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Educational and Political Reform Issues and its Means According to Sheikh Abdul Halim Ibn Smaya

قضايا الإصلاح التربوي التعليمي والسياسي ووسائله

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Abstract:

The sheikhs of the reform movement in Algeria focused on the educational and political field. They sought to reform the educational reality in the first aforementioned field, and to raise the level of the Algerian, in order for him to have awareness of the importance of defending his homeland and preserving its components. As for the second area, it related to the resistance of the reformists to the various unjust decisions that were issued by the French colonial authority against its Algerians, and Sheikh Ibn Smaya followed this approach in the reform process. This research paper aimed to present his various reform efforts and opinions in the educational and political fields, where the various methods adopted by the Sheikh and his various opinions were presented, and for this purpose, the inductive and analytical approach was adopted. The results of the study showed that the Sheikh was truly an experienced reformer.

Keywords: Al-Islah, Ibn Smaya, Means of Reform, The Reform Issues.

الملخص:

يعد المجالان التربوي التعليمي والسياسي من بين أهم المجالات التي اهتم بها رجال الحركة الإصلاحية في الجزائر، فالأول ارتبط بمحاولة إصلاح الواقع التربوي والتعليمي، والارتقاء بالإنسان الجزائري كي يكون له الوعي الكامل بأهمية الدفاع عن وطنه والحفاظ على مقوماته، والثاني ارتبط بمقاومة رجال الإصلاح لمختلف القرارات الجائرة التي كانت تصدرها السلطة الفرنسية الاستعمارية لإلحاق الجزائريين بها، وعلى هذا النهج سار الشيخ ابن سمايث في عملية



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الإصلاح، وقد استهدفت هذه الورقة البحثية عرض مختلف جهوده وآرائه الإصلاحية في المجالين التربوي التعليمي والسياسي، وفي سياق ذلك توقفت الورقة البحثية عند جملة الوسائل التي اعتمدها الرجل لإبراز آرائه محل البحث، واعتمدت الورقة البحثية لدراسة الموضوع على المنهج الاستقرائي التحليلي، وقد أبانت نتائج الدراسة أن الشيخ كان بحق مصلحا صاحب خبرة كبيرة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإصلاح، ابن سماية، وسائل الإصلاح، قضايا الإصلاح.

1. Introduction:

Sheikh Abdelhalim Ben Smaya is one of the Algerian antecedent scholars who played an important role on the Algerian movement reform. He worked to spread comprehensive awareness in various fields, this led to the manufacture of the believer in the issue of his homeland and the necessity to fight the colonizer and recovering what was taken.

In fact, Ben Smaya can be considered as a stand-alone school, because of his knowledge as he was a prominent teacher, and a counterpart to Islam, who witnessed with his competence the enemy before the friend, and won the appreciation of all those who knew him. In this research, paper will reveal the reform issues that he raised and the adopted methods.

2. Statement of the Problem:

An intellectual uprising and several reforms appeared in Algeria by the reform sheikhs, as a reaction to the systematic colonial policy of eliminating the features of the national personality, with the aim of thwarting the colonial project, educating the Algerians, in order to have an intellectual personality based on the Islamic faith. There are several areas of reform, in which the positions of the sheikhs emerged on the various issues, which the Algerian people suffered from during the colonial era.

Sheikh Ibn Smaya is considered as one of the leaders of reform in Algeria, he immortalized his reformist views by taking bold positions on many issues. The educational and political fields are among the fields that Sheikh Ibn Smaya was interested in. In order to clarify these views, this research paper tried to answer the main question of the research problem: What are the educational



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and political reform issues that Sheikh Ibn Smaya addressed? Moreover, what are the methods used?

3.Previous studies:

Researchers discussed the personality of Ibn Smaya and his reform works in several fields. Among these studies, we mention:

- Mourad Ben Hamouda's Study (2017, pp. 100-127):

The research aimed to study the personality of Ibn Smaya and his reform activity. The researcher concluded a number of results, the most important of which are:

-Ibn Smaya spent his entire life in the teaching profession, for more than forty years. He focused all his efforts on trying to educate generations. His ultimate goal was to raise a generation capable of liberating Algeria.

