

الشيخ إبراهيم أبو اليقظان: دوره الإصلاحية ونشاطه الفكري والجمعي (1920-1962م)

Le Cheikh Ibrahim Abū al-Yaqzān : Son rôle réformateur et son activité intellectuelle et associative (1920-1962)

Sheikh Ibrahim Abu al-Yaqzan: His Reformatory Role, Intellectual Activity, and Associative Work (1920-1962)

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ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى الوقوف على مآثر الشخصيات الإصلاحية التي أسهمت في محاربة الجهل والامية اللذين سعت إدارة الاحتلال الفرنسي من خلالهما إلى طمس الهوية الجزائرية، فكان نشاط هؤلاء بمثابة السبيل لإعادة الأمل إلى نفوس الجزائريين. وفي طليعة هؤلاء برزت شخصية الشيخ إبراهيم بن عيسى حمدي "أبو اليقظان" كشخصية محورية في الحركة الإصلاحية الجزائرية، حيث جمع بين النشاط الصحفي، الفكر التربوي، والعمل الجمعي ليقدم نموذجاً متكاملًا للإصلاح الشامل. تركز الدراسة على تحليل ثلاثة روافد أساسية في مسيرته خلال الفترة الحاسمة (1920-1962م)، والتي شكلت محطة مفصلية في تاريخ الجزائر الحديث؛ وهي: الصحافة كأداة لتشكيل الوعي الجماعي، الفكر التربوي كمنهج للتجديد الحضاري، والعمل الجمعي كآلية للتطبيق العملي للأفكار الإصلاحية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أبو اليقظان؛ الحركة الإصلاحية؛ النشاط الجمعي؛ الاستعمار؛ الصحافة اليقظانية.

Résumé :

Cette étude vise à mettre en lumière les réalisations des figures réformatrices qui ont contribué à lutter contre l'ignorance et l'analphabétisme, des outils par lesquels l'administration coloniale cherchait à effacer l'identité algérienne. L'action de ces réformateurs a ainsi représenté un lueur d'espoir pour le peuple algérien. Au premier rang de ces figures émerge le Cheikh Ibrahim ibn Issa Hamdi "Abū al-Yaqzān", personnalité centrale du mouvement réformiste algérien, qui a su combiner le journalisme, la pensée éducative et l'action associative pour offrir un modèle intégré de réforme globale. L'étude se concentre sur l'analyse de trois axes fondamentaux de son parcours au cours de la période cruciale (1920-1962), étape charnière de l'histoire moderne de l'Algérie : la presse en tant qu'outil de prise de conscience collective, la pensée éducative comme méthode de renouveau civilisationnel, et l'engagement associatif comme mécanisme d'application pratique des idées réformatrices.

Mots-clés : Abū al-Yaqzān ; Mouvement réformiste; Action associative; Colonialisme; Presse yaqdhanaise.

Abstract:

This study aims to highlight the achievements of reformist figures who contributed to combating ignorance and illiteracy, through which the French colonial administration sought to efface the Algerian identity. The efforts of these figures served as a beacon of hope for the

Algerian people. Prominent among them was Sheikh Ibrahim ibn Isa Hamdi "Abu al-Yaqzan", a pivotal figure in the Algerian reform movement who combined journalism, educational thought, and community associative work to offer an integrated model for comprehensive reform. This study analyzes three fundamental pillars of his reformatory journey during the crucial period (1920–1962), a defining landmark in modern Algerian history: the press as a tool for shaping collective consciousness, educational thought as a methodology for civilizational renewal, and associative work as a practical mechanism for implementing reformist ideas.

Keywords: Abu al-Yaqzan; Reform Movement; Associative Work; Colonialism; Yaqzanian Press.

Introduction

During the colonial era, Algeria witnessed the emergence of an elite group of prominent intellectual figures who shouldered the monumental task of civilizational revival, safeguarding cultural memory against erasure, and awakening the collective consciousness to resist colonial policies of enforced ignorance. Standing at the forefront of these intellectual luminaries—who left an indelible imprint on the Algerian reformist landscape—is Shaykh Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Īsā Abū al-Yaqzān (1888–1973 CE), whose career was richly defined by a legacy of intellectual and political struggle. Abū al-Yaqzān embodied the archetype of the comprehensive reformer (*al-muṣliḥ al-shāmil*), transcending the traditional role of a purely religious scholar or man of letters. He materialized an applied reformist project whose foundational pillars rested upon foundational association work, active field-based reformist practice, and an unceasing intellectual output.

Abū al-Yaqzān's approach to reform was grounded in a profound recognition that confronting colonial hegemony required structured organizational frameworks. Rather than relying solely on individual rhetoric, these frameworks coalesced collective efforts and directed society's energies toward defined objectives. Approaching his civilizational project from this perspective, he anchored his work in the authenticity of national fundamentals—namely, the Islamic faith, the Arabic language, and inherited cultural heritage—while meticulously balancing the preservation of identity with the demands of modernity, avoiding the pitfalls of cultural isolationism.

Revisiting this historical experience aims to draw critical lessons from the trajectory of a figure who resisted existential threats using the tools of his era. This invites scholarly inquiry into the efficacy of those mechanisms and the extent to which they remain relevant today. The central research problem frames itself around two core questions: What were the key manifestations of Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān's reformist, educational, and organizational efforts? Furthermore, what was the extent of their impact on Algerian society during the colonial period?

This study aims to illuminate the three interconnected dimensions of Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān's activism. It examines his organizational contributions through his work within the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulema (*Jam‘īyat al-‘Ulamā’ al-Muslimīn al-Jazā’irīyīn*) and his key role in founding the Institute of Life (*Ma‘had al-Ḥayāt*) in Guerrara. It further investigates the dimensions of his reformist vision concerning religious, social, and

educational reality, while evaluating his intellectual achievements—most notably his eight newspapers, which directly challenged the machinery of colonial repression, along with the dozens of authored works with which he enriched scholarly knowledge.

To deconstruct and analyze the multifaceted nature of this reformist career, this study employs a historical-analytical methodology. The historical method enables the tracking of pivotal junctures and the chronological evolution of the Shaykh's movement and activism between 1920 and 1962 CE. Concurrently, the analytical method facilitates the examination of his journalistic and intellectual output, deconstructing his educational and organizational vision to evaluate its practical efficacy in the field.

1. The Social and Educational Upbringing of Abū al-Yaqzān¹

The Shaykh was born under the proper name Ḥamdī Ibrāhīm ibn 'Īsā; he subsequently adopted the *kunya* "Abū al-Yaqzān" in honor of the fifth Rustamid Imam, Abū al-Yaqzān Muḥammad ibn Aflaḥ ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Rustam, driven by a deep admiration for the Imam's character, justice, and lofty ambition as a scholar, theologian, and statesman. Abū al-Yaqzān was born in the city of Guerrara in southern Algeria on 29 Ṣafar 1306 AH / 20 November 1888 CE. He received his primary education in his birthplace, where he entered the traditional Quranic school (*kuttāb*) and committed the Noble Quran to memory. He then proceeded to learn the fundamentals of the Arabic language and Islamic jurisprudence (*sharī'ah*) under his teacher, Shaykh al-Ḥājj 'Umar ibn Yaḥyā². Recounting his initial step toward acquiring knowledge in his work *Nash'atī*, he writes:

"...And there I entered upon Shaykh al-Ḥājj 'Umar ibn Yaḥyā in his school while he was among his students, holding my wooden slate in hand, and said to them: 'May God have mercy on your parents, teach me!' They laughed, rejoiced at my enthusiasm, and replied: 'Yes, we are ready to teach you.'³"

Upon completing the full memorization of the Quran, he continued his studies at the institutes of Shaykh al-Ḥājj Ibrāhīm ibn Kāsī⁴ and Shaykh al-Ḥājj Ibrāhīm ibn 'Īsā al-Abrikī. He subsequently joined the assembly of *Dār Īrawān*, mastering various fields of knowledge under the tutelage of Shaykh al-Ḥājj 'Umar ibn Yaḥyā in 1900 CE, at the age of no more than twelve⁵.

