved some of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz’s sheep entering ‘Alī ibn Khazzān’s palm grove and eating some palm fronds. When the latter learned that the sheep belonged to ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, he went to him angrily, but ‘Abd al-‘Azīz received him warmly, honored his visit with a slaughtered animal, and offered him the best food he had at that time. This incident became the reason for a reconciliation between them, during which ‘Alī ibn Khazzān uttered a famous saying that has been passed down through generations to this day: “A home for a home, a neighbor for a neighbor; whoever betrays his brother gains nothing.” Oral interview with Belqasem ibn Muhammad Lamqaddam, previously cited source.

All the family names mentioned in the village are those that were present before the outbreak of the revolution.

<sup>8</sup> شَنْهُ الرُّتْم: this is a flat, solid tract of land with no sand, flanked on both sides by sand dunes. Several neighborhoods and villages are located there, including Jāmi‘ Mīda, Jilma, the village of al-Jadida, Umm Zabad, al-‘Ayāsha, and Blīlā. It is bordered to the south by the village of al-Darmīnī, to the north by al-Shaqāyiq al-Ḥirsh, to the west by al-Maqran, and to the east by Hassi Khalifa.

<sup>9</sup> Oral interview with Khalifa ibn Ahmad Hamdi (a researcher in history), conducted on 07/06/2023 at his home in al-Dabila at 6:00 p.m.

<sup>10</sup> The word Zaqqāw is a nickname of a man known by it; in fact, it is an Amazigh (Berber) word indicating a dark green color. The clan (‘arsh) of Awlād Zaqqāw includes many family names, totaling thirty-one surnames: Rzīq, Nāṣirāt, Jrād, Bu‘azza, Bishwāshī, Buqrān, Shāqūr, Bin ‘Ammār, Bin Būzīd, Būzīdī, Sālihī, Manṣūrī, Ba‘āj, Shuwayya, Dirbāl, Mas‘ūdī, ‘Ammārī, Lamqaddam, Dāsī, ‘Amāra, Bin ‘Umar, Qasība, Barāyka, Khalāyfa, Shāyib, Shnība, Shnība Rmīlī, Shnība Blāla, Shnība ‘Atīyya, Shnība Lashqam, and Shnība ‘Abbās. Most of them are found in the northern part of El Oued Province and are distributed among the municipalities of al-Dabila, al-Maqran, Hassi Khalifa, Bin Qasha, al-Talib al-Arabi, and Douar al-Mā’. Multiple interviews with Belqasem ibn Muhammad Lamqaddam between 2005 and 2012 at his home in the village of al-Jadida. This name is attributed to the town known as al-Dabila.

<sup>11</sup> Rashid Qasība, previously cited work, p. 34.

as *Si Saghir*); Sheikh Mohamed bin Ibrahim Khenoufa and his student Sheikh Ali bin Saad Markhi (known as *Taleb Ali*) at the Grand Mosque of Mida<sup>12</sup>; Sheikh Mohamed bin Mohamed Rziq (known as *Ham bin Salem*) in the *ghout* where he lived; Sheikh Ahmed bin saleh Moubarki at Al-Huda<sup>13</sup> Mosque in Jlama; Sheikh Al-Aroussi Laghrissi,<sup>14</sup> who taught in one of the houses in the Jlama quarter; Ali bin Abdullah Lemqaddem<sup>15</sup> (known as *Taleb Ali bin Lemqaddem*); Sheikh Mohamed Salah Kadiri (known as *Ar-Ranni*); Sheikh Al-Aroussi Lahouiti; and Sheikh Mohamed Salah bin Tayeb Hamdi at the Omar bin Abdelaziz Mosque in El Jadida.

As for formal education in schools, the establishment of the first primary school in the village was delayed during the period of French colonial rule, not occurring until 1961. The school later came to bear the name of the martyr Lemqaddem Ali<sup>16</sup>.

##### **5. Administrative status of the village of El Jadida:**

Following the French occupation of El Oued in 1881, the region was subjected to a military regime (military rule). The tribes continued to be administered by tribal sheikhs under French supervision until municipalities were established. El Jadida became a municipality on 20 November 1958, in accordance with Decision No. 6417. After the issuance of the decree of 2 May 1961, the municipal headquarters was transferred from El Jadida to Debila.<sup>17</sup>

##### **6. Political and military activity in the village of El Jadida during the lifetime of Taleb Ali:**

Despite the difficult political conditions in the region due to its subjection to military rule, the ideas of the Association of Muslim Scholars found resonance after the return of students of knowledge and reformers from Zaytuna Mosque, beginning in 1933<sup>18</sup>.

