

SHEIKH 'ADDA BENTOUNES
الشيخ عطة بن تونيس



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A l'occasion de la célébration du décès, le 4 juillet 1952 du cheikh El Hadj Adda Bentounes.

4 juillet 2020

SHEIKH 'ADDA BENTOUNES (1898 – 1952)



Sheikh Hadj Adda – 1946

Upper Right: Young 'Adda at the age of 19

*Under the continents the ocean stands
Tolerating both pure and filthy in its bosom,
It receives and calms the great river
No matter how majestic or turbulent it may be
The sewer of the city, it washes and purifies
Even the rancid cadaver, its bones it launders
From its depths, pearls and corals it bestows
And from its air, health and energy*

Morchid No. 52, September 1951



Sheikh 'Adda Bentounès had great impact on the path. His faithfulness and proximity to his master, Sheikh Ahmed al-Alawi, fashioned, polished, and pacified his soul. He was a pure crystal with multiple facets, each with a unique glare. People who knew him or approached him always remembered his kindness. He was so immersed in the divine, cultivating awareness, and tirelessly preaching brotherhood and love among men. His character provoked diverse testimonies—even contradictory ones. They all indicate the exceptional aspect of his personality. He was only eight when destiny revealed him to his master, Sheikh al-Alawi—still moqadem at the time. He dedicated himself thenceforth, body and soul, to the exoteric and esoteric education that he received from his spiritual father.

In 1952, Jean Biès, then nineteen years of age, had the privilege to meet Sidi 'Adda at the zawiya of Mostaghanem. He writes in his *Voies des Sages* (Paths of Sages): « The future was certainly going to prove that the man would honor the young man and the old man the child. Sheikh 'Adda became a saint and founded his dwelling in “the breath of divine familiarity.” He is still present in me, as he is in his own self, with a turban on the head, draped in his ample white silk djellaba—his imminent shroud—and wearing around his neck the rosary of ninety-nine Names of God—the hundredth of which is still unknown and unpronounceable—indicating divine Perfections and Activities and the universal essences contained in the immanent Essence of the world. He was the breathing cradle of humility, love, patience, righteousness, and simplicity. »

A Predestined Birth

'Adda is the son of 'Awda Bentounès and his second wife, Noria Benkharchouche—a modest and pious family. His father was a butcher and the moqadem of Zawiya Shadhiliyya, which was founded by Sheikh Qaddur Ben Sliman in Mostaghanem. He was known as al-Malik because of his elegance and generosity.



Portrait of young 'Adda on the occasion of his marriage, 1924

One day, Ben 'Awda announced timidly to his Sheikh: "I have just had twin boys..." Sheikh responded: "We are still waiting for the heavens to accord us another son who will be named 'Adda, [first name of 'Adda Ben Ghulam Allah, Sheikh of Tareqa Darqawiyya-Shadhiliyya, who is buried in Tiaret]." "Another son!" Ben 'Awda exclaimed. "Yes; he will be a great pillar on the path and will spread virtue among men," answered Sheikh.

'Adda was born October 29, 1898 in Tijdit, the Arab neighborhood of Mostaghanem. He was the youngest member of a family of six. His father enrolled him in the school of Sheikh Belhamissi, where he learned reading, writing, Qur'an, Hadith, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and grammar. At the age of eight, the most educated of his brothers, Munawwar, who was a disciple of Sheikh al-Buzaydi, deemed it useful for him to receive some learning from Moqadem al-Alawi. So much did 'Adda like the new teacher that he never missed a lesson. He thus gained the love of his educator. While studying at the zawiya, he also learned cobblery.

His brother, Munawwar, was an imam and a preacher; he also taught *fiqh* at the mosque of Sidi Mhamed until he died. After Sheikh 'Adda's death, Munawwar served as a member of the council of sages with Hadj al-Mehdi Bentounès, the following leader of Tareqa al-Alawiyya.

The Favorite Disciple

When Ahmed al-Alawi became Sheikh of the brotherhood, he asked his disciples what they had learned by visiting him. 'Adda answered: "Since the moment I started coming to this zawiya, everybody has been calling me Sidi 'Adda. I have gained their esteem and yours."

Sheikh al-Alawi, himself, cared for the spiritual education of Sidi 'Adda through the sessions of *dhikr* and the esoteric commentaries on the works of Sufi masters. Sidi 'Adda learned with ease how to chant the Qur'an and sing the *sama* (spiritual poems). Thanks to his exquisite voice, he became the best *mussami* (chanter) of Zawiya al-Alawiyya. At the age of twenty, he was one of the closest disciples of Sheikh al-Alawi. He says: "I was brought up since my childhood by my venerated Sheikh; I know the thinking and depth of Sheikh al-Alawi, I know the very essence of what he said and wrote. He shared his personal life with me; I have experienced what he has experienced." Sidi 'Adda was summoned to military service in 1918; he served in the second and sixth regiments of the Algerian skirmishers. At the barracks, he introduced the instruction he had received at the zawiya. He showed sympathy for his comrades and incited them to good conduct, religious practice, and the love of *dhikr*. It is said that after each training, he

marched with his comrades chanting religious hymns, which caused him a disciplinary sentence.



Young Sidi 'Adda, student at the Zaytuna University of Tunis — 1922



Certificate of adoption of Sidi 'Adda by Sheikh al-Alawi

After having been discharged in 1921, he returned to the zawiya. Seeing that he did not come back to the house, and showed no interest in marriage, his desperate mother begged him: “Here is all my jewelry; I have kept it for you, I give it all to you.” “What would you have me do with all this gold?” he responded. “Stop following Sheikh al-Alawi, start a home and a family.” “Now that you have given me your jewelry, I give it back to you, that you let me follow my Sheikh.”

In 1922, as authorized by his Sheikh, he perfected his knowledge in theology and Arabic at the *University of Zaytuna*, one of his dearest aspirations. Two years later, he was summoned to replace Moqadem Mohamed Benalioua, Sheikh al-Alawi’s nephew, who had fallen seriously ill. ‘Adda married Kheira Benalioua. She was Sheikh al-Alawi’s niece; he had adopted her at the age of eight and raised according to the pure Mohammedan tradition. ‘Adda devoted himself totally to his functions of intendant, editor of *al-Balagh al-Jaza’iri*, and chauffeur—a privilege sought by many—all of which allowed him to live close to his master.

In 1928, he traveled with his Sheikh to Morocco (Fez, Meknes, and Rabat). In 1930, he accompanied him to Mecca and Medina where he performed his first pilgrimage. Then he visited Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon.

In 1934, feeling that his death was near, Sheikh al-Alawi adopted him as a son and named him managing director of all his assets in the presence of the *hanafi* qadi (judge) of Mostaghanem [article 4 of the will certificate KK838, No. 594 of the *Mahkama* (court) of Mostaghanem]: “All assets referenced as Habous are to be managed by the honorable Sidi Bentounès ‘Adda Ould Benaouda, who lives in Mostaghanem and who is instituted in the rank of son of founder. This administrator will exercise his function according to the decrees of the will with no opposition whatsoever, unless he excessively disobeys the will of the founder as to the purpose of the Habous. He will thus administer all the assets mentioned above as long as he lives. When he dies, administration will be entrusted to the most virtuous of his sons. In case there is no posterity worthy of such function, the administrator will then be chosen from among the disciples of the brotherhood, one whose conduct is fine, and whose spirit is of virtuous wisdom.”

Zaytuna University – Tunis

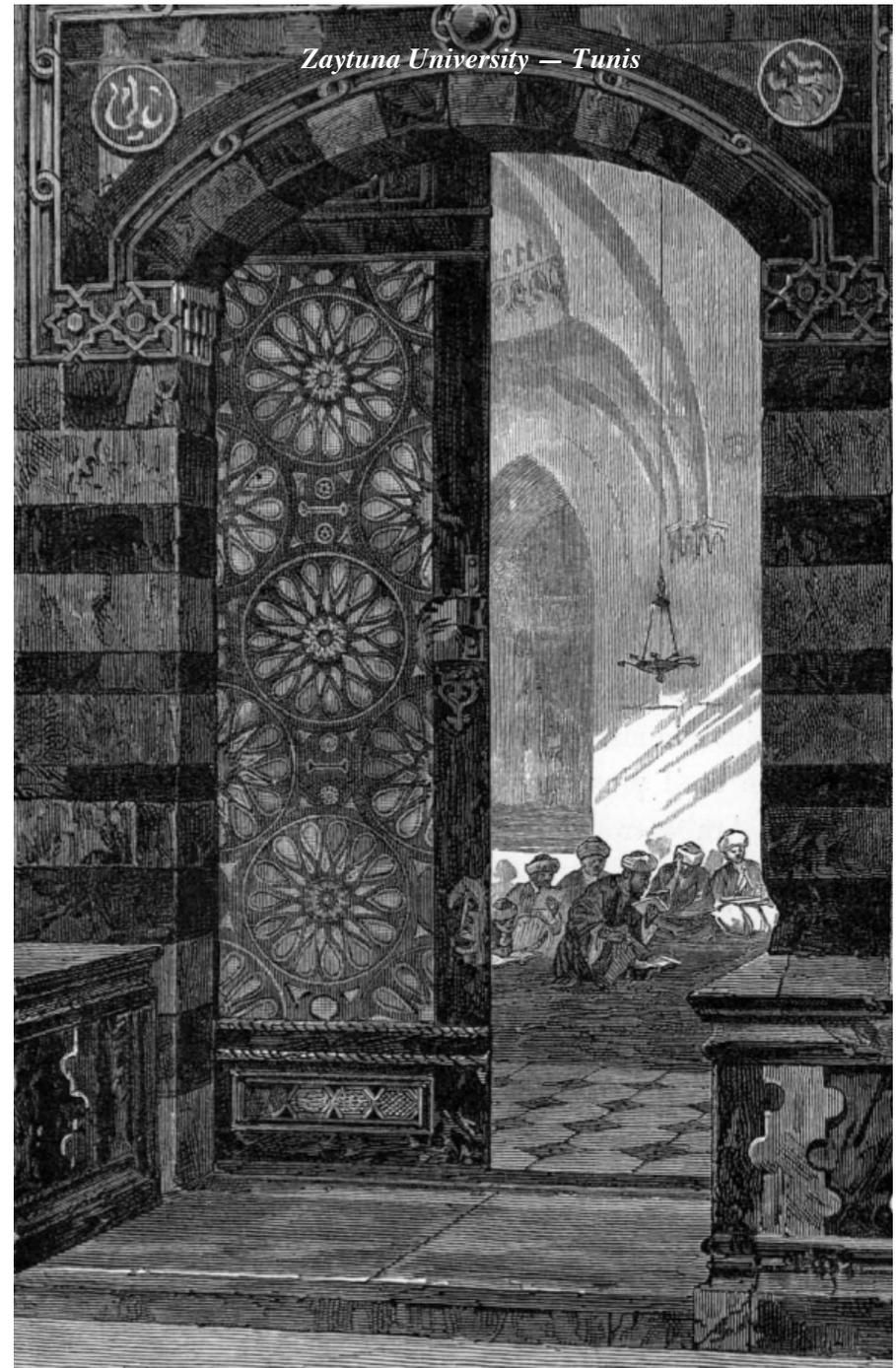
The Great Centers of Education

The great centers of traditional education famous at the time are three:

–Zaytuna of Tunis, built in 732 by an Umayyad governor

–Qarawiyyin of Fez, built in 862 by Fatima al-Fihriyya, known as Ummu al-Baneen (Mother of sons). Firm believer and rich heir of her Qairawani father, she devoted her fortune to the construction of the Qarawiyyin Mosque, an important historic site in the city of Fez. The adjoined madrassa is considered one of the oldest universities of the world. She started construction on the first Saturday of Ramadan in 245 (Muslim calendar) and fasted during the entire project. Fatima al-Fihriyya is a historic and legendary figure of the city of Fez and Moroccan history. She is considered a saint and is highly respected by Moroccans.

–Al-Azhar was founded by the Fatimids in Cairo in 972. It was and still is the most famous of these centers of education.





Al Azhar University — learning circles inside the mosque



Qarawiyyin University — Fez, Morocco

A decorative frame with intricate Islamic geometric and floral patterns in gold, brown, and green. The frame is rectangular with pointed corners and a central white box containing text. The patterns are highly detailed and symmetrical, typical of traditional Islamic art.