-Ibn Smaya is considered one of the pioneer reformers who enriched the educational curricula in schools and mosques, as he enriched the library with many new books of educational value.

-Sheikh Bin Smaya adopted the ideology of the Islamic University, which is to call for renewal and advancement of the Islamic world, and he is considered one of its greatest advocates in Algeria.

-Khaled Lashab's Study (2021, pp. 435-475):

The research paper focused on studying the life of Ibn Smaya and his educational efforts in teaching in the school and the mosque. The researcher concluded many results, the most important of which are:

-While practicing the pedagogical process, Ibn Smaya was interested in the psychological and social aspect and the extent of its impact on the personality of the learners.

-Ibn Smaya was able to combine authentic teaching, represented in the mosque, with contemporary teaching, represented in the French Sharia School.



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-Ibn Smaya's joining the French Sharia School was in the interest of Algerians, to guarantee their right to benefit from a modern educational system that is comparable to the educational systems in the Arab world.

Based on the above, we note that this research has focused specifically on narrating the life of Ibn Smaya, and on the efforts, he made in various fields, while the current research paper tended to focus on the reformist views, he presented in the educational and political fields.

4. The Reform Issues of Sheikh Abdelhalim Ben Smaya:

Since France occupied Algeria, It had worked to eliminate the elements of national identity, and to change all civilizational and urban features that characterize the Algerian people, as well as exterminating the Algerian people, and more than that, it aimed to make Algeria an integral part of France. Thanks to Allah, the pioneers of reform in Algeria stood against colonial encroachment by resisting French policy. They worked to educate the Algerians, and aware them of the legitimacy of their rights, foremost of which is to live freely in this country. The Algerian reformists had many honorable stances, like Sheikh Ben Smaya, we will mention some of them due to their value and importance.

4.1 Educational Reform Issues:

The Algerian reformist movement' studies confirmed the interest of the reformers in the field of education, considering that it is the field that guarantees the manufacture of the Algerian individuals, and to form a generation fortified by the elements of national identity. Therefore, the liberation of minds leads to the liberation of the homelands. It seems that the advice of Sheikh Mohamed Abdou, who visited Algeria in 1903, on the necessity of focusing on the field of education and avoiding politics, has found resonance with the Algerian reformers".

Sheikh Ben Smaya followed this path, believing in the importance of the value of knowledge, he found several benefits; including what helps person to avoid harm, this what determines the path of happiness and misery.



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Knowledge is utterly beneficial; because if the knowledge is beneficial, then he will seek for good things, and if it is harmful he abandons and escapes from it ... If the mind turned towards benefit, then he would had happiness, and if he went towards harm, he would brought misery. (Ibn Smaya, 1903a).

Sheikh Bin Smaya also stressed the value of science and its importance in people's lives. In the Sheikh's belief, it is beneficial in its essence and truth, because it contributes to expanding human perceptions and enriching his knowledge, and he draws attention to the necessity of distinguishing between beneficial and harmful knowledge. By using the gift of power of intelligence that God Almighty has entrusted to the human being to take from knowledge what is of benefit to humanity.

Sheikh Ben Smaya feels sorrow for the lack of awareness of some Algerians about the value of knowledge and its importance in the renaissance of society, its role in raising awareness and defeating ignorance. According to Sheikh Ben Smaya, if they knew its value, they would try their best to learn, and their children would be able to benefit from the scholars. "If people had tried to obtain knowledge, they would have been able to get their children to benefit from scholars" (Ibn Smaya, 1903b).

Sheikh Ben Smaya emphasized the necessity of learning, as knowledge illuminates the mind, and indicated that the childhood period is the best period for learning and consolidating information, «Indeed, minds are enlightened by knowledge, and this can be achieved by emphasizing learning in childhood. Early Start, Grow Smart - A little pot is soon hot. Everyone should make their children's minds fruitful with education ». (Ibn Smaya, 1903b).

Ibn Smaya focused on the childhood stage of acquiring knowledge; because the child at this stage is more prepared to accept different knowledge in an easy way, which has the ability to store information more than other age stages because it possesses the characteristics of remembering and imagination, which contributes to increasing his linguistic vocabulary.