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Oral interview with Ahmad ibn al-Šādiq al-Ābid, previously cited source; oral interview with al-Ṭāhir ibn al-Id Khunūfa, previously cited source.

<sup>12</sup> Al-ghawṭ: a low-lying area of fertile land. Some people of Souf use the term al-hawd instead of al-ghawṭ. What is meant is a place where date palms are planted, or a palm grove.

<sup>13</sup> Rashid Qasība, previously cited work, p. 35.

<sup>14</sup> Oral interview with the mujahid Muhammad ibn al-Sassi Dāsī (nicknamed “the living martyr”) on 07/12/2013, at the Mosque of ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz in al-Jadida, between the Maghrib and ‘Ishā’ prayers.

<sup>15</sup> He was known as Shaykh ‘Alī, or al-Ṭālib ‘Alī, as it was commonly recognized in the region in the past that anyone who had memorized the Qur’ān was called al-ṭālib (the student).

<sup>16</sup> Rashid Qasība, previously cited work, p. 38.

<sup>17</sup> The same reference, p. 23.

<sup>18</sup> Ammar Awadi, previously cited work, p. 33.

After the visit of Sheikh Abdelhamid Ben Badis to the city of El Oued in 1937, a group of أبناء of the village of El Jadida joined the Association of Muslim Scholars, foremost among them Taleb Ali Lemqaddem, his son Ammar, his nephew Hussein, Sheikh Mohamed Salah Kadiri, and Sheikh Khalifa bin Belkacem Shaabani. Some of them also attended the sermons and lessons delivered by Ben Badis in the areas he visited in El Oued.

The settlement of Sheikh Al-Aroussi Houiti in the village of El Jadida from 1948 onward also played a major role in encouraging young people to engage in jihad, defend the الوطن, and resist French colonial occupation. Among those who later played an important and influential role in the revolution were Mohamed Lakhdar bin Ibrahim Echaib, Mabrouk bin Ali Lemqaddem, Mohamed bin Essassi Dassi, and others<sup>19</sup>.

After the outbreak of the Liberation Revolution in November 1954, many of the village's youth joined its ranks within the army, and Taleb Ali played a significant role in urging them to do so. Among those who took part were Commander Mohamed Lakhdar Echaib, his deputy Mabrouk Lemqaddem, Belkacem Shaabani, Bashir Shneiba Belala, El Arbi Dassi, and El Aayeb Bashir, who participated in the Battle of Houd Krim at Hassi Khalifa on 17 November 1954. Most of them also took part in the Battle of Sahn Er-Ratm in Blila on 15 March 1955.

Following this battle, the French authorities gathered the Ouled Ammara tribe in the Amieh Rabah camp, due to the large number of its members who had joined the National Liberation Army<sup>20</sup>. The sons of the village—led by Mohamed Lakhdar bin Ibrahim Echaib, Mohamed bin Essassi Dassi, Mohamed Braika, Mabrouk Chakor, Bashir Shaabani, and Tahar Yahyaoui—also participated in leading the Battle of Houd Shika, which took place on 8, 9, and 10 August 1955.

This battle led French forces to move into the village of El Jadida and besiege the *ghout* of the family of Taleb Ali Lemqaddem on charges of storing weapons there.

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<sup>19</sup> An oral interview with the mujahid Mohamed bin Essassi Dassi, previously cited source; Rachid Qseiba, previously cited reference, p. 37.

<sup>20</sup> The youths from the Ouled Ammara clan who joined the ranks of the Liberation Revolution were: Mohamed Lakhdar Echaib, Mabrouk Lemqaddem, Mohamed Dassi, Lezhari Dassi, El Arbi Dassi, Khalifa Dassi, Ahmed Dassi, El Aroussi Dassi, Mohamed Braika, Ali Braika, and Sadiq Khalaifa.