*Watch out for blind imitation
Lest you will be cast out
Learn and practice
The rules of the path, instead
And realize your spiritual states*

Wisdom of Sidi Abu Madyan

Sheikh's pocket watch



Sheikh's identity card



Sheikh's burnous





Moqadem Sidi 'Adda with Abdelkarim Jossot and Abdelrahman Tapie leaving Sheikh al-Alawi's residence in Mostaghanem

A Difficult Succession

« Our theory lies in the return of the entire humanity to brotherhood and peace, through the culture of good morals and religious education of high standard, until we are able to revive the genuine fraternity dormant in our hearts like butter in milk. If all people, God's blessings be on them, bother to remember this brotherhood, all conflicts will disappear, leaving space to love; hatred and fighting will dissipate, and people will live in everlasting bliss and happiness. » (Sheikh 'Adda Bentounès, Beacon of Tunis)

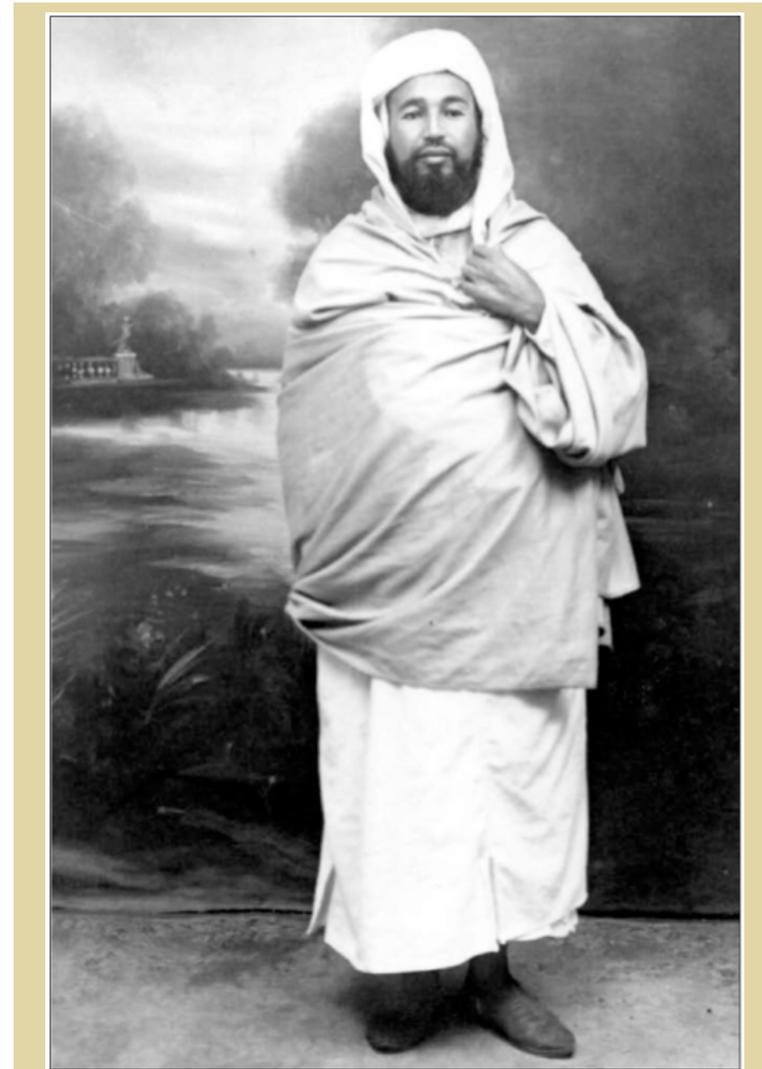


Day of Investiture — Mostaghanem, 1934

At the death of the founder of Tareqa al-Alawiyya, on July 14, 1934, Sidi 'Adda succeeded the master and assured the durability of his work in the continuity of the spiritual *education of awakening* offered at the principal zawiya of Mostaghanem and other Alawi zawiyas in Algeria, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Hedjaz, etc.

A congregation of disciples, present the day following the funeral, recognized 'Adda Bentounès as the new spiritual guide. They “founded their decision on the parental ties Sheikh al-Alawi had rooted in his disciple, the continuous affection he had never stopped showing him, his posthumous will to establish him as sole manager of all assets of the brotherhood—a burden for which Sheikh al-Alawi, fine guardian and great leader as he was, designated his most honest disciple—and finally his spiritual qualities that allowed him to ascend all stations of gnosis (*ma'rifa*).” (Salah Khelifa, *Alawisme et Madanisme* [Alawism and Madanism])

Such esteem was not shared by everyone, however. Some powerful moqadems started a movement of dissidence—sometimes helped by some countries—especially in the Moroccan *Rif* where the brotherhood was large. The Spanish, who occupied the North of Morocco, suspected Sheikh 'Adda of being a French agent propagating against pro-Franco interests.



Portrait of Sheikh 'Adda at the time of his investiture as successor of Sheikh al-Alawi



**Habous attestation
nb 763 of September
21, 1931, made by
Sheikh al-Alawi, in
which he institutes
Sheikh Hadj ‘Adda
as sole legatee
(beneficiary)**

A note from the French consulate in Méliïlia, addressed to its embassy in Rabat, August 18, 1945, indicated that “Spanish authorities of the protectorate were worried about the activity and progress of the Alawi sect whom they considered a French instrument of propaganda.” In April of 1940, the *Siete Fichas* newspaper wrote that the brotherhood was “an anti-Spanish instrument (with Mostaghanem as the general headquarters of the French secret army in North Africa). [...] It was the hub where political orders were given, information received, and an army, with one-hundred-bead rosaries and the doctrine of the Prophet as weapons, was recruited.” Consequently, after World War II, Sheikh ‘Adda’s visit to his disciples in the *Rif* was prohibited by the Spanish.

Colonel Schoen, Chief of the North African Liaison Services in the General Government of Algeria, wrote a report following the death of Sidi ‘Adda in which he admitted and reestablished the truth about the position of Tareqa Alawiyya in the conflicts of interests that agitated the region at that time: « Alawi leaders have never adhered to any political party, or taken part in the elections, or participated in the diverse “maraboutic congregations” before or after the war. They were not affiliates of the Federation of Chiefs of Zawiyas in Algeria, nor were they of the Federation of Chiefs of Zawiyas in North Africa, over which Sheikh al-Kettani of Fez presided. They were not members of the Federation of Chiefs of Zawiyas of

Eastern Morocco, which was founded in 1953 and headed by Sheikh Laared of Kenadza, nor did they campaign against independence. They never solicited favors or bribes. No Alawi representative ever participated in the recent protest, by Glaoui and Sheikh Kettani, against His Majesty Mohamed V. No Alawi representative assisted the maraboutic congress of Fez in 1953. In brief, this brotherhood is not retrograde at all. It is a sincere path; its goal transcends the material things of this world. It is very different from other brotherhoods and has no rapport with them. »

An article of the *Islamic Review* English magazine of August, 1952 accentuated the importance of the Alawi community: « There is, in England, a very important community of Muslims from Aden, Yemen belonging to the Sufi order founded by Sheikh Benaliuoa of Algeria. This group celebrated its annual festivity (*ihitfal*) the 9, 10, and 11 of May in Cardiff. Ceremonies took place under the supervision of Sheikh Hassan Ismail, who was assisted by Mr. Nassir Yahya (intendant) and Mr. Ali Basha (the association counselor).

The most eventful manifestation of the three days of prayer was the procession around the neighborhood of Cardiff; many Muslims were invited to this moving ceremony. They came in overstuffed cars from Birmingham and other important cities. Among them were members of the Muslim Commission, like Mr. Ismail de York, publisher of the *Islamic Review* and secretary of the council; and Colonel Abdullah Baines-Hewitt, a well-known English Muslim. »

The dynamics and importance of that community were such that they solicited a religious missionary group from the al-Azhar University of Cairo. *El-Mirsi* newspaper of March 11, 1952 wrote: « *The Mashyakha of al-Azhar* (assembly of theologian Sheikhs of al-Azhar) is profoundly studying the request of the Muslim colony of Cardiff, in which the latter asks for a professor of theology from al-Azhar to teach principles of the Arab culture and language. »



**Hasan Ismael, appointed moqadem by the
Sheikh, and his representative in England**



Article of *Le Phare de Tunis* (*Beacon of Tunis*) newspaper, 12/26 1952

Some representatives of the colonial administration considered the Alawi spiritual manifestations an embezzled path to awaken the masses and mobilize them at the service of the nationalist movement. General P.J. André, of the Academy of Social Sciences, influenced by the reigning spirit of the time, described the Sheikh as a suspected figure: “The spirit of the Alawi brotherhood appears to have changed considerably since the death of its founder. His successor, ‘Adda Bentounès, was indeed his adopted son. But it seems he has kept only the spiritualism of the order, without continuing the mystic work of Sheikh Benalioua. He seems closer to the approach of the *Ulama* (theologians) by creating schools (madrasas), founding newspapers in Arabic, stirring Muslim masses in order to awaken them, fanaticize them, and create in them feelings of nationalism.”

A note from the Center of Information and Studies of the General Government of Algeria, on January 5, 1948, recommended: “At the beginning of March, 1937, the governor’s assistant to Mostaghanem sent the prefect of Oran the translation of a poem that Sheikh ‘Adda Bentounès

had just composed, and wrote in a joint report that the poem had a tendency similar to that of Benbadis Abdelhamid in his early days. It called Muslims to education and total respect of religion [...] It called them to unity [...]. His actions in indigenous environments where he has influence must be closely watched.”

Sheikh Khaled Bentounès explains: “The Sheikh was caught between those who did not understand his spiritual dimension and sought to hide in religiosity and those who preached an anti-fraternal reformism and advocated a western rationalism to awaken Muslim masses. He was also suspected by the colonial authorities of the time of having clandestine relations with the nationalists, whom he received in the *zawiya* of Mostaghanem, the very place where he also welcomed Europeans, exhorting both parties to moderation and encouraging the emancipation of the country in harmony.”

This vast movement of protest, the climate of suspicion and pressure from all sides, and diabetes from which he suffered, indeed tested and defied Sheikh ‘Adda Bentounès. Still, he stood firm and continued to spread the beliefs and teachings of his master. Some heirs, who were frustrated with the judicial decree that denied them inheritance, since all assets were considered *Habous*, sued him many times without success.



Managers of the Algerian Muslim Scouts at the Ihitfal of 1948

Little by little, with much pain, perseverance, and faith, with his wife Lalla Kheira and the council of sages (particularly the members of Mostaghanem) by his side, Sheikh ‘Adda succeeded in preserving the brotherhood and spiritual heritage. The delegate of the world spiritualist conference, Mohamed Gaddas, wrote in the *Phare de Tunis* newspaper of December 26, 1952: “Since 1934, the brotherhood has been developing thanks to the devotion of Sheikh Sidi Hadj ‘Adda Bentounès, who ceases not to spend money, time, and health to teach his disciples. He advises them in matters of religious obligations and life in general; he advocates human brotherhood, and roots in them the finest levels of spirituality. Here in Algeria, all those who have met the Sheikh or his disciples are unanimous in recognizing his qualities and nobleness. It must be noted that the Sheikh is more than welcome in the Christian communities; they have warm feelings for him, and their veneration and esteem have no equal. He receives his non-Muslim visitors with courtesy, respects their convictions, and shows them during the entire visit that fusion of religions is the best foundation for a long-lasting fraternity. His reputation goes beyond Africa and the East. Dozens of illustrious figures from Europe and America, who came in contact with him, embraced the Islamic faith.”

Actions and Works

In the meantime, the brotherhood newspaper, *al-Balagh al-Jaza’iri* (created by Sheikh al-Alawi in 1926) fell into the hands of his adversaries, who filled it with false truths and diverse rumors. Sheikh ‘Adda responded well by republishing, first in Algiers, then in Mostaghanem, the monthly magazine, *Lisan al-Din*, in Arabic—created by Sheikh al-Alawi in 1924 and censored by the colonial authorities in 1926, after twenty-five years of publication. It was an innovative and modern mouthpiece; it preached the reformation of Islam, and defended Sufism, which was more and more discredited by the reformists. Things became clearer and appeared thereafter. The magazine was regularly published from 1937 to 1939, and then disappeared at the dawn of WW II.

Sheikh ‘Adda wrote *al-Rawda al-Saniyya fi al-Ma’ather al-Alawiyya*, which he dedicated to the life and work of the founding master, and on which Martin Lings relied greatly to write his famous book, *Sheikh Ahmed al-Alawi, A Muslim Saint of the XX Century*. The book was translated into many languages.

The new master of the brotherhood was particularly concerned about the suffering of the Algerian people. The destruction of society, the recomposition of the spheres of power, the massive confinement of its

lands, the colonial acculturation, the Indigenusness Code... all turned the Algerian into a stranger in his own land, a non-citizen. The values of justice, peace, and piety, traditionally held by the elite of sages, lost their ideals. Forced modernization, neglect of Arabic language, undermining of culture, and religious revisionism—last plague but not the least—sank the country in a coma.