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We believe that Sheikh Ben Smaya, when he emphasized on the achievement of education at a young age. He aimed to encourage parents to teach their children. So that the knowledge request becomes a habit in society, which is meant by saying, "So they ask their children to learn and accompany the scholars, and meet them in times of lessons and in Masjid, or even to learn two or three issues every day by asking the scholars, and berating them for wasting time. If they did that, they would get used to the pleasure of knowledge, and they would ask for it by themselves". (Ibn Smaya, 1903b).

Sheikh Ben Smaya did not only emphasize on the importance and value of knowledge as an important step for the liberation of societies, but also expressed his surprise at the weak level of children and the carelessness of helping them to improve the educational level. "We find that many fathers hear their children make a mistake in determining their age, for instance, he says thirteen fourteen while he is fifteen, If his father does not advise him to give up ignorance and be virtuous, then whoever advises him to do so. They must show responsibility. As it is well known in religion, "plants do not grow and trees do not bear fruit except with rain"(Ibn Smaya, 1903b).

Ibn Smaya - based on his educational reform vision - firmly believes in the necessity of parental participation in the child's educational attainment. The child's success in his educational path is undoubtedly dependent on parental follow-up. In addition, helping children overcome obstacles that would weaken the child's educational achievement, which confirms the supportive role of parents in the child's educational process.

Sheikh Ben Smaya stated that accompanying parents with their children leads to raise the student level, this is only through allocating a portion of their time that guarantees them to overcome pedagogical problems in academic achievement, provided that they not to treat them as young, so this may discourage their determination in educational achievement. This is what he confirms in his saying: "Every person should educate their children and not rely



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only on the teacher, but rather allocate part of their time to them. Speaking to them as adults without any contempt. This is what many parents do, which leads to frustration in their resolve and limits their educational progress, he must simplify things for them not to get bored, and otherwise the benefit will not happen". (Ibn Smaya, 1903b).

Sheikh Ben Smaya gave another educational advice in addition to accompanying the parents to the children, which was to activate the education, and the necessity of reforming the educational methods to obtain positive results, by talking about the content presented. The studies that dealt with Sheikh Ben Smaya about teaching method indicated that: "he adopted new books in the teaching process including « signs of miracles », « secrets of rhetoric », and summarizing the book « Miftah Iktissad Fi l'tikad ». in addition to that he taught another important book « Alfiya » of Ibn Malik by the explanation of Ibn Aqil or Ashmouni and the book of « Al Akd El Farid » or « Nahj El Balagha » in the fourth section. However, in the fifth section he taught the book of « El Mofassal » of Zamalhshari and « the Rissaqalat El Tawhid » of Mohammed Abdo. (Ibn Hamouda, 2017a, p105).

4.2 Political Reform Issues (His Attitude toward Compulsory Recruitment):

The law of compulsory recruitment was issued on 3rd February 1912 AD. It is a political law that provides for the recruitment of Algerians into the French army, by the French parliament, which took a decision to compel Algerians to serve as French nationals. (Habouche.A, 2018, P279).

This law has caused great controversy among the Algerians, who categorically rejected it, and popular demonstrations took place all over the country. On the military level, there were several popular revolutions in several regions.

As for the elite demanding the integration of Algeria with France and based on their intellectual background, "it supported joining the French army to defend the motherland in order to obtain some of the digested rights and if necessary to naturalize with French nationality and waive personal status.



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They were looking forward to have the right to citizenship, like the rest of the foreigners who keep with their personal ingredients. "(Bouden, 2018, p 185-186).

In order to publicize this law, all communication media have used like; cultural societies and written press to mobilize public opinion to participate alongside France in the war against the Germans.

Whereas Sheikh Ben Smaya belonged to the Conservative Bloc, who strongly opposed this law. Omar Ben Kaddour wrote about this strict position in the Turkish Civilization newspaper an article. In which he described the meeting that was held in Algiers: "Sheikh Ibn Smaya expressed his opinion and inferred in Quranic verses that if Muslims perform the French military service, they are not Muslims with the meanings that the word carries, even if they obtain the freedom that enables them to sit in the presidency. If the Muslims obtain their freedom in exchange for their enlistment in the French army, then it will be the final blow to religious nationalism identity, then their integration will be achieved with the French nation forever. (Ibn Agoune.A, 1984, P35).