Those who were killed by the French authorities on charges of collecting weapons and funds for the revolution were: Ali Lemqaddem, Ammar Lemqaddem, Ahmed Lemqaddem, Hussein Lemqaddem, Othman Braika, and Abdelghani Ammari.

All of their property was burned, including palm groves and the houses of his three sons<sup>21</sup>, which consisted of huts built from palm fronds. His son Ahmed was then killed because of his activity in supplying arms to the revolution, and Taleb Ali was arrested once again, along with his son Ammar, and imprisoned in El Oued, along with several other أبناء of the village<sup>22</sup>.

## Second: An introduction to the personal life of Taleb Ali

### 1. His name and lineage:

He is Ali bin Abdullah bin Ahmed bin Ammara bin Khalifa<sup>23</sup> bin Abdelaziz bin Khalifa bin Abdelaziz bin Zaqqaw, known as *Taleb Ali*<sup>24</sup>, from the Ouled Zaqqaw tribe. This tribe is one of the Rbay'a tribes, among the fourteen tribes that settled in the El Oued region in the seventeenth century.

Taleb Ali belonged to the Ouled Ammara clan, known in the village of El Jadida as the 'Arsh of the Amayra, in reference to his grandfather Ammara bin Khalifa. They are distributed among nine family names as follows: Ammari, Lemqaddem, Dassi, Qseiba, Braika, Ben Omar, Khalaifa, Ammara, and Echaib.

His mother was Maryam bint Ibrahim Laabidi. He had six siblings: Hmeida, Ali, Mohamed, Bashir, Bouka, and Khadija.

### 2. His birth and death:

Taleb Ali was born in the village of El Jadida, to the municipality of Debila in El Oued Province, in 1884. He died under torture by the French army in late October 1956 (may God accept him among the martyrs).

### 3. His wife and children:

After returning from Zaytuna Mosque in Tunisia in 1907, Taleb Ali married his cousin Maryam bint Belkacem Dassi. He was approximately twenty-three years old at the time. God blessed them with three daughters and five sons, in

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<sup>21</sup> Oral interview with Youssef bin Mohamed Dassi on 09/05/2024 at his home in El Jadida at 11:30 a.m.

<sup>22</sup> The livestock enclosures (zribas) of Taleb Ali and his sons Ammar, Abdelaziz, and Ahmed.

<sup>23</sup> An oral interview with Abdullah bin Hmeida Lemqaddem (nephew of Taleb Ali) and Ahmed bin Ahmed (grandson of Taleb Ali) on 05/06/2022 in El Jadida at 11:00 p.m.

<sup>24</sup> He had a small well (hassi) in the town of Hassi Khalifa, and the area later came to be named after him; oral interview with El Aid bin Hmeida Lemqaddem on 23/02/2006 after the afternoon prayer at the Omar bin Abdelaziz Mosque in the village of El Jadida.

It was traditionally customary in the region that anyone who had memorized the Holy Qur'an was referred to as Taleb (student).

the following order: Alia, Ammar, Abdelaziz, Hadi, Abdelhadi, Ahmed, Mabrouka, and Mabrouk.

4. **The reason for the family name “Lemqaddem”:** Taleb Ali’s father, Abdullah, was a *sheikh (muqaddem)* of the Azouzia Sufi order (from which he later dissociated himself toward the end of his life and advised his children to do likewise). For this reason, people referred to the family as the Lemqaddem family. After his father’s death, the family continued to carry the surname Lemqaddem within the Amayra clan.

5. **His upbringing:**

Taleb Ali grew up in a conservative, middle-income family that lived a Bedouin lifestyle, relying on camel and sheep herding and date-palm cultivation. The family moved from place to place, frequenting pastoral areas in the northern Sahara of El Oued such as Ben Qasha, Douaylat, Oum Et-Toboul, Bir Bouhabline, Boutina, Al-Aqla, Az-Zahif, and other grazing regions. From an early age, Taleb Ali was keen on seeking knowledge; he memorized the Holy Qur'an and learned the science of genealogy and tribal lineages.

### **Third: His scholarly journeys and his reformist and political activity**

1. **The beginning of his pursuit of knowledge:**

Taleb Ali’s initial studies were under Sheikh Si Nasr bin Ali Shneiba Abbas at Al-Sharif Mosque in the village of El Jadida, where he memorized the Holy Qur'an. His teacher then advised him to join one of the *kuttab* schools or *zawiyyas* in the towns of Zaqm or Guemar in order to complete his learning of handwriting, writing, and arithmetic.