¹ See Appendix No. 1.

² 'Umar ibn Yaḥyā: Al-Ḥājj 'Umar ibn Yaḥyā al-Malikī was born in 1882 CE. His family surname derives from Melika, one of the cities of the M'zab Valley. He settled alongside his ancestors in Guerrara; his lineage was distinguished by piety and righteousness, and his mother was Lady Minnah bint Ibrāhīm ibn Abī, who was regarded as one of the leaders of the revival movement in Guerrara. He is counted among the reformist scholars and activists who rose to prominence in leading the reformist struggle and educating the youth. See: Muḥammad 'Alī Dabbūz, *A lām al-Iṣlāḥ fī al-Jazā'ir 1921–1975*, vol. 3, 1st ed., Constantine: Maṭba'at al-Ba'th, p. 282.

³ Ibrāhīm ibn 'Īsā Abū al-Yaqzān, *Nash'atī*, ed. Abū al-Yaqzān ibn al-Ḥājj Shaykh Aḥmad, 1st ed., Algiers: Mu'assasat al-Shaykh Abī al-Yaqzān al-Thaqāfiyah, 2023, p. 17.

⁴ Yūsuf Bakīr al-Ḥājj Sa'd, *Tārīkh Banī Mīzāb: Dirāsah Ijtīmā'īyah wa-Iqtisādīyah wa-Siyāsīyah*, Algiers: Saḥb al-Ṭibā'ah al-Sha'bīyah li-l-Jaysh, 2007, p. 189.

⁵ 'Ammār Hilāl, *Abḥāth wa-Dirāsāt fī Tārīkh al-Jazā'ir al-Mu'āṣir*, Algiers: Dīwān al-Maṭbū'āt al-Jāmi'iyah, 1995, p. 414.

His teacher discerned a promising future in him, which prompted him to consider the necessity of diversifying the sources of his intellectual development under the guidance of other scholars, as well as seeking a benefactor to sponsor the completion of his studies given his family's limited financial means. Driven by his passionate pursuit of knowledge, a number of scholars and teachers volunteered to instruct him in the memorization of the Quran and the fundamentals of literacy. Foremost among them was Shaykh al-Ḥājj ‘Umar ibn Yaḥyā al-Malīkī, who contributed significantly to refining his talents and laying the foundations of reformist thought within him by instilling a love of knowledge, advocating striving in the cause of God, and elevating his intellectual and aesthetic sensibilities. Regarding this, the historian of the Algerian reform movement, Muḥammad ‘Alī Dabbūz, states: "Shaykh ‘Umar ibn Yaḥyā was the one who planted the love of knowledge in Abū al-Yaqẓān's soul, ignited his conscience, equipped him with the fundamentals of the religious and Arabic sciences, and stoked in him ambition and self-confidence"⁶.

The writer Aḥmad Farṣūš also recounts the Shaykh's diligence in his youth, stating: "As for Thursdays and Fridays, Abū al-Yaqẓān would go out with the *Qutb* to stroll and relax in the orchards. He used to carry his books with him to the orchards for reading, research, and debate; Abū al-Yaqẓān benefited greatly from these readings because the *Qutb* reserved these outings exclusively for him"⁷.

In 1907 CE, he moved to the institute of the *Qutb al-A‘immah* (Pole of the Imams), Shaykh Mḥammad ibn Yūsuf Aṭfayyish⁸. Reflecting on that phase, Shaykh Abū al-Yaqẓān writes: "After I had completely memorized the Quran and formally recited it from memory before the Imam, Shaykh al-Ḥājj Ibrāhīm al-Kāsī—Ḥammīd Ūjānah—and officially joined the student assembly (*Hay’at Īrawān*)... I was deeply enamored with memorizing foundational texts (*mutūn*) of various disciplines alongside my memorization of the Quran. Among these, I memorized *al-Ājurrūmīyah* and its commentary by Abū Dāwūd, the text of *‘Aqīdat al-‘Azzābah* and its commentary by Abū Dāwūd, *Alfiyat Ibn Mālīk*, *Qaṭr al-Nadā*, *Sullam al-Munawraq*, *al-Waraqāt*, *al-Arba‘īn al-Nawawīyah*, *Ṭal‘at al-Shams*, and *Jawhar al-Maknūn*"⁹.

Under the tutelage of the *Qutb al-A‘immah* Aṭfayyish, the Shaykh received advanced instruction in the Arabic language and Islamic jurisprudence (*sharī‘ah*), a formative period that shaped the contours of his intellectual identity. In 1909 CE, he traveled to the Hijaz; the Pilgrimage (*Hajj*) served as the primary avenue for achieving his scholarly ambitions and connecting with scholars across the Islamic world. After arriving in Mecca alongside his

⁶ Muḥammad ‘Alī Dabbūz, *A‘lām al-Iṣlāḥ fī al-Jazā‘ir*, vol. 1, 1st ed., Algiers: ‘Ālam al-Ma‘rifah, 2013, p. 286.

⁷ Aḥmad Muḥammad Farṣūš, *Abū al-Yaqẓān kamā ‘Araḥūh*, Algiers: Maṭba‘at Dār al-Ba‘th, 1988, p. 24.

⁸ Al-Ḥājj Mḥammad ibn Yūsuf Aṭfayyish: Born in Beni Isguen in 1236 AH (1821 CE) and died in 1914 CE. Known as *Qutb al-A‘immah*, he is considered one of the most prominent scholars of Algeria and the M'zab Valley region. He received his education in Beni Isguen and completed the memorization of the Quran before the age of ten. He spent over ninety years in the pursuit of knowledge and teaching, maintaining close correspondence and relationships with leaders and statesmen of the Islamic world, such as the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II and the Sultan of Zanzibar Barghash ibn Sa‘īd. See: Qāsim al-Shaykh Bilḥājj, *Juhūd al-Shaykh Mḥammad Aṭfayyish fī al-Naḥḍah wa-l-Iṣlāḥ*, Blida: al-‘Ālamīyah li-l-Ṭibā‘ah, 2018, pp. 16–17.

⁹ Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Īsā Abū al-Yaqẓān, op. cit., pp. 18–19.

companions on 5 Ramaḍān and completing the pilgrimage rites, he proceeded to Medina, where he remained for 27 days, despite experiencing severe financial hardship¹⁰.

In light of the strict colonial surveillance imposed by the French authorities on Algerian pilgrims, and feeling intense pressure following the imprisonment of his teacher ‘Umar ibn Yaḥyā upon returning from the pilgrimage, Abū al-Yaḳẓān was forced to return using identity documents that did not bear his real name. He trimmed his beard and adopted modern attire, utilizing the documents of a Moroccan man named "Sulaymān ibn Dāwūd al-Maghribī"¹¹. He returned after a journey lasting a full year, during which he visited several countries and acquired extensive experience¹².