Sheikh Ben Smaya expressed his opposition to forced recruitment for the following religious and social reasons: (Aouimer, <http://www.odabasham.net>, 2022).

- The inability of Muslim recruits to perform their religious rites by forcing them to break their fast during Ramadan and delaying the prayer.
- Fighting their Muslim brothers, this is in contradiction with the provisions of the Islamic religion.
- Divide the Algerian society into two distinct classes: conscripts and others.

What confirmed the Sheikh's opposition to this decision was that he decided to immigrate to the Levant because of France's insistence on the implementation of this political project, so he sold his house, which he inherited from his father, and resigned from all his works, and donate his precious books. Because of his pivotal role in Algerian society, the notables of Algeria urged him to stay, which made him withdraw the decision to travel.



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5. The Reform's Means of Sheikh Ben Smaya:

The reform process undoubtedly requires the necessity of using a set of possible and legitimate means to achieve the goals of reform work, so that the means are considered as the mediator between the reformer and the various segments of society, which are the best ways to enable the reform act in reality.

If the choice of the mean suit the spirit of time and its developments, taking into account the conditions of society and its data, that will lead effectively to achieve the objective underlined, otherwise if the failure in choosing it will lead to disastrous result of wasting in the capacities and time. Hence, the importance of the means is evident in any reform work and its direction.

Sheikh Abdul Halim Ibn Smaya realized the importance of using the means, he tried to find the necessary means to build a better society, after reading in depth in the Sheikh's life, we would identify the most important of these means, including:

5.1 The school:

School is considered as one of the most important institutions that society has created to nurture individuals, provide them with knowledge and teach positive values, to be good individuals and to contribute to the renaissance of society and its prosperity.

Because of its importance, the reformists in Algeria relied on it to aware the Algerian individuals, whom sensitized about the real life, then to raise a generation working to preserve the national identity that French colonialism has always worked to eliminate with various methods and means.

Sheikh Ibn Smaya took great advantage of the school because of his belief in its effectiveness in making the individuals and educating them in turn. First, in the year 1896, he taught in the official government school located in Al-Sufara'a Street in Bab Al-Wad, he was then 30 years old. The school graduates employees like judges and translators. Then, after building Al-Thaalabya School, where he moved to teach in 1905, the language used in teaching was Arabic



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before the French government included the French language, so it became dual language school in teaching. Sheikh Ibn Smaya was teaching in the ordinary section of Arabic literature subject, also in the higher section several subject such as logic and literature, and the Islamic interpretation. "(Ibn Hamouda, 2017b, p202).

Sheikh Ibn Smaya worked on the renewal of the teaching methods in Al-Thaalabya school by adopting new books that were not known before. These efforts undertaken by Ibn Smaya, accompanied by Sheikh Abd al-Qadir al-Madjawi, contributed to the development of this school, so that it became well known, and many students were interested in studying in it. This is confirmed by the documents in which it was stated that: «Ibn Smaya is an excellent teacher and searcher who is very conscious, full of vitality and activity. He were interested in everything that is new, and used new methods of teaching. He seems to have a renaissance project in the field of Arabic studies, which raises the interest and curiosity of his students towards renewal, He were open-minded to Western concepts, had good relations with all Muslims and Europeans. (Drawi,2017 , p321).

His student, Sheikh Abdul-Rahman Al-Jilali, states that you cannot stop hearing his speech and that those presents do not feel any bored of his words, he contributed to the graduation of many writers and scholars who also occupied professions such as education, judiciary, advisory, and Imamah. (Maysoum, 2017, p129).