2. **His journeys:**

- a. **His journey to Ghardaïa:**

His first journey in youth was to Ghardaïa around 1899, when he was approximately fifteen years old. The purpose of this journey was to search for the origin and lineage of his tribe, as he often heard that the Rbay'a tribe had come from the east and moved westward across Algeria until reaching Saqiat al-Hamra and Oued Eddahab in the Western Sahara. Taleb Ali thus traveled westward until he reached the Zawiya of Sidi Mohamed Ez-Zeigham in Metlili, Ghardaïa, where he stayed for three days. He questioned the sheikhs of the *zawiyyas* there about the lineage of the Rbay'a tribes and the Ouled Zaqqaw tribe. They set certain conditions in exchange for providing

him with the genealogical tree tracing the tribe back to the Companions. Taleb Ali did not accept these conditions without consulting his father. He returned to his village, informed his father—who was a sheikh in the Azouzia order—who rejected those conditions. Consequently, Taleb Ali did not return to obtain the genealogical tree from that *zawiya*.

**b. His journey to Tunisia:**

Taleb Ali traveled to complete his studies at Zaytuna Mosque in Tunisia after consulting his family, some of his friends, and senior sheikhs of the tribe, in accordance with the custom of the inhabitants of El Oued at that time. It was customary that once a student completed memorization of the Qur'an, he would be sent to Zaytuna to pursue knowledge under scholars there and obtain scholarly certificates, since the official schools in El Oued were under French administration and their instruction was contrary to Islamic teachings.

Accordingly, Taleb Ali traveled to Tunisia around 1900. He first joined the Zaytuna branch in the city of Nefta, then decided to enroll at the Zaytuna Mosque in the capital, Tunis. There he perfected his memorization of the Qur'an and studied jurisprudence, creed, literature, grammar, and some sciences of discernment. He remained there for approximately five years before returning to El Oued.

**c. His journey to Constantine and Algiers:**

The *mujahid* Mohamed bin Essassi Dassi recounts that after Taleb Ali returned from Tunisia, he went to the city of Constantine, where he met Sheikh Abdelhamid Ben Badis. He then moved to Algiers, where he attended the founding assembly of the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars in May 1931. There, Taleb Ali met the association's sheikhs, including Sheikh Mohamed Bashir Al-Ibrahimi. Taleb Ali was deeply influenced by the association's reformist activities and resolved to convey this reformist call to his region.

**3. His reformist activity:**

**a. His teaching of the Qur'an at El Jadida Mosque:**

After Taleb Ali returned from his journey to Constantine and Algiers, during which he met a group of scholars and sheikhs of the Association of Muslim Scholars, the Sheikh took upon himself the responsibility of calling to God in his village. He began, from the village mosque, teaching the Qur'an and delivering lessons and sermons through study circles held in front of the mosque.

b. **His room at the village mosque:**

Taleb Ali set aside a private room for himself, attached to the western wall of the mosque and opening to the south. He spent most of his time there, and it contained his personal library. He also used it for treatment by *hijama* (cupping). In addition, he held public lessons in the mosque. Among the most important books he studied and from which he delivered lessons to the general public was “*Risalat Ibn Abi Zayd al-Qayrawani*.”

Taleb Ali was a devout and ascetic man. He devoted long hours to reading the Qur'an and studying it with his students. He frequently concluded his gatherings with the supplication: “*O Allah, grant us life in happiness and cause us to die as martyrs.*” He was also generous and open-handed, often giving away all the wheat or barley he had whenever the poor came to ask him.

c. **His missionary activity outside the mosque:**

Taleb Ali's call was not limited to the mosque alone. His preaching and scholarly activity extended to his friends in neighboring villages, among them El Hadj El Kadri bin Ali bin Abdullah Daqa in the village of Oum Ez-Zbed. At that time, the level of religious and intellectual knowledge there was weak due to the spread of ignorance, innovations, and superstitions, especially in that area and some nearby villages. His student, Sheikh Lakhdar bin El Hadj El Kadri, mentioned that this village was living in the darkness of polytheism, innovations, and superstitions during that period. Taleb Ali paid frequent visits to the area, often sitting with the people until late at night. During these visits, Sheikh Lakhdar studied under Taleb Ali several scholarly texts, including “*Lamiyyat Ibn al-Wardi*,” which he memorized and studied with commentary, as well as certain rules of grammar and morphology.