In 1912 CE, he traveled to Tunis to pursue his higher education, enrolling at the Khaldūnīyah School¹³ and drawing upon the scholarship of its prominent luminaries, such as Shaykhs Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn ‘Āshūr, Muḥammad al-Nakhli, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Ja‘īṭ, and al-Ṣādiq al-Nayfar¹⁴, as well as Ustādh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Tha‘ālibī¹⁵, with whom Abū al-Yaḳẓān forged bonds of firm friendship and close collaboration¹⁶.

His presence in Tunis coincided with the French administration's closure of the Tebessa Arab-Quranic School and the assassination of the president of its Ṣiddīqīyah Association. Faced with the desire of the students' guardians to enroll their children in Tunis, Abū al-Yaḳẓān took it upon himself to make preliminary preparations and secure accommodations and educational arrangements for them¹⁷. Thus, he headed the first Mozabite educational mission to Tunis in 1914 CE, which was followed by a second mission in 1917 CE, maintaining supervision over both until 1925 CE. Despite smear campaigns and misrepresentations launched against these missions by certain conservative elements and opponents in the M'zab Valley starting in 1920 CE¹⁸, the Shaykh successfully persevered in fulfilling his mission.

During his residence in Tunis, Abū al-Yaḳẓān established strong relations with prominent figures of the Tunisian Renaissance (*al-Nahḍah*), including Shaykh Ṣāliḥ ibn Yaḥyā (a member of the executive committee of the Destour Party and uncle of the poet

¹⁰ Aḥmad Farṣūṣ, op. cit., pp. 27–28.

¹¹ Barakah Muḥammad, "Aqlām Ṣaḥāfiyah min al-Janūb al-Jazā'irī wa-Dawruhā al-İslāhī: al-Shaykh Abū al-Yaḳẓān Unmūdhajan", *Majallat Hawliyyāt Jāmi'at al-Jazā'ir* 2, vol. 3, no. 1, 2023, p. 52.

¹² Muḥammad ibn Qāsim Nāṣir Būḥajjām, *al-Shaykh Abū al-Yaḳẓān: Tarjamah wa-l-Maṣādir wa-l-Marāji'*, 1st ed., Guerrara: Jam'iyat al-Turāth, 2023, p. 15.

¹³ The Khaldūnīyah School (*al-Madrasah al-Khaldūnīyah*): The first modern-style institution established in Tunis in 1896 CE by the Young Tunisian Movement led by BASHİR ṢAFAR, named after Ibn Khaldūn. It aimed to equip graduates of the Ez-Zitouna Mosque with modern sciences and foreign languages. See: Ḥamdān Maḥmūd, *A'lām al-I'lām fī Tūnis 1860–1956*, 1st ed., Tunis: al-Sharikah al-Tūnisīyah, 1991.

¹⁴ Aḥmad Farṣūṣ, op. cit., pp. 30–33.

¹⁵ Abd al-‘Azīz al-Tha‘ālibī: (1871–1944 CE) A Tunisian political leader and religious reformer of Algerian origin, born in Tunis and graduated from the Ez-Zitouna Mosque; he was the founder of the Tunisian Destour Party. See: ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Tha‘ālibī, *Tūnis al-Shahīdah*, trans. Sāmī al-Jundī, Beirut: Dār al-Quds, 1975, pp. 7–27.

¹⁶ Assāf Ṣāliḥ, *Wilāyat Ghardāyah*, Algiers: Dār Hūmah, p. 21.

¹⁷ Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Īsā Abū al-Yaḳẓān, op. cit., pp. 44–45.

¹⁸ Mufḍī Zakarīyā, *Tārīkh al-Ṣaḥāfah al-‘Arabīyah fī al-Jazā'ir*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥamdī, Algiers, 2003, p. 165.

Mufdī Zakarīyā'), Shaykh Sulaymān al-Jadwī (proprietor of the newspaper *Murshid al-Ummah al-Tūnisīyah*), the historian Ustādh 'Uthmān al-Ka'āk, and the poet al-Shādhilī Khaznadār¹⁹, alongside the leader of the Tunisian Destour Party, Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Tha'alībī²⁰.

Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān's activities in Tunis extended to journalistic writing in defense of the nation's core fundamentals, and he served as a member of the Literary Committee of the Destour Party. In this context, Dr. Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Nāṣir notes: "Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān became an active member of the Executive Bureau of the Destour Party between 1917 and 1920 CE under the leadership of his intimate friend and spiritual-patriotic mentor, Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Tha'alībī, from whom he received direct instruction in political science" ²¹.

The period spanning 1917 to 1925 CE is considered one of the most fruitful stages of his early journalistic and literary activity; through his articles and poems published in the Tunisian press, he voiced explicit support for the Tunisian cause and closely followed political developments and activism alongside his Tunisian and Algerian brethren.

2. His Intellectual Output

Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān pledged himself to the service of society through its defense and by working toward its elevation from backwardness and dependency, employing every means and pursuing every avenue conducive to progress and prosperity. He entered the journalistic arena with absolute resolve and determination to achieve his purpose, striving with an honest, responsible pen despite all colonial obstacles and harassments. Throughout every moment of his committed national struggle, he served as an exemplar of steadfastness; neither allurements compromised him nor threats bent his resolve. He remained stationed at the vanguard, defying opposing forces for twelve full years, until he determined that the atmosphere was no longer viable and that the journalistic medium had ceased to be effective following severe colonial crackdowns²².

Consequently, he pivoted his struggle toward another domain: book authoring and intellectual production. He set to work with diligence and devotion, explaining this transition in his career by stating: "After observing that the atmosphere had darkened following the suppression of our newspapers, and having despaired of returning to the journalistic field while realizing—praise be to God—that time remained for action, I turned my attention toward authorship"²³.

He dedicated himself to writing in the fields of history, Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), pedagogy, and literature, leaving behind a major intellectual legacy exceeding sixty works, ranging from full-length books to treatises. This body of work encompassed a rich intellectual

¹⁹ Yamīnah Bin Raḥḥāl, *al-Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān Ibrāhīm ibn al-Ḥājj 'Isā wa-Qaḍāyā 'Aṣriḥ 1888–1973m*, Algiers: Dār al-Irshād, 2013, pp. 38–39.

²⁰ Muḥammad al-Ṣāliḥ al-Ṣiddīq, *A'lām min al-Maghrib al-'Arabī*, vol. 2, 2nd ed., Algiers: Mūfam li-l-Nashr, 2008, p. 190.

²¹ Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Nāṣir, *A'lām wa-Aqlām*, 1st ed., Guerrara: Dār Nāṣir li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī' / Jam'iyat al-Turāth, 2017, pp. 451–452.

²² Muḥammad ibn Qāsim Nāṣir Būhajjām, op. cit., p. 26.

²³ Ibrāhīm ibn 'Isā Abū al-Yaqzān, op. cit., pp. 101–102.

diversity, combining poetry, essays, biographies, prosopographies, and comprehensive studies. His devotion to authorship intensified particularly after he was afflicted with hemiplegia, which restricted his physical mobility and field activism without diminishing the vitality of his mind or intellect. Passionate about history through both oral narrative and scholarly writing, he possessed a formidable memory and was meticulous in logging his memoirs regarding pivotal events. This rendered his historical material exceptionally prolific—a quality rarely encountered among other scholars of his era²⁴.