Summer school outing for the youth — Al-Tanwir Association. Hadj el-Mehdi, second from the right



Young el-Mehdi membership card

Ye! People of Our Nation

*Ye! People of our nation
Let us revive our obligations and traditions
Let us avoid mental turmoil
That plagues us from all over*

*Ye! People of our nation
Let us unite on the right path
And close the gap
That parts all believers*

*Ye people! Let us agree
On unity and understanding
Let us ban the discords
That have enshrouded us*

*Ye People! Let us engage
Let us shake off our frozen bodies
For time has ridiculed us*

*Ye people! Take the oath
To support the Law
For no peace will there be for Muslims
Should they betray the path*

*Ye people! Let us revive our knowledge
For the souls rise with science
That we may reap the fruits of our sowing
And enjoy dignity*

*Ye people! Let us restore our Traditions
Let us unite to continue learning
Let us harvest the finest element of our knowledge
For the good of all*

*Ye people! Let us resuscitate the Qur'an
Religion and faith
For, indeed, are spread in these times
All things that harm our Law*

*Let us engage in reciting our verses
And unite in our prayers
No peace will there be, my brothers
Outside our applied religion*

*Impiety has plagued us
And all ills of this earth
Still, we are not aware anymore
Brothers! We see not that which weakens us*

*Poverty has stricken us
Our power is in dust
Ignorance has spread
Cutting off the light
Our children roam in the streets
Girls as well as boys
Thus erring without a goal
Oh! What times these are*

*Jobless and with no religion
Miserable we all are
My God! Have mercy on Muslims
Have Mercy on what we have become*

*My Lord! Protect our youth
That they may find the right path
To Your Book guide them
To the tradition of the Initiated*

*Accord Your Prayer on him, thanks to whom
The ancients have acquired their qualities
Mohamed, Crown of Eminence
Our prophet, elected among and above all creatures*

*Accord Your Blessings, oh Lord, to his family, source of purity
His companions, faithful people
And to those who, among Your believing servants
Are on their path*

Sheikh Sidi Hadj 'Adda Bentounès

Suddenly without past or future except that of the West, the deracinated and disoriented Algeria was in danger. Its living power, the youth, found themselves with no instruction and could not adapt to the economic, social, and religious mutation; they did not have the adequate markers to live their faith and find their place in society. “To save them from chaos and help them escape their ignorance of their past and its grandeur, and give them a genuine education, (Morshid, nb 11 of June, 1947),” Sheikh ‘Adda went beyond analysis and advice. He reacted and created the first soccer club of Mostaghanem, bought complete uniforms, printed membership cards, and encouraged his own children to become members. He also created an association called *al-Tanwir* (the Awakening) to promote interaction among the youth who had no structure. In it they learned the true sense of brotherhood, mutual help, Arabic language, chanting, poetry, etc. Experienced disciples organized daily trips to the beach and managed summer vacation camps. Sheikh ‘Adda remained in close contact with the youth throughout his entire life. He relied on the Algerian Muslim Scouts Association for order and service during the illustrious gatherings of the brotherhood.



First soccer team of Mostaghanem — Mostaghanem’s Hope

Sheikh ‘Adda sought to assist the most feeble among the youth, the delinquent minors. A precursor in the treatment of delinquency and social reinsertion, he opened, in Mostaghanem, schools of carpentry, mechanics,

bakery, and printing. He used *Lisan al-Din* magazine to pressure the Algerian government until he obtained its official recognition of this endeavor. In 1941, successive groups of delinquent minors left the prison of Mostaghanem for the *zawiya*. During the day, they learned to read and write the Arabic language and practiced a craft of their choice; and in the evening, they received spiritual education. This double management of their time reinstated them fully into society. Last but not least, Sheikh ‘Adda, in his steps of innovation, founded in Mostaghanem, the first independent school of Arabic language, which he offered to the *Party of the People of Algeria* when the latter decided to spread the Arabic language in occupied Algeria.



Madrasa (school) at the time of the Sheikh

The Second Pilgrimage

In January of 1939, in spite of statements that an imminent war would make terrestrial and maritime routes extremely dangerous and in spite of the profound worry of his entourage, Sheikh ‘Adda undertook his second pilgrimage with some disciples and his eldest son, Mohamed Mehdi, who was only eleven. He discovered the vast destruction that *Wahhabis* had brought on the sanctuaries of the companions and family of the Prophet and the irreparable damage they caused this patrimony—a common asset of the entire Muslim community.



"Ville de Marseille" ship leaving for Djedda with pilgrims on board

The Prediction

Once back in Algeria, Sheikh 'Adda decided to renew the investiture of the moqadems who had been assigned this function by Sheikh al-Alawi. He created the Alawi Association for Preaching and Exhortation (*al-Jam'iyya al-Alawiyya lil-Wa'd wa al-Tathkir*). He used it to open, almost everywhere in the country, many schools of Arabic and traditional religious instruction in order to diffuse a moderate and open Sufi education in a world of chaos and violence.

The War

On the first of September war broke out. Communication was almost cut off, and the Sheikh could hardly step out of the district of Mostaghanem.



Procession of Sheikh 'Adda and the pilgrims who were going from Mostaghanem to Mecca — January, 1939

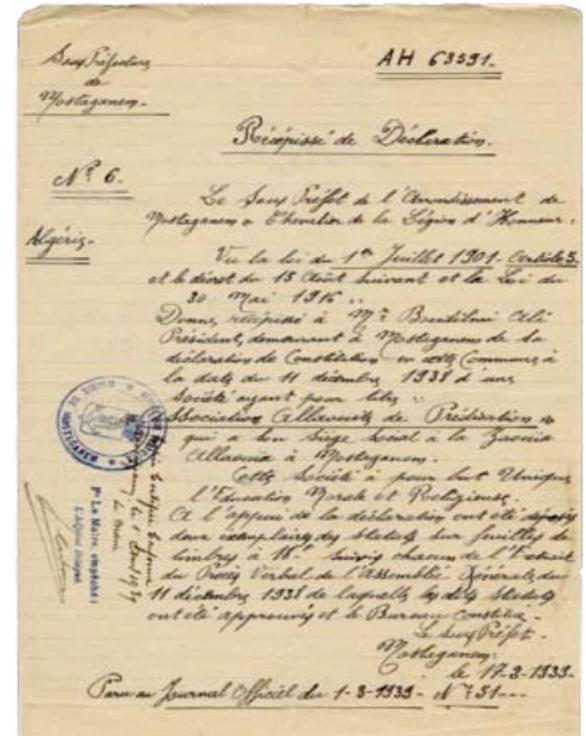
« Ah! Poor world! Everything collapses! The only visible progress is the new ruin. The universe is overcome by horror. The earth swims in blood. Fire dominates and consumes everything. Only black walls are standing! All this for the passion of some, for shameful appetites! Evil seeps in from all over! Nothing but destroyed homes! Material leprosy wears down and disfigures all things in its way (...) The more the world heads for collapse the more some become aware of it and attempt to avoid it.



Tomb of Sidna Hamza, Prophet Mohamed's uncle, on Mount Uhud



Devastated Sheikh 'Adda, with hands on his head, with a group of disciples at the mausoleum of Hamza, the Prophet's uncle, destroyed by Wahhabis

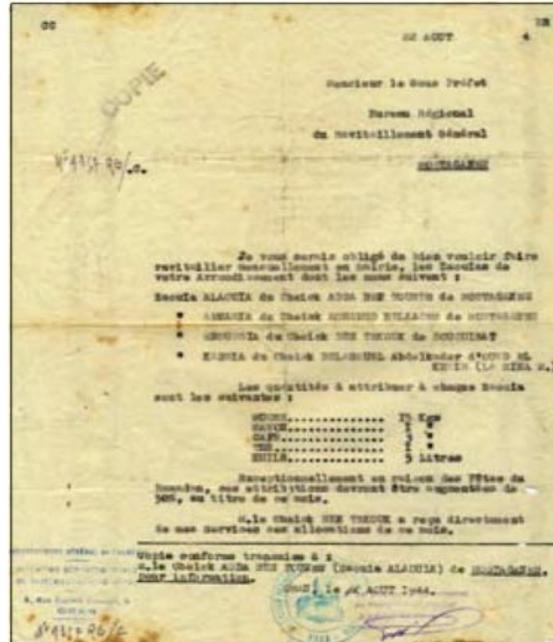


Receipt of declaration of the "Alawi Association for Preaching," February 17, 1939



Sheikh 'Adda with his son and companions in Ihram, attire and state of mind

We must help them (...). Let's build a strong brotherhood, a great love in accordance with immutable and sincere precepts that are more truthful than those of the world of illusion. Let's create the Adamic brotherhood, the love that unites all the creatures of the One and Only God. We must unite; we must seek the truth! » Day after day, for four years, Alawi zawiya throughout Maghreb welcomed war victims as well as the faithful and the needy. Provisions were lacking and financial problems accumulated. The brotherhood, already amputated from a part of its assets, could barely survive. It was on the verge of foreclosure.

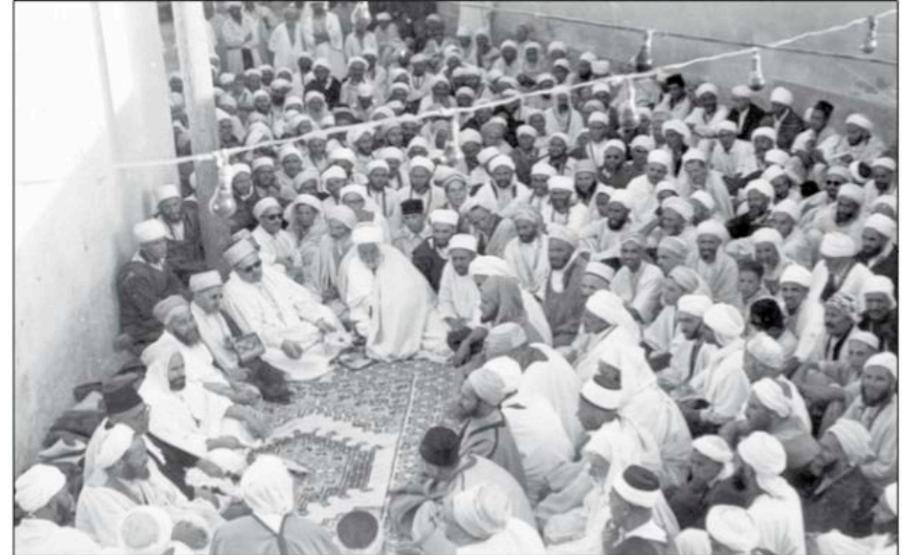


Food distribution bill during WW II, August, 1944

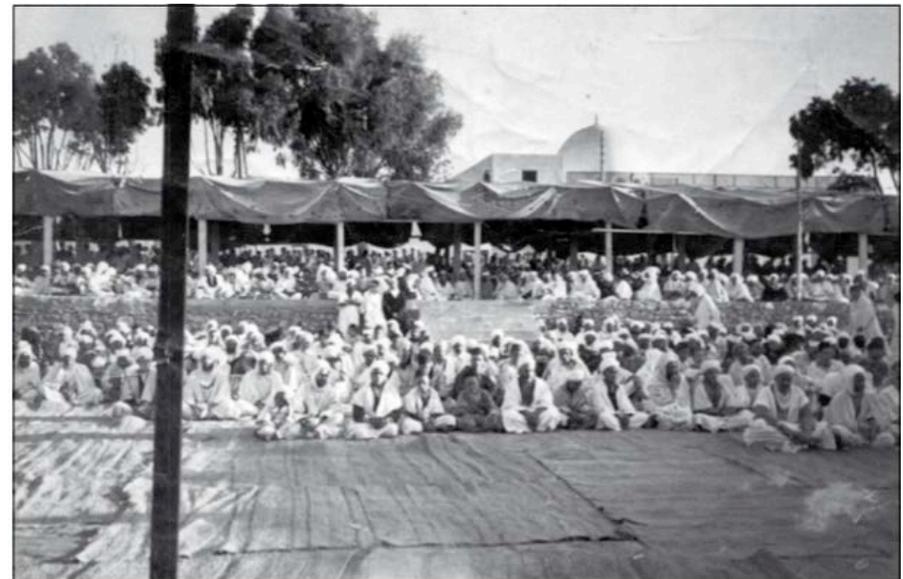
Peace

Once peace made its way back, Sheikh 'Adda could circulate anew. The court of appeal ratified the indisputability of succession by recognizing the validity of Sheikh al-Alawi's testimonial disposition in the matter. His lawyer, the honorable Rimbeau, argued that the legatee had left his fortune in the zawiya to the service of those who are looking for the Truth; he left it to the poor and everybody else: « The venerated Sheikh always said: "The day I came to this world, I brought nothing with me. It is God who has given me everything I have; it is only reasonable that I leave everything to Him." "Your honor!" pleaded the lawyer, "I ask that you honor the noble

will of the Sheikh who said *to everyone.*" » The brotherhood then regained its legality, legitimacy, and assets.



Ihtifal of the installation of the Sheikh al-Alawi's tomb in the chamber where he used to write and meditate — July 14, 1946



Ihtifal (1948), wedding of the elder son of Sheikh 'Adda, Hadj el-Mehdi



Ihtifal (1950), view of the archways of what would be the future mosque of Sheikh al-Alawi

On July 14, 1946, about fifteen hundred disciples came to the first great post-Alawi congregation (*Ihtifal*) in Mostaghanem. The event celebrated the installation of the tomb of Sheikh al-Alawi in the very chamber where he wrote his treatises and meditated. The tomb was built against the wall to avoid the circumambulations often sought by pilgrims—a form of maraboutic devotion both Sheikhs firmly fought. Sheikh ‘Adda saw Sheikh al-Alawi in a dream where the latter asked him to contain such practices. Once the reason behind the placement of the tomb was abundantly explained by the Sheikh, no disciple attempted to go back to these customs.