Taleb Ali also traveled to the areas of the nomadic Bedouins from among the clans of his tribe to teach them essential religious rulings, including the correction of belief and the rulings of purification, prayer, and other matters. He even extended this instruction to women, teaching them Surat al-Fatiha and the short surahs without which prayer is not valid.

Taleb Ali never missed an opportunity to correct a corrupt belief or to deliver an admonition and advice to the public. One of his students, the *mujahid* Mohamed bin Essassi Dassi (the “living martyr”), recounted that one day, when they were in the desert where his family had settled, at the time of the afternoon prayer he saw Taleb Ali leading his father Essassi and his cousin El Arbi bin Mabrouk Braika in prayer.

The child Mohamed—who was then no more than seven or eight years old—joined them in prayer. When the prayer ended and the Sheikh turned around and saw the child with them, he immediately advised him, saying: “*Seven are shaded by God in His shade on the Day when there will be no shade but His; among them is a young man who grows up in obedience to God.*” When they then asked Sheikh Ali about this hadith, he explained it to them in full.

**d. Names of some of the students taught by Sheikh Ali:** Taleb Ali mentored many students in memorizing the Qur'an and learning Islamic law. Among the most prominent were:

- Mohamed Salah bin Tayeb Hamdi (former imam of El Jadida Mosque)
- Mohamed bin Belkacem Hamdi (known as *Si Ali Hamdi*)
- Lakhdar bin El Kadri Daqa (known as *Taleb Lakhdar*)
- Sadiq bin Omar Lemqaddem (grandson of Taleb Ali)

Among those he also taught, who later played a prominent role in the Algerian Revolution, were:

- Commander Mohamed Lakhdar bin Ibrahim Echaib (known as *Hamma Lakhdar*)
- Mohamed bin Essassi Dassi (known as *the living martyr*)
- Ammar, Ahmed, and Mabrouk (sons of Taleb Ali)
- Hussein bin Hmeida (nephew of Taleb Ali)

Those students reported that their Sheikh often spoke to them in his lessons about the virtues of jihad and urged them to be in the front ranks if war broke out against France, addressing them with the words: “*Be men—a revolution is coming to you.*”

#### **Fourth: His activity and role in preparing for the revolution**

##### **1. His participation in preparing for the armed struggle:**

Before the outbreak of the revolution, Taleb Ali engaged in clandestine activity to prepare for it. This is evident from his travels to villages neighboring his own to coordinate with some of his friends who held revolutionary ideas, among them the *mujahid* Bashir Gharbi in Hassi Khalifa. He also sent his son Mabrouk to the capital to coordinate with revolutionary leaders there. On some of these trips to the Aurès region in Batna, Mohamed

Lakhdar accompanied him. Taleb Ali frequently advised the two not to separate from one another.

Mabrouk joined the national movement at the end of the Second World War, forming—together with Commander Mohamed Lakhdar (*Hamma Lakhdar*)—a group of revolutionaries to coordinate within the plans of the “Secret Organization” to carry out the armed revolution. This effort was directly supervised by the two leaders Mohamed Belouizdad and Mostefa Ben Boulaïd. One of the principal tasks of this group was the collection and storage of weapons.

Among the most important contributions made by Taleb Ali was the collection of weapons coming from Tunisia and Libya, their storage, and then their transfer to the Aurès region. His son Ammar often personally led these convoys, assisted by Khalifa bin Belkacem Shaabani. Together, they sent weapons with caravans transporting dates and wool to Biskra and Khencela.

Abdelraouf Shaabani narrates, quoting his father, the *mujahid* Belkacem bin Khalifa Shaabani,

saying:

“My father and Taleb Ali used to send me to the Shchar area (south of the city of Khencela). They would task me with transporting equipment or goods loaded on a camel, without my knowing what they were. These would be received by Mr. Belkacem Kenzari at a prearranged location. When I arrived, he would take the camel and unload the goods without my seeing them, then refill the saddlebag with some wheat or barley and I would return as usual. However, on the seventh or eighth trip, the camel stumbled (fell to the ground) along the way and its load fell off. I then discovered that it was weapons. It became clear to me on that journey that what I had previously been transporting were weapons. These trips all took place before the outbreak of the revolution.”