This scholarly dedication bore a multifaceted output comprising both published and unpublished works. Among his published books, we cite *Hayāt Sulaymān Bāshā al-Bārūnī* in two volumes; *Dīwān Abī al-Yaqzān*, published in 1350 AH under the title *Wahy al-Wijdān min Dīwān Abī al-Yaqzān*; the *Sullam al-Isti qāmah* series—divided into seven volumes for the primary level on the jurisprudence of worship (*fiqh al-‘ibādāt*) and four volumes for the secondary level on the jurisprudence of transactions (*fiqh al-mu‘āmalāt*); the treatise *Irshād al-Ḥā’irīn*; and the treatise *Faṭḥ Nawāfidh al-Qur’ān*. Regarding his unpublished output and scholarly treatises, these included specialized books such as *Mulḥaq Siyar al-Shammākhī* and *al-Ibādīyah fī Shimāl Ifrīqiya wa-fī Wādī Mīzāb*.

His intellectual genius also yielded a rich corpus of biographical works and life histories, including his biographies of Imam Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf ibn Ibrāhīm, Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Bakr al-Nafūsī, Abū ‘Ammār ‘Abd al-Kāfī, and ‘Abd Allāh ibn Ibād, in addition to biographies of contemporary figures, such as his treatise *al-Shaykh al-Thamīnī kamā ‘Araṭuh*. His contributions were not confined to these domains; rather, they extended to organizational and reformist treatises, such as *Niẓām al-Masājid fī Wādī Mīzāb* and *Niẓām al-‘Ashā’ir fī Wādī Mīzāb*, as well as various Quranic studies, including *Aḍwā’ ‘alā Ba‘ḍ Amthāl al-Qur’ān*, *Anāṣir al-Faṭḥ min Sūrat al-Faṭḥ*, and *Ṣabr Yūsuf Yatajallā fī Sijnih*. Added to this intellectual repertoire was his systematic recording of his personal and historical memoirs, which chronologically covered the period spanning from 1914 to 1972 CE²⁵.

3. The Establishment of the Arab Printing Press

The Arab Printing Press (*al-Maṭba‘ah al-‘Arabīyah*) stands as the first modern Arabic printing house established by an Algerian nationalist, making a conspicuous contribution to the national renaissance. It was housed in confined premises located at 70 Rovigo Street (currently Zabana Street)²⁶. Elucidating his motives for its creation, Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān clarified his goal: "As for establishing the Arab Printing Press, it likewise served a purely literary, non-material purpose. It was an expansive vehicle for publication—not merely for journalism, but for it and for books alike; and means share the moral status of their ends"²⁷. Consequently, this press was regarded as a prominent landmark in the conflict between the

²⁴ Muḥammad ‘Alī Dabbūz, *A‘lām al-Islāh fī al-Jazā’ir 1921–1975*, vol. 1, 1st ed., Algiers: ‘Ālam al-Ma‘rifah, 2013, p. 238.

²⁵ Mūsā Hammīsh, *al-Shaykh Ibrāhīm Abū al-Yaqzān al-Ṣaḥafī al-Shā’ir*, introd. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jilālī, Algiers: Manshūrāt Baghdādī, 2001, pp. 37–38.

²⁶ Muḥammad ibn Qāsim Nāṣir Būhajjām, op. cit., p. 19.

²⁷ Yūsuf Ḥusayn, "Uslūb al-Da‘wah wa-Wasā’iluhā ‘inda Abī al-Yaqzān", *Majallat al-Muwāfaqāt*, no. 5, Algiers: Manshūrāt al-Ma‘had al-‘Ālī li-Uṣūl al-Dīn (June 1996), p. 427.

Arabic script and Latin colonial hegemony. The Shaykh established it through his personal efforts, aided by contributions from benefactors among his brethren, after entering the Arabic journalistic arena in 1926 CE. Prior to its establishment, he had been editing his newspaper *Wādī Mīzāb* in Algiers while printing it in Tunis, ensuring its uninterrupted weekly distribution across Algeria.

Abū al-Yaqzān recognized the necessity of founding a dedicated printing press to overcome logistical printing obstacles; thus, the official launch of the press took place on 10 February 1931 CE. The Shaykh enlisted qualified printers and utilized traditional manual machinery in which words were assembled letter by letter, set into metal chases line by line—a process demanding immense time, effort, and financial expenditure²⁸. Over three decades, the press played a dynamic role in disseminating reformist ideas and propagating the reformist call (*da‘wah*). It successfully achieved its principal objective: reviving the Arabic language and spreading it throughout Algerian circles where its influence had dangerously receded²⁹.

Alongside its commercial printing, the press assumed the responsibility of supporting charitable institutions and national associations by printing their pamphlets and periodicals—frequently free of charge. These included publications for the North African Student Association (*Shabāb al-Mu‘tamar*), the Algerian Muslim Scouts (*al-Kashshāfah al-Islāmīyah al-Jazā‘irīyah*), and educational societies such as the *al-Ḥayāt*, *al-Iṣlāḥ*, and *Tahdhīb al-Banīn* associations. Shaykh al-‘Arabī al-Tibīsī explicitly acknowledged its merit in this domain, noting that it had printed several pamphlets for him without monetary compensation³⁰.

Dr. Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Nāṣir captured the defining contours of this printing press and the Shaykh’s labors within it, drawing upon his childhood observations: "As a young child, I used to visit the press from time to time, standing spellbound before these machines moving in continuous monotony, my nose filled with the pungent smell of ink and chemical solvents. We navigated between those machines with difficulty due to the cramped nature of the premises, beneath which lay a basement accessed via a nearly vertical wooden ladder. Whenever I recalled that place, I remembered the burdens the Shaykh endured in managing the financial obligations of the press"³¹.

Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān also immortalized the hardship of its establishment through verses he composed in his work *Nash‘atī*, stating:

*Halt both of you, that we may weep over the memory of a journal established... devoid of printing machinery, while time was unforgiving. Indeed, my inauguration of an Arabic press... proved arduous for my shoulders to bear, a crushing weight*³².

²⁸ Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Nāṣir, *Mashāyikhī kamā ‘Araftuhum*, 3rd ed., Algiers: Dār Nāṣir li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī‘, 2016, p. 69.

²⁹ Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Īsā Abū al-Yaqzān, "Bushrā lakum yā ‘Ushshāq al-Lughah al-‘Arabīyah", *al-Maghrib*, no. 33 (12 February 1931).

³⁰ Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Nāṣir, *Abū al-Yaqzān wa-Jihād al-Kalimah*, vol. 2, 1st ed., Algiers: Dār Nāṣir li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī‘, 2018, pp. 145–147.

³¹ Muḥammad ibn Qāsim Nāṣir Būhajjām, op. cit., p. 70.

³² Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Īsā Abū al-Yaqzān, op. cit., p. 144.