5.2 Masdjid (Mosque):

Masdjid is undoubtedly the most pure spot on the face of the earth, its importance lies in "being the religious social institution after the family in the Islamic community, it is the center of meeting and bonding of individuals. Masdjid is the place of practicing the values and principles on which the Muslim individual grew up, and how to embody social relations governed by the rules of religion and pure belief, and that the merit and importance of the Masdjid is great for Allah Almighty and distinguished it from other places. Allah



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almighty dedicated it by saying, (Djafal, 2013, p125.)"And that the mosques belongs to Allah; so do not invoke, along with Allah" (72:18). (Ghali, 2014, p935).

According to the correct perception of the function of the Masdjid, which is more than a place of worship to be considered a place to be reckoned with in the promotion of individuals to be good citizens to the extent that proper awareness spreads in various fields.

Masdjid in all circumstances and conditions possesses the ability to "purify people's minds and hearts, awaken their consciences, and control their behaviors through what is the recited of the wise Quranic verses for them and what they study from the Qur'an and Sunnah, and the narrated prophetic biography." (Omar, 1992, P84.).

Sheikh Abdel Halim Ibn Smaya realized this noble work in educating the Algerian individual about religion's matters. That is why he accepted to teach in Masdjid El Kabir in the year 1900 AD, which was supervised by the French government at that time in the footsteps of his father Ali Ibn Smaya, to achieve his reform project. So the Masdjid were used as a mean to educate the Algerian individual. "Which he was able to reconcile the two positions (the teaching job in the school and the Masdjid). he worked hard in organizing time, so he devoted twelve hours to the Masdjid and fourteen hours to the school per week, and his lessons in the Masdjid based on language sciences, Shari'a and logic. Since he follows the doctrine, he relied in the lessons of the Islamic jurisprudence on the books of Al-Sharnbalali, Al-Qudduri, Al-Tahtawi, Ibn Abdeen, and Al-Nasafi. (Ibn Hamouda, 2017a, p106.).

Sheikh Abdul Rahman Al-Jailali described the lessons of Sheikh Abdul Halim Ibn Samia by saying:

"His lesson was brief and eloquent in the speech manifested in his words and phrases, this is due to the abundance of his vocabulary and his dedication to reading "Lissan El Arab" (the lexicon of the Tongue of the Arabs), he did not use colloquial language in his lessons unless it provided a related benefit. (Gennaneche, s date, p 266).



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Sheikh had good results through the lessons of Masdjid, "purifying minds from superstition, fighting "bid'ah" (a novelty or innovation in religion) (Al Khudrawi, s date, p42).

"mobtadi'in" innovators (Al Khudrawi, s date, p42). Defending religion and making the argument against orientalists, fanatics, and preachers who try to corrupt people's beliefs. (Dabouz, 1965, p. 109).

5.3 The press:

The written press is an excellent medium in spreading awareness among individuals and helps to illuminate and educate minds. Its importance lies in its ability of spread; to reach large numbers of segments of society, and its ability to overcome geographical frameworks. The pioneers of the reform movement in Algeria were aware of its value in spreading the reform idea and accelerating the achievement of its goals. So they used it in an ideal way, either by working to create newspaper headlines that help to achieve societal awareness, or by writing in various newspapers and magazines available that serve the reform goal.

Sheikh Abdel Halim Ibn Smaya realized the value of the press in public mobilization like other pioneers of the reformist movement, except that he did not create his own newspapers as they did but rather wrote in various newspapers inside and outside the country to serve the reformist idea in various issues.

Sheikh Abdel Halim Ibn Smaya has many articles in the Algerian newspapers, whether literal or social articles signed in his real name or pseudonyms due to the circumstances of that period. He has many articles in «Kawkab Ifrikyia » newspaper, among them an article he wrote in 1911, in which he talked about his quest for renewal and liberation, in response to a question he received in the newspaper, where the Sheikh wrote two articles titled « The Difference between Sufism and those who pretend to be Sufism ». He spoke in the first article on Sufism and attacked those who pretend to be Sufis, and these are some quotes from his article; "Sufism is compliance with morals to the extent that would be solution to the soul, not just a story». In



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the second article, he talked about Sufism, where he described them as people who benefit others and get benefited as they learn and comply with good morals, because they abandoned the reprehensible morals. Therefore, they called them Sufis, and they are the true scholars. In fact whaever they sit, they say good words, guid others and work in sincerly way. (Ibn Hamouda,2017a, p 115-116).