In 1947, in the second great congregation (September 26-29), during which he married his eldest son, Mohamed el-Mehdi, to Yamina Yassini, a woman from the Spanish *Rif* area, sister of Moqadem Hadj Ahmed Redouane al-Tafersiti, Sheikh ‘Adda addressed his disciples with an exceptional message: « Brothers! It is not Sheikh ‘Adda who has invited you to this convention, it is your brother, whom you have trusted with the mission of continuing the work of the great master. If experience has shown that I have strayed from the path traced by our venerated Sheikh al-Alawi, the path of prophetic tradition, show me my mistakes; choose someone better than me as leader [...] I was brought up by our revered Sheikh ever since my childhood; he educated me in his school, he made me live his

spiritual life, I have lived what he has lived. [...] I am only a servant of Tareqa al-Alawiyya, I am at your command. I accept your judgment. Be careful however; should you decide to let me continue the path I have deemed in my conscience to be right, [...] then a task imposes itself on you: help me in this endeavor [...] and shoulder me in my work, the work of the Alawis, not only to serve our fellow fuqara or Muslims, but the entire humankind—demeaned and losing faith—which we have the duty to help (*El Morshid Magazine*, nb. 14, December 1947). » From then on, the brotherhood knew an unprecedented progress and expansion.

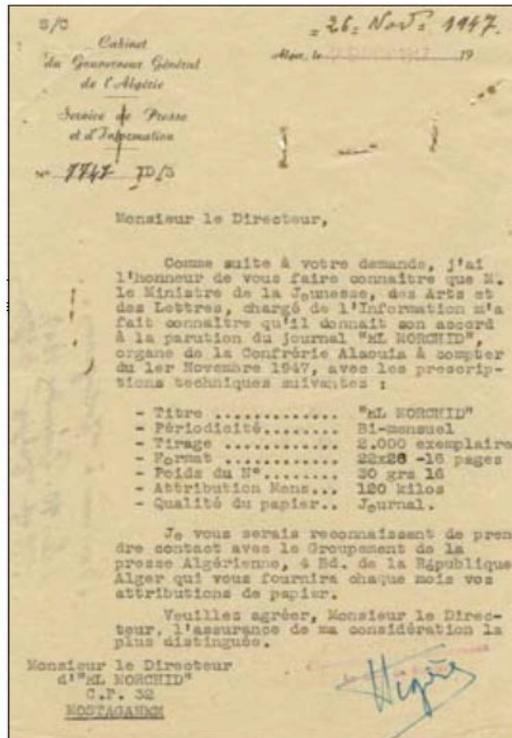
El Morshid

When *Lisan al-Din* periodical was discontinued during the war, Sheikh ‘Adda created, in August of 1944, his second periodical *El Morshid*, the monthly magazine printed in Arabic and French and diffused throughout Algeria by the Alawiyya publishing house of Mostaghanem. *El Morshid* became the official press instrument of the brotherhood. When Sheikh ‘Adda died in 1952, its name changed to *Amis de l’Islam* (the Friends of Islam). “He whom Allah guides is rightly guided; but he whom Allah leaves to stray, for him wilt thou find no patron or guide.” (Qur’an, sura 18, verse 16)

The Sheikh’s articles, most of which were in Arabic, addressed subjects meant mainly for the Muslim world. With simple but powerful words, he made sure to clarify debates, remove vagueness, and end the ambiguity—nourished by some reformists with partisan purposes—between maraboutism/obscurantism and Sufism.



French and Arabic covers of El Morshid



The Minister of Arts and Humanities authorizing the publication of *El Morchid* magazine, starting November 1 of 1947

He stood against the rigidity of religion, the thrashing of its essential values, and the ignorance that comes with that: “My heart bleeds when it sees the Muslim world dominated by its passions, accepting to live in ignorance of its language, its past, its Creator, and its religion.” (*El Morchid*, September of 1946) “Where are Muslims? We obey neither the laws of religion nor those of true humanity. Help! Islam is drowning, overcome as it is by misfortune; it is miserable and besieged.” (*El Morchid* nb. 7, February of 1947).

He advised believers, the country, and the entire Muslim community against all kinds of manipulation of religion, “a venom as lethal as alcohol, the slayer of young Muslims’ spirits. The nation of Algeria will never be happy should it remain at the mercy of its many sectarian groups.” (*El Morchid*, nb. 43, November of 1950). “Mosques will become sites for their propaganda so they can worm their way into the beliefs and practices of Muslims.”

He fought against the domination of colonialism and its subsequent acculturation. He exhorted the parents who fell for the promises of material modernity to balance the future of their children by educating them on the

great history of the Mohammedan tradition. “Islam is unknown because the nations that claim it have forsaken it for a materialist civilization and traditions that have turned them into perverted peoples. I told them that those who seek to europeanize them (the youth) because of shame of their origins are infidels. I fight to save them from their ignorance of their past, their ignorance of their grandeur.” (*El Morchid* nb. 11, June of 1974)

Last but not least, he reminded people of the fundamental teachings of Sufism, accused by some reformists of being forms of maraboutism and obscurantism, specifying that it is a path of awakening, receptiveness, and tolerance for both men and women. He advocated excellence in modernity with no place for arrogance, destructiveness, or egotism. J. Carret described the spirit that animated Tareqa al-Alawiyya: “It possesses the originality of conserving, within its own entity, the ancient precepts of Sufism while openly admitting the evolution of Islam toward modernity and liberalism—thought to be the exclusive privilege of reformists.” In doing so, and following the steps of his master, Sheikh ‘Adda contributed greatly in assuring the safeguard, actuality, awareness, and pride of the spiritual and cultural patrimony of both Maghreb and Mashreq (West and East), while connecting with the West and the world.

اشتركوا في مجلة « المرشد » فانها لسان دينكم الغريب

EL MORCHID
Revue Spirituelle d'Etudes et de Défense Islamique
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Subscription form to *El Morchid* magazine

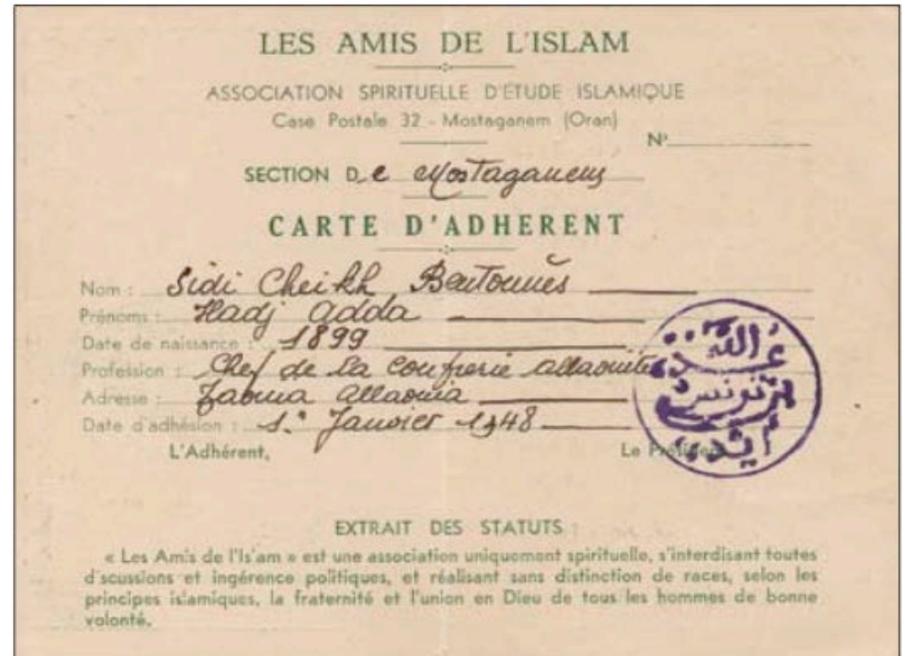


Lisan al-Din newspaper, its publication was resumed by Sheikh ‘Adda in 1936. Front page of the 27th publication: picture and testimony of Frithjof Schuon, Isa Nur al-Din, relating to his conversion to Islam

In his French articles, dictated to his bilingual disciples in the same limpid style, imaged and richly argued, Sheikh ‘Adda explained in depth ritual practices and holidays, and commented on prophets... by defining them in heart and in action. He clarified the precepts of Sufism, “the Soul of Islam,” and specified the nature and the role of the master: “He is the shepherd God guides to seek Him by ignoring his own self, who is bound by no race, no religion, and who loves God in all His messengers and all His creatures” (*El Morshid*, February/August of 1948). The initial relationship is love: “To realize the knowledge of God, by God, is to accept His burden; it is to accept and help all creatures,” (*El Morshid*, nb 42, October of 1950). Conscious of the gravity of an eventual worldwide conflict, Sheikh ‘Adda engaged himself fully to the unity of all people despite his deteriorating health. He exhorted amity and accord among religions by explaining the reasons and status of his new association, “Friends of Islam.” He called for universal brotherhood through his message during the first world spiritual conference in Brussels in 1946.

Friends of Islam Association

Friends of Islam Association called out people of all social statuses to condemn the world’s indifference to and ignorance of its (problems). They all united to seek the Truth. They wanted to go beyond the tangibility of this world and reach the divine Truth, the heart that governs the universe, the very soul materialism has never ceased to suffocate [...] Although arduous, the task was possible [...] Many who were weary of constant anxiety sought the association to engage in life with force and certitude [...] The association had nothing to hide; it was not there to deceive people. It did not fight any belief or dogma. It did not seek, in the least, to vex cults or other religious groups. It was there for the exclusive service of the Truth. For the Friends of Islam association, the Truth was [and still is God].” (*El Morshid* nb. 54, November 30 of 1951)



Verso of the membership card of Friends of Islam association

In less than a quarter of a century two world wars dramatically pitted people against each other, to the point where the entire human race was seriously threatened. Sheikh ‘Adda saw the urgent necessity of reconstructing mutual respect and tolerance amongst people through

extensive and open dialogue. That call for peace, not only on the level of nations and religions, but of hearts also, responded truly to what all people thirsted for. Many Algerians and prominent Europeans of diverse horizons agreed to sponsor and participate in the life of Sheikh Adda's new ecumenical association of international vocation: *Friends of Islam*. Sheikh was its president, Doctor Marcel Carret (doctor and personal friend of Sheikh al-Alawi) its president of honor, Hadj Salah Bendimred, its vice president, Joseph Le Mer (Abdallah Faïd), its secretary, and Ahmed Benachenhou, its treasurer.

Friends of Islam association organized open conferences where everyone was welcome. The association sought to “confirm ties of friendship and brotherhood.” Friends of Islam, explained Sheikh 'Adda, is the rallying point that reconciles and bonds people's hearts to the love of Allah, through the love of all His prophets and the respect of all beliefs and philosophies” (*El Morshid*, April of 1951). The association was first introduced in Mostaghanem during the conference of September 27, 1947.

Plain as it may appear today, such a project was so innovative then that it required exceptional clairvoyance and trust from all participants.

Moqadem Si Abdelkader Belbey says: « Sheikh 'Adda sent me to reserve the auditorium at the Grand Hotel whose owner was Jewish. Unable to say no, the latter doubled the price to discourage us. Furious, I returned to the Sheikh who ordered me to go back right away to reserve the auditorium at the price required. Intrigued, the owner slipped into the auditorium to hear the Sheikh. At the end of the speech, the Jewish owner, tears in his eyes, told the Sheikh: “I beg you pardon; here is your money. You have helped me rediscover Moses. From now on, my place is yours whenever you need it.” »

*Members of Friends of Islam
Professor Goinard and his wife*



Recto of Membership card of Friends of Islam association

The first conferences started right at the beginning of 1948, at the Touring Club of Oran in the auditorium of the Grand Hotel. They knew immediate and great success within the non-Muslim French and European population of Algeria. A true consciousness of brotherhood emerged. Other cities in Algeria organized conferences with the same purpose, and they too knew immense success. Many Europeans—intellectuals, doctors, writers, journalists—became disciples or friends of Sheikh 'Adda. Friends of Islam easily reached Morocco, Senegal, Brussels, Paris, and the southern part of France.

The dean of the University of Geneva, Edouart Monet, called for the support of such a useful endeavor: « As a Christian, and in the name of my religious faith, I denounce what I call an attack led against the honor of a respectable religion. Let us work toward peace with the Muslims; let us get closer to them, that we may inspire them to get closer to us. We have been for so long digging an abyss between Islam and Christianity, a gap existing only in imagination. Let us bridge over such voids by trashing all prejudices and correcting the false truths about Islam. I know that the effects of our small group will not change the face of the world regarding this matter. Nevertheless, let us unite our efforts; for in doing so, we will be able to

slightly modify public opinion, which is still not enlightened enough in the matter but can perhaps be reformed and will one day know the very heart of our conviction—*Let us Respect Islam* » (*El Morshid* nb. 23, March 1 of 1949). A bulletin continued appearing in *El Morshid* magazine until the latter disappeared in January of 1952. Five months later, Tareqa started the publication of its monthly periodical *Friends of Islam*, which continued until June of 1961.