The convoys to the city of Khencela were numerous. On one journey, in which the *mujahid* Belkacem bin Khalifa accompanied the *mujahid* Ahmed bin Mohamed Dassi to the village of Aghir in Shchar, they met Abdelhamid Al-Alwani Al-Badsi (from the village of Badis in Biskra), Mustafa Bousta (one of the deputies of Mostefa Ben Boulaïd from Batna Province), and Belkacem Kenzari (from Khencela Province). Weapons, money, and letters sent by Taleb Ali to be delivered to the Aurès were handed over to them.

Taleb Ali also received letters from his son Mabrouk and from some of the Aurès leaders. These letters were read to him by his grandson Sadiq bin Omar and his student Mohamed bin Belkacem Hamdi (*Si Ali*). The letters were encrypted. Si Ali

Hamdi mentioned that he once asked the Sheikh about certain terms used in one of the letters, and he replied: “The sheep are the *mujahidin*, the wolf refers to the French army, and the grass is the provisions sent to the *mujahidin*.”

Taleb Ali dedicated his sons to serving the revolution, including Ahmed, Ammar, and Mabrouk, who were among its earliest contributors. Ammar followed in his father’s footsteps, having joined the national movement at an early stage. He maintained close relations with major leaders such as Mohamed Belouizdad, Mohamed Boudiaf, Larbi Ben M’hidi, and Mostefa Ben Boulaïd. Ammar was active in purchasing and collecting weapons and sending them to the northern regions. He often traveled personally to bring them from Libya and then dispatched them through commercial caravans, frequently walking ahead of these caravans to secure the route. In this way, Ammar earned the trust of the northern leaders, who would stay at his house whenever they passed through El Oued on their way to Tunisia.

### **3. The visit of Mohamed Belouizdad and Mostefa Ben Boulaïd to the village of El Jadida:**

Abdelghani Echaibi mentioned, in his account of the incident involving the explosion of a quantity of ammunition in the winter of 1947 in the village of Derimini, evidence confirming the visit of these leaders to the house of Ammar Lemqaddem and his father, Taleb Ali. He stated: “We were gathered in the house of Ammar bin El Bashir Allal, together with Ammar, the son of Taleb Ali Lemqaddem, cleaning about 800 bullets that had been brought from Libya (leftovers from the Second World War). We found that about 200 of them were unusable. During this operation, we heard someone calling for Ammar. When he came in, the caller informed him that Mohamed Belouizdad and Mostefa Ben Boulaïd were waiting for him with his father, Taleb Ali, at your house...”

Ammar then took the usable ammunition with him and left the unusable quantity so that the group could quickly bury it after his departure. Without delay, they dug a deep pit and buried the defective ammunition. Because the weather was cold, they lit a fire nearby for warmth. This caused the buried ammunition to explode, producing a loud sound and heavy smoke. The explosion reached the ears of the French administration, which promptly sent forces to the site to determine its cause. They questioned Sheikh Tahar bin El Bashir Allal, who told them that a group had been preparing gunpowder for weddings and that it had exploded. In this way, Sheikh Tahar concealed the true nature of what had happened.

The city of Annaba was among the places frequently visited by Ammar bin Taleb Ali. He had a close relationship with Ahmed El Amin Echaibi (the father of Abdel Salam and Abdelghani). Abdel Salam—who was a small child at the time—recounted that Ammar used to visit them at their home and would always arrive one or two days before the caravan in order to secure the route. These caravans were often loaded with weapons that Ammar had brought from Tunisia and Libya. Ammar would stay with them for long periods, sometimes up to three months, and he was known to them by the name “Omar Er-Rab‘i.”