The press was not limited to printing the Shaykh's own publications; rather, it embraced the printing of numerous foundational books and national newspapers. Printed on its presses were the first edition of *Tārīkh al-Jazā'ir al-‘Āmm* by Shaykh ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jīlālī, the first edition of *Maqāṣid al-Qur’ān* by Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ṣāliḥ al-Ṣiddīq, *al-Baṣā’ir* (the official organ of the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulema), and the newspaper *al-Manār* by Shaykh Muḥammad Būzawzū. It also printed works by Shaykh Aḥmad Tawfīq al-Madanī, such as *al-Jazā'ir*, *al-Muslimūn fī Madīnat Ṣiqillīyah*, *Ḥanniba’l*, and *‘Uthmān Bāshā Dāy al-Jazā'ir*, in addition to *Sulaymān Bāshā al-Bārūnī* and *Dīwān Abī al-Yaqzān*. Furthermore, it printed the six journals founded by Abū al-Yaqzān: *al-Maghrib*³³, *al-Bustān*³⁴, *al-Nūr*³⁵, *al-Ummah*³⁶, *al-Furqān*³⁷, and *al-Nibrās*³⁸, as well as the newspaper *al-Iṣlāḥ* by Shaykh al-Ṭayyib al-‘Uqbī, and the publications of the Algerian People's Party (*Parti du Peuple Algérien*), foremost among them the anthem *Fidā’ al-Jazā'ir*.

Consequently, the printing press was not merely a site for printing and distribution; it evolved into a cultural forum and gathering place for intellectuals, nationalists, and reformists in the capital, such as Shaykhs al-Ṭayyib al-‘Uqbī, Aḥmad Tawfīq al-Madanī, Muḥammad al-‘Īd Āl Khalīfah, Muḥammad al-Sa‘īd al-Zahrāwī, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Baklī, the poet Mufdī Zakarīyā, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jīlālī, and the political activist ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Mahrī. It also served as a retail outlet for books imported from the Arab East³⁹, particularly the works of Shaykh Ibrāhīm Aṭfayyish⁴⁰. Despite these contributions, Abū al-Yaqzān suffered under the

³³ *Al-Maghrib*: Published from 29 May 1930 to 9 March 1931 across 38 issues. Its sixth issue was printed at the Shaykh's Arab Printing Press; it focused on economic, intellectual, and literary matters with an emphasis on reform. See: Muḥammad Aḥmad Jahlān, *Qaḍāyā al-Iṣlāḥ al-Ijtimā‘ī fī Maqālāt Jarīdat al-Ummah li-Abī al-Yaqzān 1934–1938*, Ghardaia: Jam‘īyat al-Turāth, 2013, p. 63; and ‘Abd al-Qādir Qūba’, *al-Ḥarakah al-Iṣlāḥīyah fī Minṭaqatay al-Zibān wa-Mizāb 1920–1954*, Algiers: Dār Ṭulayṭilah, 2013, p. 185.

³⁴ *Al-Bustān*: Published from 27 April 1933 to 3 July 1933 across 10 issues; a satirical critical newspaper aimed at the general public, it ceased publication after being administratively suspended. See: Al-Zubayr Sayf al-Islām, *Tārīkh al-Ṣaḥāfah fī al-Jazā'ir*, vol. 6, Algiers: al-Sharikah al-Waṭanīyah li-l-Nashr, 1988, p. 99.

³⁵ *Al-Nūr*: Published from 15 September 1931 to 3 May 1933 across 78 issues; held a reformist orientation aimed at enlightening minds and refining character. See: Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Nāṣir, *Abū al-Yaqzān wa-Jihād al-Kalimah*, vol. 1, 5th ed., Algiers, 2018, p. 226.

³⁶ *Al-Ummah*: Published from 8 September 1933 to 6 June 1938 across 170 issues, making it his longest-running newspaper. It addressed national, Arab, and Islamic issues until it was confiscated and suppressed by decision of the colonial authorities. See: ‘Isā Abī al-Yaqzān, *Tārīkh Ṣuḥuf Abī al-Yaqzān*, ed. Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Nāṣir, Algiers: Dār Hūmah, 2003, p. 105.

³⁷ *Al-Furqān*: Published from 8 July 1938 to 3 August 1938 in only 6 issues; it focused on spiritual matters and combating stagnation before French authorities suspended it under the pretext that it represented activities of the banned Algerian People's Party. See: Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Nāṣir, op. cit., p. 286.

³⁸ *Al-Nibrās*: Published from 21 July 1933 to 22 August 1933 across 6 issues; it contained scathing criticism of colonial policy toward the Arabic press and disseminated reformist thought until its suspension. See: Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Nāṣir, op. cit., pp. 250–259.

³⁹ Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Nāṣir, op. cit., pp. 145–147.

⁴⁰ Shaykh Ibrāhīm Aṭfayyish: (1888–1965 CE) A prominent figure from the M'zab Valley who studied at Ez-Zitouna and was a member of the Destour Party in Tunis, before France exiled him to Egypt where he founded the journal *al-Minhāj* and continued his intellectual and national activities. See: ‘Ādil Nuwayḥīd, *Mu‘jam A’lām*

financial burdens of the press, which encumbered him with heavy debts and anxieties resulting from severe economic crises, particularly the global crisis preceding the Second World War (1939–1945 CE)⁴¹; during these crises, the people of the M'zab Valley stood by his side, led by Shaykh Ibrāhīm Bayyūd⁴².

The Stance of the French Authorities Toward the Arab Printing Press

The Arab Printing Press was not spared from police raids, continuous searches, and surveillance, alongside the targeting of Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān with financial fines and administrative penalties, as well as the harassment, detention, and occasional imprisonment of its workers and printers⁴³. This repression stemmed from the fact that the press posed a constant source of concern for the French occupation due to its nationalist activities operating outside the dictates of the colonial administration—particularly as it assumed responsibility for publishing Abū al-Yaqzān's series of newspapers, which served as the true catalyst for preserving national identity. In this context, the French authorities brought direct charges against Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān, stating that his press "publishes and prints the productions of Ibn Bādīs, maintains continuous contact with revolutionary elements, and prints revolutionary material including the national anthem and publications of the Algerian People's Party"⁴⁴.

Undoubtedly, these harassments and repeated searches were not driven solely by reformist publications; rather, their primary catalyst lay in the tracts and articles printed on behalf of the radical independence movement. Notable among these was the "Manifesto Written on Behalf of the Noble Algerian People," authored by the poet Mufdī Zakarīyā', of which the press printed approximately 40,000 copies that the party's executive committee was tasked with distributing across the nation⁴⁵.

Newspaper Title	Date of Publication	Date of Suppression	Total Issues
Wādī Mīzāb	1 October 1926	18 January 1929	119 issues
Mīzāb	25 January 1930	5 February 1930	1 issue
Al-Maghrib	29 May 1930	9 March 1931	38 issues
Al-Nūr	11 September 1931	2 May 1933	78 issues
Al-Bustān	27 April 1933	3 July 1933	10 issues
Al-Nibrās	21 July 1933	22 August 1933	6 issues
Al-Ummah	8 September 1933	6 June 1938	170 issues

al-Jazā'ir, 2nd ed., Beirut: Mu'assasat Nuwayhid, p. 19; and Muḥammad Nāṣir, *al-Shaykh Ibrāhīm Aṭfayyish fī Jihādih al-Islāmī*, Algiers: al-Mu'assasat al-Waṭanīyah li-l-Funūn al-Maṭbū'īyah, 1991, p. 16.

⁴¹ Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Nāṣir, *Mashāyikhī kamā 'Araṭuhum*, op. cit., pp. 68–70.

⁴² Shaykh Ibrāhīm Bayyūd: (1899–1981 CE) A pioneer of the reform movement in the M'zab Valley, founder of the Institute of Life in Guerrara, and member of the administrative council of the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulema. See: A Group of Authors, *Mu'jam A'lām al-Ibādīyah*, vol. 2, Guerrara: Jam'iyat al-Turāth, 1999, p. 36.