Some Christians worried: « “You want to turn us into Muslims?” “No, brother,” answers the Sheikh, “I honestly seek to make of you a friend of Islam. I would like, please God, that you be a faithful servant of Jesus, peace be with him, and that you follow him in his words and acts. The Holy Qur’an and Prophet Mohamed, peace be with him, require me to be tolerant, to love Jesus, Moses, and all prophets, for they are chosen, and messengers of God. That shows me the universality of their mission.” » (*El Morshid* nb. 27, June 27 of 1949)

« [...] For we are sure and certain that if a brother or sister of ours were to truly follow his/her religion, he/she will undoubtedly reach God directly, that is to His knowledge. Hence, we tell all Christian, Israelite, Buddhist, Muslim brothers and sisters, (and those of other denominations): Linger not face-to-face with the stars. Turn a little bit to the right and you will see the sun. » (*El Morshid*, April of 1951)

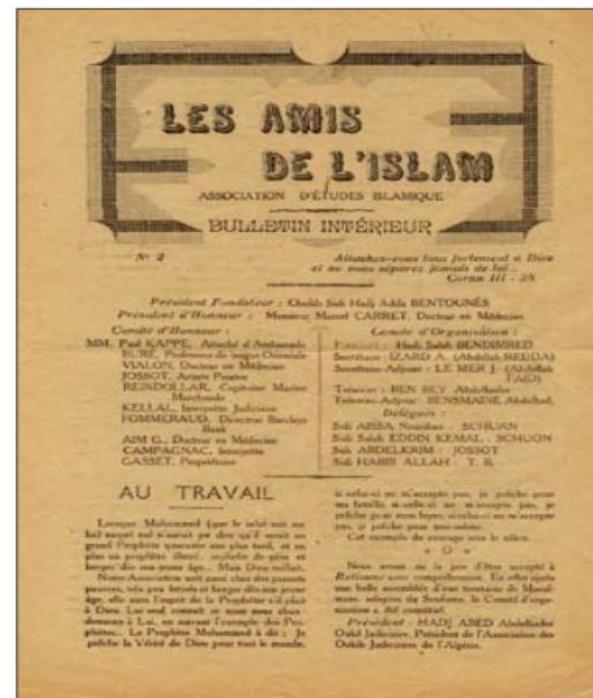
The following year, Friends of Islam opened its gate in Europe, first in Brussels then in Paris. The sincerity, profoundness, and modernity of Sheikh ‘Adda provoked a spirited interest from the public as well as religious authorities. For some Muslims « a serious deviation from the qur’anic doctrine crept its way into the association; the latter admitted that it welcomed believers and non-believers alike and that Muslim faith was not a price for membership. The activities of such sect with its European ramifications were very similar to Freemasonry¹. » Sheikh Hadj ‘Adda replied: « Friends of Islam has nothing to hide, it seeks no deception, and it does not stand against any belief or dogma; it does not seek to harm other cults or religious groups. It is here for the exclusive purpose of Truth—not the truth of this or that question—the divine Truth, the Essence that manages the entire universe, the Essence that materialism tries its best to suffocate. » (*Brotherhood of the Hearts*)

¹ A fraternal organization that arose from obscure origins in the late 16th to early 17th century. Freemasonry now exists in various forms all over the world, with a membership estimated at around 5 million, including just under two million in the United States, England, Scotland, and Ireland. The various forms share moral and metaphysical ideals, including, in most cases, a constitutional declaration of belief in a Supreme Being.

Thanks to this audacious and widespread call to dialogue, Sheikh ‘Adda was seen as an innovator, way ahead of his time since Friends of Islam remained for many years the only association offering a frame of convivial debates and conferences between religions and different streams of thought. Actually, it was only in 2001 that the General Assembly of the United Nations recognized the necessity for dialogue and proclaimed that year as “the Year of Cross-Religious and Cross-Cultural Dialogue.”

This outward “deviation,” path of the heart and Truth, was very beneficial since it wove its way by growing regularly at the rhythm of the brotherhood. Half a century later, in January of 2000, it acquired, first in France then throughout Europe, a status that proved to be more suitable for its audience under the name of *Terres d’Europe* (Lands of Europe). The inauguration took place on the 12 and 13 of January in Paris, under the aegis of UNESCO, during an international conference entitled: “For an Islam of Peace.”

What a lovely lesson from a Master of Love, humble and modest, limited in his travels but whose ideas, actions, and audience went far beyond all kinds of borders and reached for the horizon of universal brotherhood!

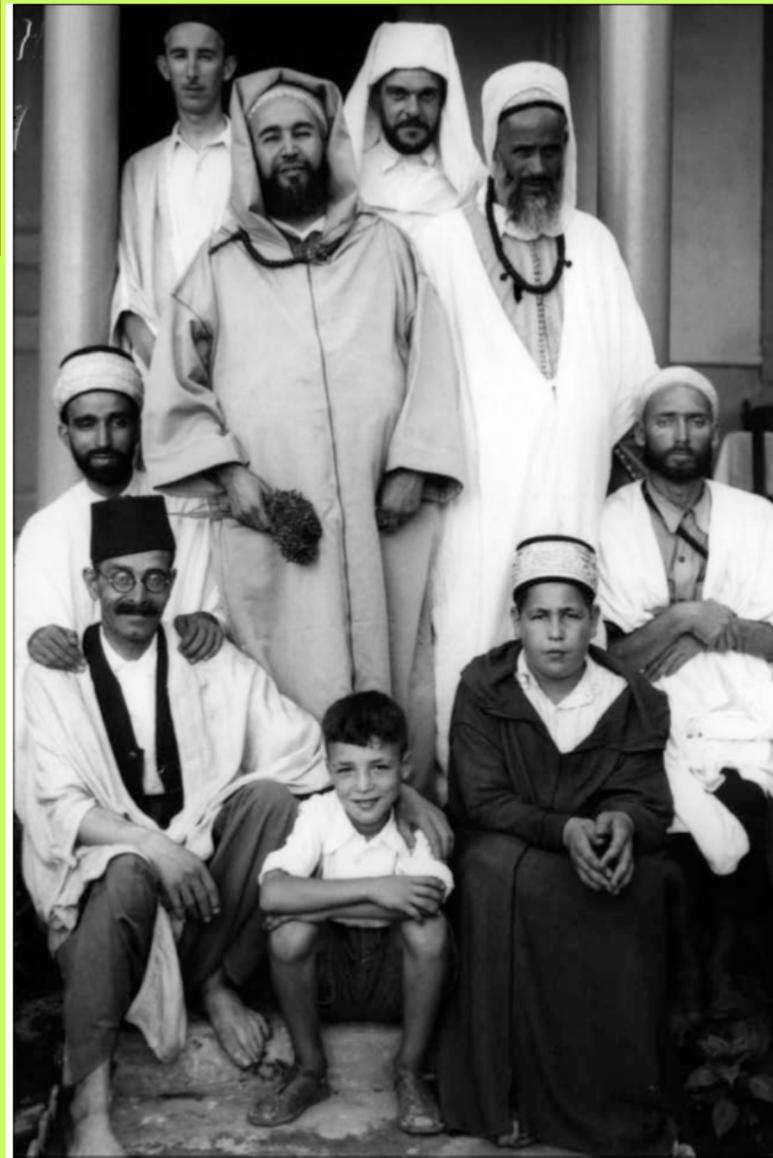


Regional bulletin of Friends of Islam association

One of the Brotherhood

Someone asked: « “Who are you really, Sheikh?” Sheikh 'Adda answered: “I am no one, I am not a personality. I am one of the brotherhood, one of those who prepare and await the return of Jesus, peace be with him. I am one of this group because Prophet Mohamed, peace be with him, said: ‘Before the Messiah, son of Mary, comes down from Heaven, a virtuous group among my disciples will blossom to replace his companions’ (the companions of Jesus). And none shall enter this group lest he rid himself, in the course of his endeavor, of all obstacles, particularly race and religion.

For when Christ returns, he will be merciful towards all, regardless of race, religion, or nationality. Were Prophet Mohamed, peace be with him, among us today and were he to notice that a disciple is still suffering from such ill, I am sure he would tell him: ‘Go, do your ablutions and (cleanse yourself).’ He would say so to show that if a good Jew, a good Christian, a good Muslim, and a good Buddhist were to gather, they would find absolutely nothing that separates them. On the contrary, if any of them were to recite the words of his prophet, he would find only words that support and fortify friendship, brotherhood, and love. That is what satisfies all prophets.” » (El Morshid, October of 1949)



Sheikh 'Adda with some of his disciples, two of whom are European: Abdallah Redha on the right side of the Sheikh and Si Mahdi el Francaoui (Jean Charles) — arms crossed on the chest— whom Sheikh adopted

The Universal Call in Brussels

The range of Sheikh ‘Adda’s message reached far beyond Muslim society; it addressed the entire humankind during the *World Spiritual Conference*, first of its kind, organized by the Theosophical Association in Brussels in 1946. One of the organizers, Serge Brisy—her pseudonym—had received some education from Sheikh ‘Adda. In her letter of invitation dated February 20, 1946, she wrote: “I do not know whether you remember me, but I will never forget the learning I received in your holy zawiya of Mostaghanem, may God protect it. We are in the process of organizing a world spiritual conference, where we are hoping to gather all religions in the hope of establishing a Spiritual Chart of humanity. What a joy it would be to see you again should one of you, dear brothers, come.”

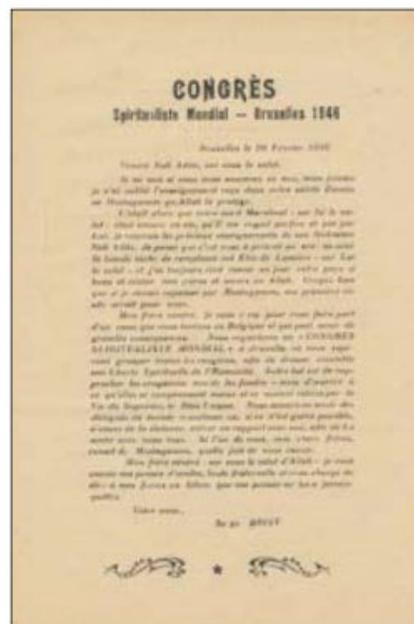
Unable to assist because of sickness, Sheikh ‘Adda sent a historic message in which he called all believers to dialogue, and exchange spiritual and moral values contained in all holy books and all wisdoms taught and passed on from one generation to another. *The condition here*, he confirmed, *is to place The One above all groups and dogmas.*

He focused on the necessity of such dialogue: “Brothers! The entire world is in dire need of the greatest as well as the smallest of advantages related to your conference. One of the advantages of this conference, although minor, is the fact that many people, from different parts of the world and different faiths and races, have come to a recognized assembly, seeking an instant of closeness and understanding in order to strengthen friendship and brotherhood amongst each other.”

He reminded his audience that God created man in the framework of mercy and subdued all creatures to his service so that he may believe in Him and praise Him for all His gifts. Ignorant as man is, however, he believes that he is all-powerful, that he has and dominates the truth of all things, and that he is self-sufficient. No matter his pretension, he often finds himself in weakness and helplessness. By nature, man dreams of wealth and authority; but reality shows that he causes suffering to his fellow human beings in the exercise of his aspirations. Religion has the power to educate him on how to act with wisdom and prudence toward himself and others. In His mercy, God sent Adam to earth as His representative so that he may manage it according to divine laws—they are a source of peace and justice for all creatures. Human imposed laws, on the other hand, are often based on caprices, hence injustice and conflict. Sheikh ‘Adda writes: “No matter what or how a people may be, it is impossible for them to find eternal bliss and perfect tranquility; unless they return to the laws of the Truth and use them as a basis for righteousness in all circumstances of their existence.”

Sidi ‘Adda emphasized the universality of the Revelation: “All prophets spread justice and peace. We have never heard that a prophet sowed discord among men. All of them were true servants of God. Therefore, it is not fair to establish a difference in the matter. Prophet Mohamed, peace be with him, the *Seal of Prophecy*, is one of them. God told him not to make any distinction between one and another of His prophets. Any that makes a distinction between one and another of God’s prophets is on the path of confusion and loss.

Sheikh ‘Adda ends his message with these words: “Brothers! I hope indeed that you will consider the goal behind my words, and examine with great care their significance and scope.” (*El Morshid* nb. 2, September of 1946)



Text of the Universal Call from Brussels - 1948



Sheikh Adda’s Message to the Religions of the World Conference in Paris - 1949

Zawiya and the Breaths of Proximity

The goal is not to see me but to know me, Sheikh 'Adda Bentounès

Jean-Gabriel Brosset, Honorary President of Friends of Islam in the city of Oran, said: “Zawiya is a terrestrial heaven of silence and piety, where people forget the deafening cities, the misery of men, the fire of machinery, and the clamor of wars.”