He also wrote in « Al-Maghrib », « Al-Maarefa », « Al-Mabshir » and «Al-Iqdam » newspaper for Emir Khaled. His articles varied from social, moral, political and religious articles.

Abd al-Rahman al-Jilali stated that his teacher has many articles in Tunisian newspapers such as the newspapers of “Al-Wazir” and “Al-Moshir”. Sheikh Ibn Smaya also presented for the scholar Mohamed Al-Khodr Ali the article introduction that he liked a lot, and describing it as eloquent phrases, honest with its meanings, and asked him to send it to him for publication in the “Sa’da Kubra” newspaper. (Ibn Hamouda, 2017, p116).

5.4 Authorship:

Hence we point to the importance of authorship in enriching people’s knowledge in various fields. What was noticed unfortunately is almost complete absence of the authorship movement among the pioneers of the reform movement in Algeria. Perhaps the reason for that is, as Sheikh Abdel Hamid Ibn Badis stated that: « I have been interested in building a person rather than writing books »; which means that these people were concerned at first by building a generation that believes in change and then getting free from colonialism.

Despite the lack of authorship for the reformist movement compared to journalistic activity, there are writings on Sheikh Ibn Smaya that confirmed the existence of a group of authorships in various fields because of his belief in the role that the book plays in nourishing the mind and enlightening thought.

In 1911, Sheikh Ibn Smaya published a letter about usury entitled: "Ihtizaz EL Atwad Wa Ribba FI mas’ alat Tahrim Ribba », but it was not found. Fortunately, his student, Sheikh Abd al-Rahman al-Jilali, viewed it, and said: "It



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is a prolific letter in its subject matter. The author realized the origins of this chapter, in which he called on all Islamic scholars to assume their responsibilities towards this important topic. " While in 1913, he published also another book entitled: «El Kanz El Maknon».

(Aouimer, <http://www.odabasham.net>, 2022).

He also wrote a letter on monotheism « Rissalat El Tahid » in responding to atheists, as well as a book on the philosophy of Islam (Ibn Smaya, 2022) , it had a great impact in raising awareness of the reality of Islam and his position on many of the problems that were raised at the time.

6. CONCLUSION:

Through what was presented above, the research paper reached a number of results:

-The research paper confirmed that Ibn Smaya chose to teach in French public schools based on a strategic vision based on achieving his fine mission in educating the people of Algeria on the one hand, and getting rid of the attempts to restrict the occupation that could be imposed on him if he refused to work in public schools.

-The research paper confirmed Ibn Smaya's belief that the awareness of the Algerian individual is achieved through knowledge, as it is the guarantor of preserving national identity, and also the belief that there is a homeland that must be liberated from the grip of French colonialism.

-Ibn Smaya emphasized the necessity of parents accompanying their children in the educational process, guiding and monitoring them, and accompanying them and not despising them, because this may lead to halting their determination to achieve education.

-Ibn Smaya's approach in the educational field is based on the principle of reforming educational curricula to achieve educational goals, by supplementing educational curricula by adopting new books in teaching.



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-The research paper confirmed Ibn Smaya's interest in political issues, through which he recorded his complete rejection of the compulsory conscription decision imposed by the French colonial authorities, arguing that it was a way to integrate into France, and that it was considered one of the obstacles that prevented the Algerian Muslim conscript from practicing his religious rituals.

-In presenting his reformist views, Ibn Smaya relied on a number of legitimate means: It was represented by the school, the mosque, writing, and the press, as they are important means of communication that can contribute to conveying the reformist idea and achieving awareness among the Algerian individual.

In general, it can be said that Sheikh Ibn Smaya is considered a great reformist figure who was able to raise the level of awareness of the various issues among Algerians. By the use of his keen knowledge, and the ability to understand the reality surrounding him. This was evidenced by his continuous efforts in teaching in the mosque and school, and his desperate struggle to speak the truth. Based on the principles that he believed in, which were uncompromising, he was truly a man of education and a patriot who loved the soil of his homeland to the core.

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