⁴³ Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Nāṣir, op. cit., p. 71.

⁴⁴ Jam'iyat al-Turāth, *Mahrajān al-Ṣaḥāfī al-Shaykh Abī al-Yaqzān*, op. cit., p. 138.

⁴⁵ Ṣāliḥ ibn Idrīs, *Mufdī Zakarīyā' min Khilāl Taqārīr al-Idārah al-Faransīyah*, trans. Muṣṭafā Ḥammūdah, Ghardaia: Maṭba'at al-Wifāq, 2012, p. 48.

Al-Furqān	8 July 1938	3 August 1938	6 issues ⁴⁶
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4. His Journalistic Activism

Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān is counted among Algeria's pioneering scholars and early twentieth-century reformers. His cultural and political activism in Tunis alongside the nationalist leader ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Tha‘ālibī paved the way for his major scholarly and national reputation. Following his return from Tunis and his establishment in the capital, Algiers, he launched his journalistic career by issuing his first newspaper in 1926 CE. Through this endeavor, he consolidated ties with Algeria's reformers and ulema, who recognized his absolute sincerity and devotion to serving the nation, the faith, and the homeland⁴⁷. In this regard, the researcher Al-Zubayr Sayf al-Islām describes him stating: "This zealous journalist combated colonialism for a prolonged period in the press arena through his pen and the word of truth; he was a hero among the heroes of Arab struggle (*jihād*) and one of the earliest Algerian militants who reshaped history and renewed its majestic structure"⁴⁸.

The press of Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān was genuinely a journalism of principle, stance, and cause, rightly earning its position as the legitimate mouthpiece of the reformist movement. This status derived from the array of issues and educational reforms it championed—such as calling for the modernization of instruction, establishing free private schools (*al-madāris al-ḥurrah*) in all regions, urging parents to enroll their children and fund these institutions, modernizing curricula, introducing modern sciences, combating intellectual stagnation, eradicating social ills, poverty, and ignorance, advocating national unity while rejecting fanaticism and sectarianism, and elevating preaching and guidance⁴⁹.

The newspapers founded by Abū al-Yaqzān—most notably *al-Ummah*—provided an expansive platform for disseminating the ideas of the reformist school, refuting allegations leveled against it, and articulating its objectives. The Shaykh placed his publications at the disposal of all writers supporting the reformist movement to publish articles and scholarly studies. These intellectual battles persisted for nearly a quarter of a century with the objective of enlightening public opinion and dispelling doubts. Abū al-Yaqzān engaged in a bitter struggle to modernize education in Guerrara and the M'zab Valley; he published scathing articles in the press of Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm Aṭfayyish and various Tunisian newspapers prior to launching his first journal, *Wādī Mīzāb*, in 1926 CE (1344 AH). Through these writings, he confronted traditionalists and stalwarts of stagnation who opposed all innovation in traditional education—a confrontation that led opponents of reform in the M'zab Valley to launch a

⁴⁶ Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Nāṣir, *Abū al-Yaqzān wa-Jihād al-Kalimah*, p. [s.n.]; see also: Qāsim al-Shaykh Bilḥājj, "Juhūd al-Ṣaḥāfah al-Islāhīyah al-Jazā'irīyah fī Muqāwamat Mukhaṭṭaṭāt al-Isti'mār al-Faransī: Abū al-Yaqzān Unmūdhajan", *Ḥawlīyāt Jāmi'at al-Jazā'ir* 1, no. 25, part 2 (July 2014), p. 163.

⁴⁷ Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Nāṣir, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 25.

⁴⁸ Al-Zubayr Sayf al-Islām, "Ākhir Ḥadīth li-‘Amīd al-Ṣaḥāfīyīn al-Jazā'irīyīn al-Marḥūm Abī al-Yaqzān", *Majallat al-Aṣālah*, nos. 14–15 (June–August), yr. 3 (1973), p. 288.

⁴⁹ Qāsim al-Shaykh Bilḥājj, "al-Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān wa-Ma‘ālim fī Jihādih al-Islāmī", *Majallat al-Muwāfaqāt*, no. 5, Algiers: al-Ma‘had al-Waṭanī al-‘Ālī li-Uṣūl al-Dīn (1996), pp. 498–509.

campaign gathering 400 signatures demanding the suppression of *Wādī Mīzāb*. In this context, the historian Abū al-Qāsim Sa'd Allāh highlights the defining feature of the Shaykh's journalistic struggle: "As for his journalistic role, the number of his newspapers, and his confrontation with the administration, it has been addressed by numerous scholars. It remains a unique phenomenon that distinguished Abū al-Yaqzān, particularly during the period from 1926 to 1938 CE; he would reissue his publication under a new title whenever the administration banned it, demonstrating that events adapted him without ever breaking him"⁵⁰.

The Shaykh devoted meticulous attention to social reform and safeguarding the religious and worldly well-being of the Algerian individual. This focus is evident in the titles of his well-known essays, such as: *To the Meadows of Knowledge and the Springs of Wisdom; If Hunger Causes the Death of the Body, Ignorance Causes the Death of the Soul; Can a Muslim's Affairs Prosper in This Life Without Adherence to Religion?*; and *Before We Commence Instruction, We Must Pay Heed*⁵¹. Through these bold essays, Abū al-Yaqzān analyzed the profound contradictions and intellectual, educational, and civilizational maladies afflicting society. In praise of his journalistic stature, the poet Mufdī Zakarīyā' remarked: "If the title 'Doyen of Journalism' is deserved by any master of the press in Algeria, Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān possesses this title with absolute merit and distinction. He completed ten full years of glorious journalistic struggle, defying the colonial administration in Algeria with patience, composure, and an unwavering determination—all during a period considered among the most arduous and brutal phases of the struggle of the pen in Algeria"⁵².

For Abū al-Yaqzān, journalism was a modern necessity to establish reformist thought and counter colonial policy, owing to the vigor of its discourse and its capacity to combat intellectual inertia, religious deviation, and sectarian fanaticism⁵³. Among his primary motivations for traveling to Tunis in his early years was the pursuit of intellectual freedom denied to him in his homeland, an aspiration he expressed by stating: "I found no means to achieve that end except by undertaking the Pilgrimage at the expense of certain wealthy patrons"⁵⁴.

Nevertheless, Abū al-Yaqzān's press was subjected to rigorous colonial restrictions and stringent censorship due to its reformist platform defending the Arab-Islamic identity and resisting the policy of enforced ignorance. Colonial security authorities monitored his activities through relentless intelligence reporting, systematically suppressing his newspapers week after week based on administrative informers and executive pressures. Reflecting mournfully on this journalistic hardship and colonial oppression, Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān stated: "Permit me to seize this precious opportunity to address you as an afflicted journalist,

⁵⁰ Abū al-Qāsim Sa'd Allāh, *Tārīkh al-Jazā'ir al-Thaqāfi*, vol. 5, 1st ed., Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1998, p. 293.

⁵¹ 'Azīz Salāmī, "Qirā'ah Tarbawīyah fī Fikr al-Shaykh Abī al-Yaqzān", *Majallat al-Muwāfaqāt*, no. 5, Algiers: al-Ma'had al-Waṭanī al-'Ālī li-Uṣūl al-Dīn (1996), p. 436.