#### **4. His revolutionary activity and struggle:**

Taleb Ali worked to spread revolutionary awareness and to strongly encourage young people to join the armed struggle against French colonial occupation once it began. His personality was well liked and widely accepted among the general population, due to his persuasive speech in the gatherings he held in front of the village mosque. He often repeated the following statement: *“No matter how great France’s weapons may be on land and in the sky, they will never frighten us. Jihad will continue until we achieve victory or attain martyrdom, and the day will come when it is expelled from our country.”* It is also reported that during the Battle of Houd Shika, he would climb the minaret of the El Jadida village mosque and incite people to jihad and to go to the battlefield, proclaiming: *“Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar, jihad in the path of God, jihad in the path of God—O people, rise up and help your brothers!”*

##### **a. His imprisonment and torture after the Battle of Houd Krim (17 November 1954):**

After the victory achieved by the *mujahidin* in the Battle of Houd Krim at Hassi Khalifa—in which a group of fighters from the village of El Jadida participated, led by Commander Mohamed Lakhdar Echaib and his deputy Mabrouk Lemqaddem, the son of Taleb Ali, following meticulous planning—France realized that behind this action was a secret civilian organization operating within the village of El Jadida. It therefore sought to identify those directing it and imprisoned everyone suspected of involvement. Taleb Ali was among those arrested; he was seized in the village mosque and then taken to El Oued prison along with some of his companions.

The *mujahid* Mohamed bin Essassi Dassi, who was imprisoned with Taleb Ali, recounted that he could hear what took place between Taleb Ali and the guards of the cell in which he was held. Taleb Ali never ceased reciting the Qur'an, which

annoyed the guards. On one occasion, a guard ordered him to stop, but the Sheikh refused, saying: *“By God, I will not stop, even if you lock me up with seven locks.”* The guard then struck him repeatedly on the head with the butt of a rifle until he lost consciousness. The prisoners with him thought he had died. Taleb Ali did not regain consciousness until evening, when he found himself lying on the ground with his face covered in blood. He then resumed reciting the Qur'an. He remained in prison for about a week under interrogation and torture before being released.

**b. His imprisonment and torture after the Battle of Sahn Er-Ratm (15 March 1955):**

After the Battle of Sahn Er-Ratm, in which Mabrouk, the son of Taleb Ali, was captured, the French administration launched a wide campaign of arrests, detaining everyone suspected of having any connection with participants in the battle. During this campaign, Taleb Ali was arrested and taken once again to El Oued prison, where he was tortured and interrogated regarding the recruitment and participation of his son Mabrouk in the battle. When Taleb Ali was asked why he had allowed his son to fight in the ranks of the National Liberation Army in El Oued, he replied with strength and resolve: *“By God, if I had twelve sons like my son Mabrouk, I would send them all to jihad in the path of God, and I would be with them.”* Taleb Ali remained in prison for about a week before being released.

**d. The burning of Taleb Ali's house and the killing of his son Ahmed after the Battle of Houd Shika (August 1955):**

After the Battle of Houd Shika, France received information from one of its agents in the village of El Jadida stating that Ahmed, the son of Taleb Ali, had collected a large number of weapons and hidden them in the *houd* where he lived. These weapons had been gathered to be distributed to volunteers for jihad and to join the force of Mohamed Lakhdar coming from the Aurès. However, the weapons were not distributed due to the unexpected outbreak of the Battle of Houd Shika. Ammar, the son of Taleb Ali, had ordered them not to go, fearing that their involvement would be discovered and that they would all be killed, as had happened to others who participated in the battle. As a result, Ahmed gathered and concealed the weapons.

Accordingly, French forces surrounded the *houd* in which Taleb Ali and his sons lived on Friday, 16 Muharram 1375 AH, corresponding to 2 September 1955. Ahmed, the Sheikh's son, was arrested while on his way to the mosque and taken to Debila prison. After being interrogated, tortured, and brutalized in an attempt to force him to reveal the location of the weapons—without success—they tied him up

and dragged him behind a French army vehicle. The following day, they returned him to his place of residence in the *houd*, where all members of his family and some of their neighbors were gathered. He was tortured in front of them until he died.

They then proceeded to burn the *houd*, including its palm trees and houses (which consisted of enclosures made from palm fronds), after searching for the weapons and failing to find them. All of this occurred while Taleb Ali was not present. When he returned and saw what had befallen his home and the homes of his sons, he said nothing but: “*O Allah, this is an abomination. Allah is sufficient for us, and He is the best disposer of affairs.*” This took place on Saturday, 17 Muharram 1375 AH, corresponding to 3 September 1955.