In his *Path of Sages*, Jean Biès mentions the fervor of his nineteen years of age; he remembers “the small court of the zawiya where roses, jasmines, and balsams found their paths up the vine; he still remembers how the roots of the ancient olive tree fought their way in the ground, and the pigeons that cooed on top of palm trees. Close by was the beautifully ornamented prayer hall with the somber bier of the former Sheikh, [...]. Hospitality therein was exquisite and courteous, always shown with a natural gentleness of word and gesture within a voluntary and praiseworthy poverty. The sweet sound of the fountain rocked our tranquility. No sign of rationality ever hindered our stays or imposed a particular schedule. That heavenly parcel was free and transparent; one of us had baptized it *Janat al-Dhat*, (Garden of the Essence).”

The atmosphere of the mother-zawiya was impregnated with an indefinable peace. Sheikh 'Adda welcomed all people—opponents included—with a spirit of dialogue and reconciliation. “May God grant them a long life!” He prayed for his enemies. A disciple asked: “But why?” “Let us accord them a chance to repent. They do not love me, but I have nothing against them [...]. They are suffering; their hearts are full of hatred. God made them that way; I do not have the right to regret that.”

About a hundred people lived in the zawiya permanently: relatives, some disciples, pilgrims, visitors, the sick and the needy. They were in the good care of Lalla Kheira and under the protection of Sheikh 'Adda who says: “When I sleep, I feel that the believers are observing me; when I wake up, I feel that they are watching me. I do not help the suffering hoping they become my disciples. I only help them so that they may find their faith, Allah willing. I relieve their misery with the sole purpose of serving my God.” (*El Morshid*, September of 1946)

During religious celebrations, seminars, and conferences, zawiya shone “like a bride taken care of by all people.” Sheikh 'Adda always stood in front of the door to welcome pilgrims from Morocco and Algeria. Catherine Delorme writes: “He seemed like he was waiting for my arrival; he received me like a member of his spiritual family, and showed me a particular esteem. Astonished by such admirable consideration—baffled and reassured

by his welcome—I was very worried to have arrived that way in the middle of the celebration among the multitude of the fuqara.” (*Path of God*)

Jean-Gabriel Brosset says: “As far as I am concerned, I hold in my heart the memory of those blessed hours, when I saw and heard Sheikh Hadj 'Adda [...]. With a soft voice, during his simple poetic *muthakara* (learning session), gifted as he was, he was able to dig deep in the souls of his audience and create images that clarify many notions—ideas which were until then in the cocoon of the unconscious and which became thereafter clear and full of wisdom and revelation. People felt like they were becoming more intelligent, more conscious, and more knowledgeable around the strong and appeasing ambiance of the Sheikh. [...] Intellectual contradictions and conflicts between heart and reason were resolved, harmonized, and unified. Sheikh 'Adda exercised his spiritual influence on everybody; men, women, youth—on the shepherd as well as the professor, the vagabond, the magistrate, the street sweeper, the decorated officer, the *shawish* (door keeper), the doctor, the shoe shine, the writer, the water boy... To each and all, he gave exactly what they needed. He did not teach them; he awakened them.

His charisma and humanism were recognized by people in his city; they loved him dearly and respected him.”



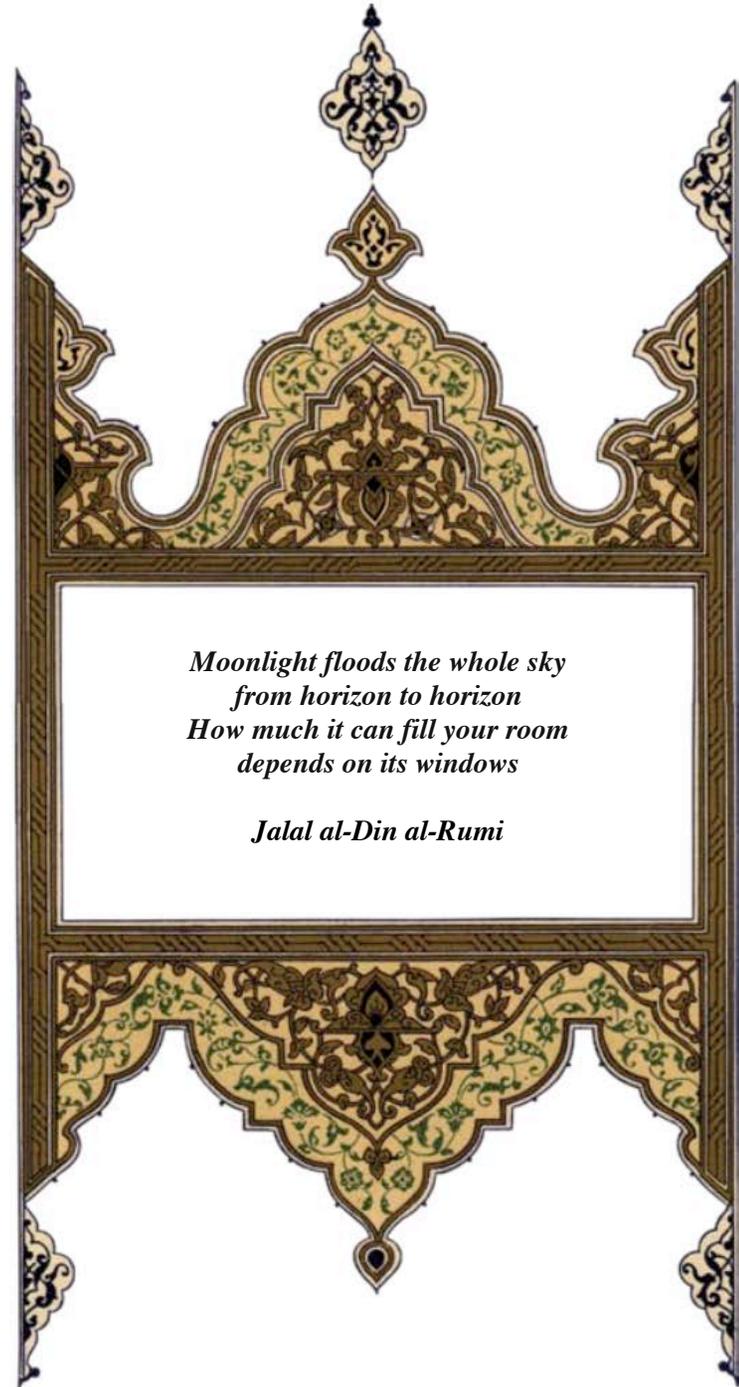
Sheikh 'Adda with writer Jean Biès — Mostaghanem, September of 1950



Moments of spiritual intimacy



Under the trellis of the garden





Sheikh 'Adda in the inner garden of the zawiya, with his moqadems and important fuqara from Morocco at the wedding of his son, Hadj el-Mehdi

“When he entered the room,” explains Mussammi (chanter) Si Lahsen Belkheir, “my tongue tied up; a strange force spread in the air and in us.” “Always smiling and affable, in spite of illness, hardship, and fatigue,” writes Emile Dermenghem, “he shone with virtue and streamed with muthakarat (lessons/sessions), moral and mystic anecdotes, and apologues based on real life or writings of great Sufis. He did not pay much attention to the acrobatic exercises of meditation and the multiple recitations of litany. He recommended the latter according to his followers’ ability, but insisted on participation in spiritual/learning congregations.



Sheikh ‘Adda in one of his teaching sessions

In the last conference that he chaired, dozens of *halqas* (learning circles) of twenty, fifty, even one hundred fuqara each, participated at night in the hallucinating ‘*Emara* (spiritual dance).” [Emile Dermenghem, *le culte des saints dans l’islam maghrébin (Cult of Saints in the Islam of Maghreb)*]

J. Biès writes, “Sheikh preferred oral education to written learning. Like every man of tradition, he firmly believed that words remain engraved in memory more than they do on marble, more so than words on tablets. He expressed himself in short sentences, punctuated with silence, and modeled in vague gestures. His words were concrete and imaged in gracious parables and apparent naivety. It is said in Islam that *Allah disdains not to use the similitude of even a fly*. (Jean Biès, *Voies de Sages [Path of Sages]*)



Catherine Delorme, known as Mamita, relates her encounter with Sheikh ‘Adda, in 1948, in her book, Le Chemin de Dieu (the Path of God)

His simplicity astonished all visitors: “Ask the humble and simple Sheikh about the identity of the true and authentic value. He will answer you that he does not want people to make him divine; he simply sees himself as a Path to Him. He sees Tareqa Alawiyya as one of many, and accepts all other paths.” (J.G. Brosset)

« One day, when I was on my doorstep, he embraced my space. His eye was shining with fervor: he was the student of the Sufi mystics of the zawiya of Mostaghanem. “I was waiting for you,” said he in salutation. (...) the man shone with inner power. After having asked for permission, he predicted my future. I listened to it with no belief. Everything was there: the publication of many books, when none was projected, journeys and missions to the four corners of the planet, and my establishment in Paris then in Jerusalem. Nothing was pushing me toward such predictions [...]. Today that this vision has come to be with all its specifics, I still do not know how I can foresee the future (...). When I left for Paris, where I had to continue my education, the atheistic convictions that my professors in the high school of Oran had strived to inculcate in me started fading. The Bible ceased to be for me a useless accessory and God an old moon. » André Chouraqui, *Ce que je crois* (What I Believe)

Jean Biès reports these words of Sheikh ‘Adda: “I have shown you my path; I have entrusted you with my secret. But should you find someone else who is truer than me, I ask you not to go to him alone. Inform me, take my hand, and we will go to see him together.”

Under the sponsorship of Sheikh ‘Adda, humble manager of the house of God, the zawiya of Mostaghanem became a site of fraternal gathering and high spirituality.

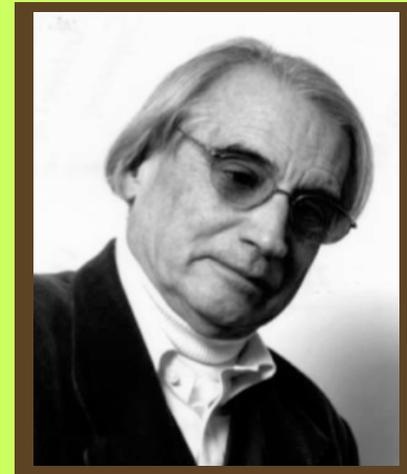


Under the shade of the jujube tree in Dabdaba...

Sheikh 'Adda and the Blind

« There was an old blind man living in the zawiya. Sheikh 'Adda always took his hand and helped him sit in the best place, led him to the prayer hall, and followed him like a disciple. "Come on Sheikh, we told him, he demands and claims of you more than you do of us!" He answered: "Let me help him for the love of God. Are we not all blind?" »

Jean Biès



Servant (Slave) of God

« — Sheikh, his doctor once said, the first day I saw you with all your disciples around you in the *zawiya*, offering tea, coffee, and cookies, I noticed the great veneration everyone has for you and told myself: “Here is truly a king!” Then I saw you again and visited you; now that I have done so, I believe I know you better. Whenever I see the disciples venerating you, kissing your hand, and offering you gifts, I say: “Here is truly a servant.” Have I really understood you, Sheikh?

— Doctor, answered Sheikh ‘Adda, the truth is that if you seek to be the servant of God, you must first be the servant of His creatures. By the creatures of God I mean everybody and everything. I need to tell you that I start (my day) by being the servant of my wife, the slave of my children, the servant of my disciples, and last but not least the servant of anyone who seeks me. »

The Sister and the Bread

He told a sister who dreamt that someone gave her bread through the window of the upper floor: “Bread is the very Word of God for your soul. Unfortunately, you are placed high in the building, my sister, and it is a little difficult to assist you. For those who live downstairs, who come down, who lower themselves, it is much simpler: they receive their bread easily through the door. Try, sister, to find some room down on the ground floor. Live always at the bottom where everyone can easily serve you.” (Letter to a Faqeer — Letter 16 of July, 1948)

Concepts of the Brotherhood

The concept of the brotherhood is identical to the ideal of any order that sincerely claims Sufi doctrine. Sufi doctrine aspires to know Allah and get closer to Him through the practice of all sorts of meritorious acts until the disciple rises enough to reach the extreme degree of improvement that leads him to the True and Real degree—the station of those who have the divine favor of being the spiritual heirs of prophets. What are the ideals of the brotherhood? The concepts of our order seek to bring all of humanity back to brotherhood and peace by consolidating its pure points and preaching its high religious principles. They insist on their endeavor until brotherly love comes back to life again in the hearts—like butter in milk that emerges only after strong shaking. If people were to feel and accept this brotherhood we share through our father Adam and mother Eve, all discord would cease, friendship and fraternity would reign as kings and queens, and all kinds of resentment and hatred would disappear. Human kind would live in wellness and quietude without any trouble. Such are the ideals of any sincere order.

Lalla Kheira, the Welcoming Harbor

Adopted daughter of Sheikh (al-Alawi), wife of Sheikh 'Adda, mother of Sheikh el-Mehdi, and grandmother of Sheikh Khaled, Lalla Kheira had a large family (fourteen children, eight of whom survived). She was a model for women in the zawiya. She courageously assured material and spiritual life in the zawiya for almost a century, experiencing dire times in the process. With dignity and discretion, she filled the role that Sheikh al-Alawi, at his death, entrusted to her in the company of Sheikh 'Adda: "I leave you here, in the zawiya," he told her, "like a harbor where ships and boats will dock from all corners of the world." When she turned eight, Sheikh al-Alawi started taking her with him on his horse rides and built her a pool to teach her swimming. He gave her an education of perception based on the principles of Islam—with the nobleness and dignity to which each person has a right—in an open-minded fashion that corresponded to her time. He taught her Islamic law, poetry, and chanting.