⁵² Mufdī Zakarīyā', op. cit., p. 65.

⁵³ Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Nāṣir, *al-Ṣuḥuf al-'Arabīyah al-Jazā'irīyah*, 1986, pp. 66–67.

⁵⁴ Muḥammad 'Alī Dabbūz, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 253.

to share something of my pain and anguish regarding the exhaustion and persecution that have befallen me in the service of this profession, as well as the catastrophic material and moral losses I have endured as a consequence of that unsheathed sword hanging over the neck of the Arabic press"⁵⁵.

5. His Associational Activism

5.1. The Establishment of M'zab's Reformist Schools and Their Educational Role

The personality of Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān is multifaceted, revolving fundamentally around the reformist associational movement—particularly within the M'zab Valley region—which contributed dynamically to preserving national fundamentals and Algerian collective memory. Following years of scholarly acquisition spent moving between Guerrara, Beni Isguen, and Tunis, he returned to his birthplace to contribute to the cultural and educational development of his community. In June 1915 CE, with the authorization of his teacher, al-Ḥājj 'Umar ibn Yaḥyā, who encouraged him to design a modern educational system, he established an educational institute for students under the umbrella of *Hay'at Īrawān*⁵⁶. Abū al-Yaqzān organized instruction into four distinct study circles (*ḥalaqāt*): he personally assumed the instruction of the first, Shaykh 'Abd Allāh ibn Ibrāhīm Abū al-'Alā' taught the second, al-Ḥājj 'Umar ibn al-Ḥājj Mas'ūd led the third, while Shaykh al-Ḥājj 'Umar ibn Yaḥyā directed the fourth⁵⁷.

The curriculum of this school synthesized religious sciences with modern secular subjects; he sought to modernize and renew his teacher's institute, deeply influenced by the curricula of the Khaldūnīyah School in Tunis, where he had been a student and later supervised its educational missions. Abū al-Yaqzān's school flourished, and its positive impact was reflected in the conduct and academic achievement of its students, delighting both parents and reformists. His formidable religious and social authority left a profound mark on his pupils, as he instilled within them adherence to faith, self-sacrifice, courage, altruism, and devotion to truth⁵⁸. In this regard, the historian Muḥammad 'Alī Dabbūz characterizes the role of this school stating: "The school contained the nucleus of modern education in the M'zab Valley and a new direction for reform in Guerrara in particular, for those very students were the ones who carried the banner of reform and served as a shield for both Abū al-Yaqzān and Shaykh Ibrāhīm Bayyūd—may God have mercy upon them all" ⁴.

Despite incorporating modern subjects previously absent from traditional Quranic schools, this institutional experiment at his birthplace did not endure for long. In late December 1917 CE, he departed for Tunis following insistent requests from former students of Shaykh al-Ḥājj 'Umar that he supervise the educational mission, given his prior familiarity

⁵⁵ Ibrāhīm ibn 'Īsā Abū al-Yaqzān, *al-Ummah*, no. 120 (4 May 1937).

⁵⁶ *Hay'at Īrawān*: A religious-educational institution comprising advanced students who have completed the memorization of the Quran and continued their pursuit of religious sciences. This system was founded by Shaykh 'Ammī al-Sa'īd al-Jarbi in the mid-ninth century AH (fifteenth century CE), and it serves as the primary auxiliary body to the Assembly of *al-'Azzābah*. See: A Group of Authors, *Mu'jam Muṣṭalaḥāt al-Ibāḍīyah*, vol. 1, 2nd ed., Muscat: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa-l-Shu'ūn al-Dīniyah, 2017, p. 90.

⁵⁷ Ibrāhīm ibn 'Īsā Abū al-Yaqzān, *op. cit.*, pp. 46–47.

⁵⁸ Muḥammad 'Alī Dabbūz, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, pp. 203–206.

with the Tunisian context. The Shaykh expressed profound sorrow over leaving this nascent project into which he had poured his utmost effort, writing in his work *Nash'atī*: "All these endeavors were emerging together within my heart, constituting all my hopes in this life. It broke my heart to leave them to vanish into thin air after two full years of effort; had there been someone to succeed me, the misfortune would have been far lighter"⁵⁹.

Despite the brevity of this initial experiment, Abū al-Yaqzān's credit was paramount in laying the foundational stones for the renowned reformist schools of the M'zab region that were subsequently established across its seven cities—such as the *al-Ḥayāt*, *al-Faṭḥ*, *al-Nūr*, *al-Iṣlāḥ*, *al-Jābirīyah*, *al-Nahḍah*, *al-Isti qāmah*, and *al-Naṣr* schools—which drew explicitly upon his guidance and pioneering experience⁶⁰.

His practical initiative proved sufficient to dispel the initial apathy and aversion harbored by the general public toward this modernized educational model. Illustrating the fruits of this endeavor, Muḥammad 'Alī Dabbūz observes: "Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān achieved his objective through his modern Quranic school. He gave Guerrara and the M'zab region a true taste of the sweetness and utility of modern Arabic instruction when coupled with robust Islamic upbringing. He instilled in them the imperative of modern Quranic schools—institutions that preserve the Quran alongside essential religious, Arabic, and natural sciences, while cultivating refined, resilient souls and enlightened, perceptive minds. Abū al-Yaqzān thus forged for Guerrara, the M'zab, and southern Algeria the correct perspective toward this style of education, from which many had previously recoiled"⁶¹.

5.2. The Establishment of Literary Clubs

The establishment of literary clubs occupied a central position within the reformist vision of Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān, given their dynamic role in rectifying Arabic speech, refining morals, and safeguarding youth from deviation and corruption, as well as unifying the intellectual and social orientation of the nation. Abū al-Yaqzān advocated transforming these clubs into complementary tributaries to the national private schools (*al-madāris al-ḥurrah*), emphasizing this symbiotic relationship by stating: "They are the offspring of the schools and a branch among their branches; wherever the latter flourish, the former spring forth"⁶².

Translating this vision into practice, Abū al-Yaqzān established the first literary club in his birthplace of Guerrara in 1915 CE, attached to his private school opened following his return from Tunis. Through it, he sought to preserve and defend Arabic literature, while providing the rising generation with the methodology and path to enter the struggles of life equipped with knowledge and awareness. He subsequently renewed this initiative by founding the "Literary Club of Guerrara" in the summer of 1924 CE to hold weekly public sessions, personally assuming its presidency alongside a distinguished group of regional figures. He appointed Shaykh Ibrāhīm Bayyūd as vice president, while the membership included Shaykhs al-Ṭarābulusī, Qāsim ibn al-Ḥājī 'Īsā, Mallālī al-Nāṣir ibn Ṣāliḥ, Ḥarīz 'Abd Allāh ibn Ibrāhīm, and the inspector 'Addūn ibn al-Ḥājī (Shaykh 'Addūn).

⁵⁹ Ibrāhīm ibn 'Īsā Abū al-Yaqzān, op. cit., pp. 47–48.

⁶⁰ Muḥammad al-Ḥasan Fuḍalā', *Min A'lām al-Iṣlāḥ fī al-Jazā'ir*, Algiers, 2000, p. 90.

⁶¹ Muḥammad 'Alī Dabbūz, op. cit., vol. 3, p. 205.

⁶² Ibrāhīm ibn 'Īsā Abū al-Yaqzān, "Ḥawl al-Madāris wa-l-Nawādī", *Wādī Mīzāb*, no. 42 (29 July 1927).