As a result of these events, Taleb Ali was taken for the third time to El Oued prison to be interrogated about the whereabouts of the weapons and about what his sons were doing against France. He replied to them: “*Ahmed—you have killed him; Ammar and Mabrouk are in your prison; Abdelhadi is blind; and Abdelaziz is a shepherd tending sheep in the desert.*” He was then released after interrogation.

**e. The imprisonment and killing of Taleb Ali in October 1956:** After a group of *mujahidin* from the village of El Jadida joined the National Liberation Army stationed on the eastern borders—led by the *mujahid* Mohamed bin Essassi Dassi—in September 1956, the eldest son of Taleb Ali, Ammar, and his nephew Hussein bin Hmeida were arrested. Both had been active in recruiting young people to join the National Liberation Army. The French administration’s aim was to eliminate revolutionary activity in the village of El Jadida, but it failed to do so, as Taleb Ali did not cease encouraging, educating, and inciting young people to jihad in the path of God. Consequently, the French administration decided to arrest him once again, after one of its agents in the village advised them, saying: “*If you want things to calm down in the village of El Jadida, you must kill Taleb Ali and Sheikh Khalifa bin Belkacem.*” A military force was then dispatched to the village to take the two sheikhs and those with them to Debila prison. This occurred in October 1956.

Thus, Taleb Ali was imprisoned for the fourth time, during which he was subjected to the harshest forms of physical and psychological torture despite his advanced age. While being tortured, he would respond to his tormentors by saying: “*O enemies of God, O enemies of God.*” One of those imprisoned with him recounted that he saw a French army conscript pouring hot coffee over Taleb Ali’s head. He did not remain in prison on this occasion for more than one or two nights. El Aid bin Mohamed Qseiba (who was imprisoned with him) stated: “*They took Taleb Ali out at night,*

*and shortly afterward I heard the sound of gunshots. Then one of the soldiers came to me and said, 'We killed your uncle... we killed your uncle...' I went out and found him dead, so I covered him with his burnous."* Sheikh Khalifa met the same fate, and earlier his son Ammar and his nephew Hussein had also been killed. This occurred in late October 1956. By morning, news of their deaths spread, and the village of El Jadida was shaken, as grief engulfed everyone at the loss of one of the symbols of preaching, knowledge, and jihad.

The French forces took all the bodies and buried them in a designated place for burying those killed in Debila prison.

### **Conclusion:**

Sheikh Ali—may God have mercy on him—devoted his life to knowledge and sound education. He dedicated himself to encouraging its pursuit and to combating innovations, superstitions, and everything that could hinder the nation's progress toward liberation. He worked to consolidate national identity at a time when French colonial occupation showed no mercy to anyone who approached these core pillars of the Algerian nation. He was keen on forming a righteous, active, and striving generation that would defend the *الوطن* and stand against occupation, which sought by all means to keep the Algerian people ignorant by destroying their fundamental foundations of religion, language, and history.

The Sheikh succeeded in educating a number of students, some of whom participated in the Liberation Revolution and rose to high ranks in the National Liberation Army, foremost among them Commander Mohamed Lakhdar. Others later became leading figures in Algeria after independence in various fields of life, such as Sheikh Imam Mohamed Salah bin Tayeb Hamdi.

Based on what has been presented and studied, the following conclusions were reached:

- Taleb Ali is considered one of the reformist figures of the village of El Jadida due to his religious formation, his acquisition of Islamic knowledge at Zaytuna Mosque in Tunisia, and his subsequent involvement in the Association of Muslim Scholars. His call had a strong resonance among the people, as he urged them to adhere to authentic religion based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and to reject polytheism, innovations, and superstitions.

- The house of Taleb Ali served as a meeting point for major revolutionary leaders passing through El Oued, foremost among them Mostefa Ben Boulaïd and Mohamed Belouizdad.
- Taleb Ali enjoyed the love and respect of everyone, and his word was heeded by the village's inhabitants, which made him a reference point in resolving disputes and conflicts among people.
- Taleb Ali played a prominent role in confronting French colonial occupation by encouraging young people and calling them to jihad and to join the ranks of the National Liberation Army. This led to his being subjected to repeated torture and ultimately to his killing by the French administration.

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