On the fortieth day after her death, March 26 of 1998, Sheikh Khaled Bentounès described her as "A queen without a kingdom, throne, court, nation, or nationality; she was the guardian of the house of God, its protector and talisman. She was a model in privacy as well as in public. She was truly a queen wherever she went. Everybody accepted and loved her." "If the Messenger of God, Prophet Mohamed, peace be with him, hid his secret in his daughter Fatima al-Zahra, Sheikh al-Alawi, too, hid his in his daughter Kheira. She possessed the power of the secret (al-Sirr), but never did she abuse it or pretend any subsequent honors.



Lalla Kheira on her wedding day
1924



Lalla Kheira in the seventies

she did provide good advice and blessing. Her energy and spiritual power were of such uniqueness that she was the only one whose prayers were sure to be answered."

A servant of God, she shared, by example and in all discretion, the spiritual "secret" entrusted to her. She was very pious. She always had her rosary in her hand, and her words were nothing but prayers and invocation: "May the encounter with Allah be agreeable," she used to say daily. Even her moments of silence required respect, not for her but for God and His house. She was an excellent mother; her sons and daughters affirm that she made of them progressive and responsible people. She treated, loved, and considered all those who lived in the zawiya like her own children, particularly the children of poor parents. She educated and raised them under her guardianship until they were ready for marriage. She did the same with adult disciples (Mutajarrideen) who dedicated themselves to prayer, meditation, and the daily works of zawiya until their death. She used to tell them: "Work with faith in this house, the house of God. He will reward you.

Servants are rewarded for their intentions first." Lalla Kheira always received visitors with warmth, simplicity, and generosity. Little mattered their nature; savants or uneducated, rich or poor: "We are all Allah's guests," she used to say, "It is He that gives and He that takes away."

Together with the women of the zawiya, she made sure strict equality reigned on the premises. Everyone ate the same food. Everyone was given new clothes on holidays: *Mawlid* (Prophet Mohamed's birthday), *Eid al-Fitr* (End of Ramadan), and *Eid al-Adha* (Day of the Sacrifice). Evenings were spent in-group, around the big *qanoon* (brazier) in winter and on the

She never initiated a woman nor did she give *dhikr* (litany). She always directed people to Sheikh or Moqadema when they sought her for that. Still,

wide balcony in summer, listening to storytellers and accounts of daily events.

Sufi Storytelling

« *Storytelling in Sufi literature offers a model, a picture, or a series of relations to the spirit of the reader. Once the reader is familiarized with such a structure, he can grasp concepts and experiences similar in base outline but operating at a higher level of perception... (...) This method brings enlightenment to the individuals who dig deeper in their ability to understand. It constitutes an essential part of the disciples' preparatory spiritual exercises. They must try their best to go beyond appearances, improve their aptitude to understand, and appreciate the humor and other exterior characteristics of the story. In Sufi groups, it is a rule to use stories in a very specific and intelligent way to allow their multiple significations to be revealed to students the moment when that is important to their development. This very phase sometimes requires the intervention of an initiatory master, for it is he alone who knows the "moment" and the "place" of this development. That is why, according to ancient Sufi terminology, Sufi stories are passed on to us to "conceal a priceless secret," that can only be "liberated by the power of the initiatory master."* To analyze these stories is to dispossess them of their instrumental function; "Take apart a hammer and it ceases to be one." From long ago, stories have always been bearers and carriers of knowledge and instruments of comprehension... » (Idries Shah, *Learning to Learn*)

« *The art of the storyteller is working; we enter the story and soon understand that it is about us, what we are and what we could be. The story embraces us and teaches us, (at the same time), captivates and delivers us. It leads us also to sense, way beyond words, a reality that is more real than the ordinarily perceived reality. These stories of wisdom, in the heart of Sufi tradition, take us deep into space and time among the philosophers-in-action who have practical sense, psychological discernment, and profound intuition.* » (Idries Shah, *Sufi Stories*)



The golden brooches (Bzima) of Lalla Kheira



Pieces of ancient gold (Soltanee) that were used for finery



Solid gold necklace with precious stones (Krafache)



Lalla Kheira in prayer

Days and months were arranged according to tasks and seasons: laundry, roasting, meat preservation, food canning, jam and jelly making, etc. For trips to the sea, visits to mausoleums, or Moorish public baths, the entire zawiya went together.

Spiritual education took place on Fridays during *dhikr* sessions; they were directed by a woman invited to the zawiya. “Learning is an obligation for every Muslim man and Muslim woman.” According to this recommendation of the Prophet, female disciples received, and are still doing so, in various subject areas, the same precepts and the same education as the male disciples. Female disciples are considered able to reach the highest of mystic states; hence, they must be highly respected for their noble function as transmitters of life.

Alawi masters have always enjoyed and preached integrity within their own families and within society through their moral qualities and good education. “It is so for all people,” adds Sheikh Khaled Bentounès, “for if the human being needs his two feet to walk, society also needs equilibrium and brotherhood; it needs a healthy and benevolent union between man and woman. Together, they can evolve peacefully, complementing each other, toward a world of harmony and freedom.” (Sheikh Khaled Bentounès, *Message*)



Lalla Kheira with her grandson, Sheikh Khaled Bentounès (white djellaba), and Ahmed Ben Bella (suit), first president of Algeria (1962 – 1965)

For Sheikh ‘Adda, Lalla Kheira was an elegant spouse, discrete and affectionate, a tireless mate, and a precious support, to the point where some fuqara, who hesitated to swear allegiance to Sheikh ‘Adda after the death of Sheikh al-Alawi, did so out of respect for her.

Lalla Kheira was very modest; she never boasted her qualities or talents. She always sat at the last row during congregations, just as Sheikh al-Alawi always recommended, and never did otherwise. Her departure, on March 8 of 1998, deeply saddened all those who knew her. She witnessed quite a full century, a long time filled with change, pain, but also with hope. She faithfully served and bequeathed spirituality with a feminine savor.

Fatima Guénaoui, known as Khalti, was the intimate friend and the right hand of Lalla Kheira. She took care of the entire family with her herbs and tisanes and relentlessly assisted the grandmother with cooking. To those

who used to ask her, because of her age, to rest, she always said angrily: “I cannot eat and drink in the house of God without working in it!” She was so close to Lalla Kheira that she could not bear to live without her and left this world two weeks after her death.



Lalla Kheira on the way to the eternal abode



Khalti, Lalla Kheira's companion and Sidi Khaled's wet nurse

The New Zawiyas in the World

Thanks to the determination and the universality of Sheikh ‘Adda, his message of tolerance and love spread and shone. Dozens of zawiyas opened in Algeria (Frenda, Tighinnif, Zemmoura, Relizane, Oran-Senia, Tennis...) and in Morocco (Ceuta, al-Hussaima, Imzurin, Oujda, Meknes, a second one in Tetouan). Others saw light in the Middle East (Palestine), Madagascar, and Senegal. The first Alawi zawiya that opened in Sub-Saharan Africa was in Dakar.

Military servicemen from West Africa, called “skirmishers,” transited through Mostaghanem to receive training before going to war in Europe. Many among them visited the zawiya of Mostaghanem to worship. They met Sheikh ‘Adda and were touched by his message. The first Senegalese to have been touched and baptized *Alawi Faqeer* (disciple) was Mamadou Sall. He was a teacher. He visited Mostaghanem in 1945. Once back in his country, he circulated the *El Morshid* (the Guide) and *Amis de l’islam* (Friends of Islam) magazines. In 1952, Sheikh ‘Adda sent Moqadems Ahmed Farhat and Hadj Ibrahim al-Ghattas to Sub-Saharan Africa to spread his teachings; they did not stay there for long however: Hadj ‘Adda died and they had to return to Mostaghanem.

Other zawiyas were created in Europe: in England (Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool, Cardiff, etc) and in France (Morez, la Grande-Come).



Tangier — general view



Moqadem Si Ahmed Farhat visiting the fuqara of Senegal in 1952



Alawi zawiya in Gaza, Palestine

The first European disciples of Sheikh al-Alawi and the immigrants who lived there had already introduced Sufism in the West; the number of disciples was in constant growth. “I am glad,” wrote Sheikh ‘Adda to a European disciple, “to know you are in France [...] I have been seen the European world colonizing the Muslim world; it has colonized the body but was not so lucky with the heart. Colonizing the hearts is much more powerful, more righteous, more honest, and more humane, for it is dominated by the sublime qualities and virtues of simplicity, calm, peace, love, and mutual understanding, all of which make a solid brotherhood. Each person in this path seeks to relieve and help somebody else with his knowledge if he sees himself more knowledgeable, or seeks to profit from others if he sees himself still ignorant in a matter. Such is reciprocated aid among the creatures of the same God.” (El Morshid, August of 1950)

Lower right side: Letter of support from the fuqara of Palestine to Sheikh ‘Adda, recognizing him as heir and successor of Sheikh al-Alawi — 1934

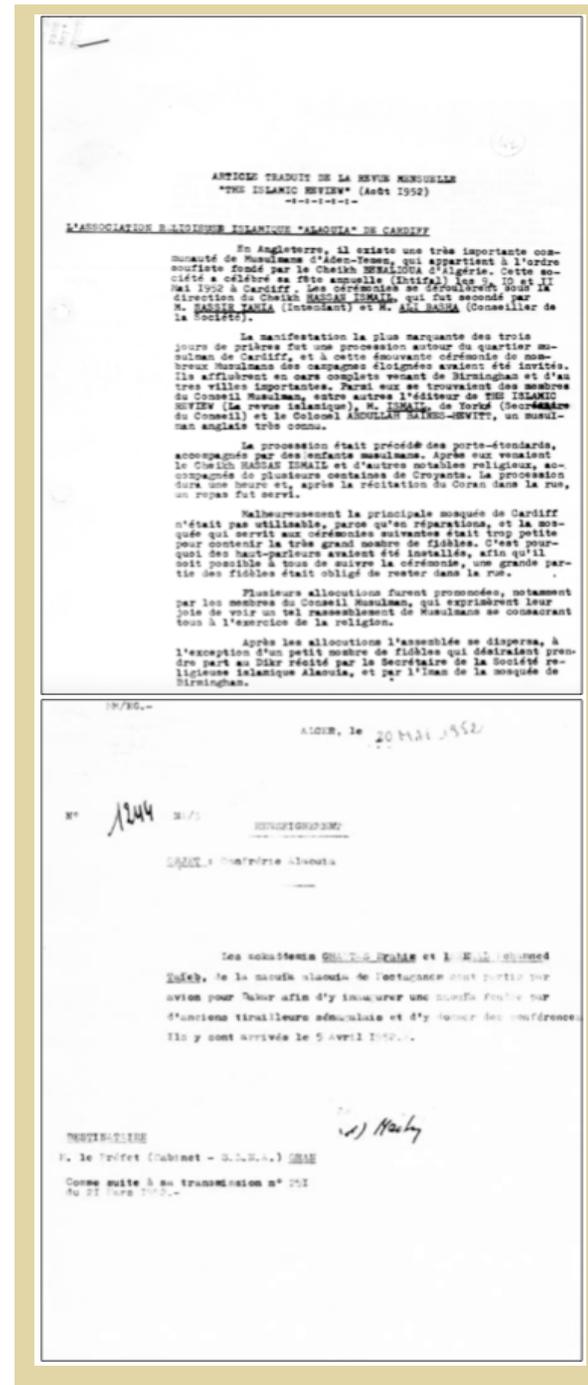




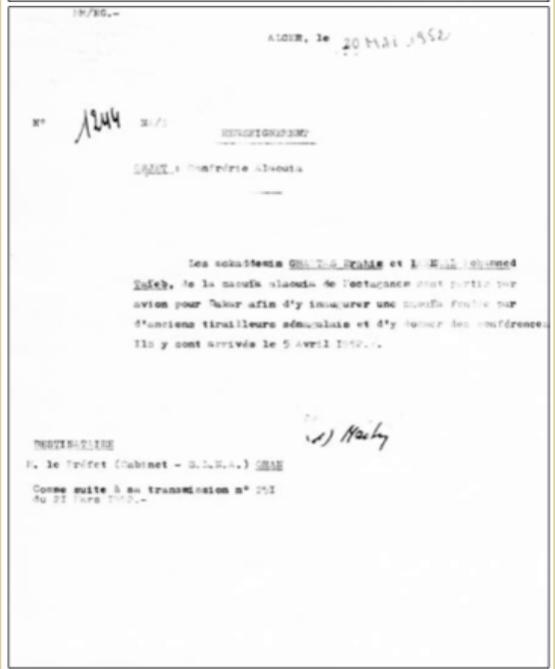
Sheikh Mohamed Qassim, moqadem of Tareqa Alawiyya, laying the foundation stone of the mosque of Liverpool, 1950



Tangier, the mosque



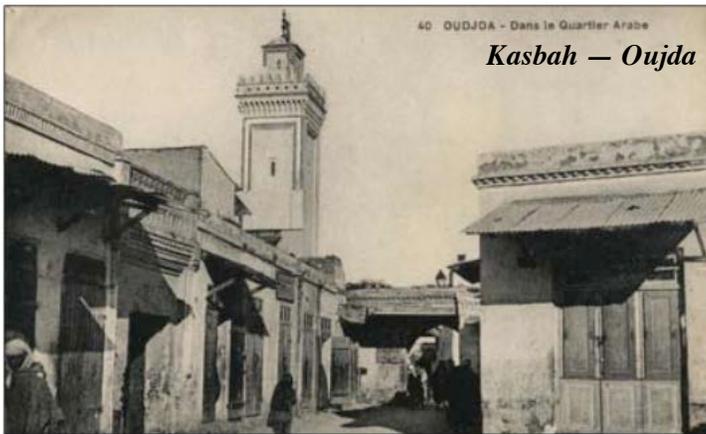
Translation of the article from the monthly magazine, "Islamic Review," August of 1952



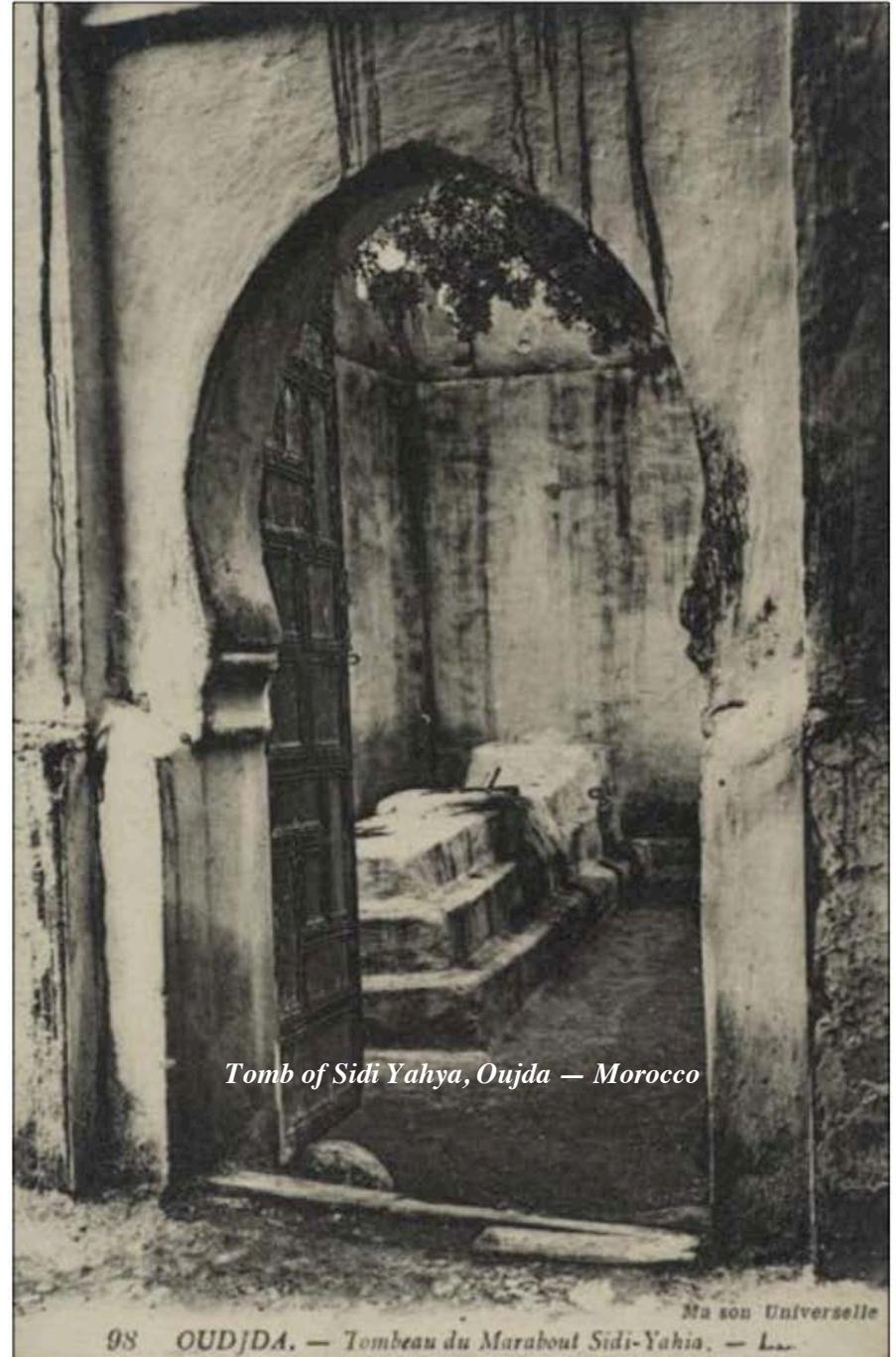
Administrative letter on the trip to Senegal (April 5, 1952), written by Moqadem Si Ahmed Farhat and his companion, Brahim Ghattas



Spiritual reunion at the zawiya of Tafersit — Morocco



Moqadems of the Rif region with the fuqara of Hoceima — Morocco



98 OUDJDA. — Tombeau du Marabout Sidi-Yahia. — L...
Ma son Universelle

Blacks and Whites

« Indeed brothers, I love black people. After the death of my venerated spiritual Sheikh, the great saint al-Alawi, I decided to abandon my entire family as well as my country to go live next to my black brothers in Africa, where, as my heart told me, there were pure hearts. Indeed, deep in my heart, I love black people, not because they are black, but because they suffered slavery; and since I myself am a slave of God, I love slaves. Were people reasonable, they would accept, in good heart, to be slaves. I tell you that if we do not go through the state (maqam) of slavery in life, we can never reach the state of mastery. » (Friends of Islam nb. 36, Mostaghanem, 1955)



Moqadem of Mali

The Writings of Sheikh ‘Adda

In 1936, Sheikh ‘Adda wrote and published a book honoring his master, in which he talked about the life and work of Sheikh al-Alawi—*Al-Rawda al-Saniyya fi al-Ma’ather al-Alawiyya* (the Sublime Anthologies of Sheikh al-Alawi). Martin Lings used it largely as inspiration for his famous book, *Sheikh Ahmed al-Alawi, a Sufi Saint of the XX Century*, which was translated into many languages.

Sidi ‘Adda is also the author of many books on Sufism and Islam, but all the savor, grandeur, and depth of the second master of Mostaghanem is especially felt in his successful parables, his metaphysically profound images, which he was able to express in a simple and limpid fashion that everybody could understand and feel. Such depth can be found mainly in his articles and letters—these were conserved thanks to some of his close witnesses, disciple or not, like Emile Dermenghem, Léon Neveu, Léon Langlet, Jean-Gabriel Brosset, Alphonse Izard... all of whom recorded and edited a great part of the master’s work.

Léon Langlet, honorary director of the hospitals of Algiers, privileged the traditional stories and fables of Sheikh ‘Adda in his *Ainsi m’a parlé le venerable sidi Hadj ‘Adda* (Thus has Spoken to Me the Venerable Sidi Hadj ‘Adda), published in *Cahiers des Amis de l’islam no 2* (Friends of Islam Notes nb. 2).

Alphonse Izard gathered the teachings of Jesus, with whom Sheikh ‘Adda had a particular intimacy, in the book *Jésus, Ame de Dieu* (Jesus, Soul of God). The above two writings were newly published by Sheikh Khaled Bentounès under the title of: *Le Chœur des prophètes, enseignements soufis du Cheikh ‘Adda Bentounès* (Seal of Prophets, Sufi Teachings of Sheikh ‘Adda Bentounès) and *La fraternité des cœurs* (Brotherhood of Hearts).

His Articles

Written at the beginning of the XX century, his articles appeared mainly in *Lisan al-Din*, *al-Balagh*, and *el-Morshid*; they are still pertinent, authentic, and relevant. They clarify the problems that Islam faces today; they show the ignorance (sometimes intended) in which the West is trapped, when judging the Muslim world. This master of eminent spirituality, who was very attentive to the problems of his era, was as a fine spiritual pedagogue, a wise reformer, a visionary, and a subtle analyst of the condition of the world and the remedies needed to re-establish peace and

prosperity for all. These articles are assembled in four chapters, typed in French, in the book *Le livre du guide, Archives de la tariqa 'Alawiyya* (Book of the Guide, Archives of Tareqa al-Alawiyya)

Correspondence

In spite of their intimate characteristic, the letters of Sheikh 'Adda had a universal scope. His answers were always full of humor and delicacy. They dealt with questions men and women, disciples or not, faced during their spiritual journey in life. Each word mirrored the love of a true master toward those who needed his assistance. When carefully read, one can see, better yet can taste, how a Sufi master guides, nuance by nuance and step by step, with infinite docility, the heart of anyone who sincerely seeks the Truth. A big part of this correspondence, however, remained unpublished. Certain letters, of broad nature, were published while he was still alive, in *El-Morshid* magazine, others in *Le cœur des prophètes* (Seal of Prophets). A part of the French correspondence was typed and archived in a document that was provisionally entitled *Lettres à un faqir* (Letters to a Faqeer).

Farewell

« “I am leaving with a white beard and I will come back with a black beard, and you will not recognize me,” said Sheikh al-Alawi. I too tell you: “I am leaving with a white beard and I will return without a beard, and I know that you will say it is not I. Should the new tenant close the entry door I have opened, and should he desire to open another on the back side of the house, would you remain in front of the old door or would you use the new one? He who really wants to enter a house does not stop at the closed door; he uses the open one, the one that allows him to enter.” »

Six months before his death, Sheikh 'Adda wrote to a disciple in a humorous tone: “You know, illness is always with me, hence the constant company and care. Illness comes each time with a different face, to the point where I feel two or three of its effects continuously. I dare say it feels like they want to be my *fuqara* (disciples)—they like me so much. It is a true allegiance” (January letter, 1952). Illness (diabetes) never stopped the servant of God. Whenever his disciples asked him to take care of himself, he answered with a smile on the lips: “Let illness do its job and I mine!” He continued his tiring and dangerous visits and sessions with his *fuqara*, times during which the disciples offered him multiple cakes and cups of tea out of love for him and which he never refused out of love for them.



Farewell picture — 1951

“A short time before his death,” writes Emile Dermenghem, “he was heading a gathering with the disciples of Tlemcen when people knocked on the door. A prostitute had just died in the brothels; no imam (leader of prayer) wanted to go there. Sheikh 'Adda immediately went to fetch the body, accompanied it to the cemetery, performed the prayer, and declared that God had brought him to that city only to pray for that unfortunate woman.”

Abdallah Redha describes one of his last pilgrimages: « When we arrived in Tlemcen on our way back, Sheikh looked a little tired; he had fever and a sore throat. The following day, he could not move. We needed two people to help him get to the car. The fever was so high, and he could not speak because of the pain he had in his throat. That did not keep him from stopping at Sidi-bel-Abbas city, where his *fuqara* were awaiting him. For nothing in the world did he want to disappoint them. For five straight hours, he talked to them, laughed and sang with them, burning with fever but filling his disciples with wonder. When the car started its way to Oran, all the *fuqara* of Sidi-bel-Abbas were happy, and Sheikh 'Adda collapsed. While melting like a candle, the venerated Sheikh lightened and nurtured his audience. In spite of his weakness, he always took a corner in the *zawiya* where he received his visitors. We had the impression that he was sick only for us, only for those who surrounded him. »



The burial — July 5, 1952

He traveled one last time to the East and Kabylia. One month later, he died in the zawiya, barely fifty-four years old, on July 4, 1952.

After his death, his oldest son, Sheikh Hadj el-Mehdi, took the torch with courage and determination, at a time when Algeria entered a long and painful war of independence. Ten years, day by day, after the death of Sheikh ‘Adda, Algeria reached its freedom.

“Those who knew Sheikh Hadj ‘Adda Bentounès can by no means forget him. For his disciples, his friends, and for the men and women that approached him, even after his death, he lives and will live eternally.”
 Sheikh Khaled Bentounès, *La fraternité des cœurs* (Brotherhood of Hearts)

Sheikh ‘Adda as seen by Sheikh Khaled

« I was then three and a half years old. I still see the living image as if coming out of a shroud of mist; the image of a face with a large smile, flowered with a beautiful white beard, which I pulled each time I was taken to kiss him. The day of his funeral, the zawiya was in turmoil. A great number of men and women cried. Their tears, mixed with chants and recitation of the Qur’an, resonated everywhere. Afraid and unable to understand what was going on, I ran from one room to another seeking comfort and security near my wet nurse, who tried, in vain to explain to me something I was not yet able to understand. »



Darih (tomb) of Sheikh ‘Adda



Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities attending the funeral



Sheikh 'Adda, the Love Incarnate