The Shaykh drafted a foundational constitution for this club regulating its proceedings and weekly activities, aimed at cultivating literary practice in both prose and poetry while steeping its members in the masterpieces of Arab heritage. In their study circles, the members adopted the classical text *al-Umdah fī Maḥāsin al-Shi'r wa-Ādābih wa-Naqdih* by Ibn Rashīq al-Qayrawānī, analyzing its treasures through textual study, discussion, analysis, criticism, and comparison, committing its finest passages to memory, and training participants in writing on diverse literary themes. Notable in this regard is that when Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān prepared to travel to Tunis, the club members commissioned him to compose a farewell poem, to which he responded with a poem subsequently included in his *Dīwān*⁶³. This club continued to fulfill its mission for nearly a year and a half, until it was eventually succeeded by the "Literary Youth Association" (*Jam'īyat al-Shabāb al-Adabīyah*) at the Institute of Life⁶⁴.

5.3. The Literary Youth Association

Shortly after the establishment of the Institute of Life (*Ma'had al-Ḥayāt*) in 1925 CE, a student organization known as the "Youth Association" (*Jam'īyat al-Shabāb*) was founded. It operated as a club dedicated to the cultural and social formation of students, training them in moral courage across the literary arts—poetry, public speaking, literary composition, debates, and delivering addresses—to correct their errors and cultivate eloquence and fluency of speech. The association thus functioned as a practical arena for the theoretical lessons students received at the institute.

The association was created upon the proposal and initiative of the institute's director, Shaykh 'Addūn, alongside senior students. Credit is due to Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān for inspiring the concept of such associations from Tunis through his scholarly correspondence—an idea that met with the approval and encouragement of Shaykh Ibrāhīm Bayyūḍ. Consequently, it was officially established in 1926 CE (a year following the institute's founding). The association thereby became a competitive platform where students engaged in research and debate, discovering and refining their talents while unlocking their potential in literature, rhetoric, public speaking, poetry, prose, theatrical performance, discussion, and critical thought⁶⁵.

⁶³ Sa'īd Bilḥājj Sharīfī (Shaykh 'Addūn), *Ma'had al-Ḥayāt: Nash'atuh wa-Taṭawwuruh*, Guerrara: Jam'īyat al-Turāth, 2008, pp. 47–48.

⁶⁴ The Literary Youth Association (*Jam'īyat al-Shabāb al-Adabīyah*): The idea for its founding traces back to scholarly and educational correspondence between Shaykh 'Addūn and Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān, in which the latter conveyed aspects of the literary renaissance in Tunis. The Literary Club founded by Abū al-Yaqzān in 1924 CE exerted a profound impact in forming the initial nucleus of this association at the Institute of Life in 1926 CE under the presidency of Shaykh 'Addūn. The association went on to produce a manuscript journal titled *Jarīdat al-Shabāb*, which contributed to cultivating literary talent and elevating stylistic expression. See: Muḥammad 'Alī Dabbūz, *Nahḍat al-Jazā'ir al-Ḥadīthah wa-Thawratuhā al-Mubārakah*, vol. 2, 1st ed., Algiers: 'Ālam al-Ma'rifah, p. 120.

⁶⁵ Sa'īd Bilḥājj Sharīfī (Shaykh 'Addūn), *Ma'had al-Ḥayāt: Nash'atuh wa-Taṭawwuruh*, Guerrara: Jam'īyat al-Turāth, 2008, pp. 50–52; and Muḥammad 'Alī Dabbūz, *Nahḍat al-Jazā'ir al-Ḥadīthah wa-Thawratuhā al-Mubārakah*, vol. 2, 1st ed., Algiers: 'Ālam al-Ma'rifah, p. 120.

5.4. His Contribution to the Founding of the Institute of Life (*Ma'had al-Ḥayāt*)

When fierce opposition mounted to dismantle the educational mission of Algerians in Tunis, Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān recognized the gravity of the situation, pondered its fate deeply, and established a solid base within the homeland to protect it. Burning with reformist zeal, he returned to his birthplace in 1925 CE, where, with the assistance of local residents, he initiated the founding of a modern institute for instruction in the Arabic language known as the Institute of Life (*Ma'had al-Ḥayāt*)⁶⁶. This institute played a conspicuous and historical role in the M'zab Valley, graduating successive generations of scholars, poets, intellectuals, and thinkers⁶⁷.

Abū al-Yaqzān contributed immensely to laying the foundations of this institution. Through continuous correspondence, he urged the establishment of an advanced institute adopting modern methods and incorporating contemporary subjects. He personally participated in drafting its curricula and programs, while supplying his colleagues with comprehensive Middle Eastern journals and invaluable books⁶⁸, owing to his standing as one of the students most thoroughly versed in Tunis's educational innovations and contemporary curricula⁶⁹. Furthermore, he personally drafted the historical founding charter of the institute issued in late 1925 CE, opening it with an exposition on the importance of education in national advancement, while detailing a curriculum divided by academic levels (*al-ṭabaqāt al-ṣuḡhrā wa-l-kubrā*) that separated general academic subjects from Quranic memorization⁷⁰.

This step was preceded by his preparation of a landmark historical document titled *Wathīqat Iṣlāḥ al-Ta'lim* ["Document on Educational Reform"] in Muḥarram 1343 AH (1924 CE) to structure the educational framework of the Youth Institute (*Ma'had al-Shabāb*, the initial nucleus). This document delineated the formal name of the institution⁷¹, the internal organization of the house of learning, the language of instruction, pedagogical methods, scheduling, disciplinary measures, academic classifications, pedagogical objectives, and the organization of written and oral exercises⁷².

⁶⁶ The Institute of Life (*Ma'had al-Ḥayāt*): A private educational institute established on modern pedagogical principles, aimed at cultivating the mind, enlightening the intellect, and providing proper moral training to prepare students for religious, social, and national reform. It was inaugurated on Friday, 28 Shawwāl 1343 AH / 21 May 1925 CE by Shaykh Ibrāhīm Bayyūḍ. Its curriculum was divided into levels offering jurisprudence, legal theory, rhetoric, grammar, morphology, logic, theology, arithmetic, history, literature, and ethics. Students flocked to it from the M'zab region, across Algeria, and the Nafusa Mountains (*Jabal Nafūṣah*), graduating prominent figures such as the historian 'Alī Yahyā Mu'ammar, the historian Muḥammad 'Alī Dabbūz, the writer Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Nāṣir, and the poet Muḥammad al-Akhḍar al-Sā'ihī. See: Sa'īd Bilḥājī Sharīfī, op. cit., p. 54.

⁶⁷ Muḥammad 'Alī Dabbūz, *Nahḍat al-Jazā'ir al-Ḥadīthah wa-Thawratuhā al-Mubārakah*, vol. 3, 1st ed., Algiers: 'Ālam al-Ma'rifah, p. 21.

⁶⁸ Muḥammad 'Alī Dabbūz, *A'lām al-Iṣlāḥ fī al-Jazā'ir*, vol. 4, Constantine: Maṭba'at al-Ba'th, p. 278.

⁶⁹ Qāsim al-Shaykh Bilḥājī, *Ma'ālim al-Nahḍah al-Iṣlāḥīyah 'inda Ibādīyat al-Jazā'ir*, 1st ed., Guerrara: Jam'iyat al-Turāth / al-Maṭba'ah al-'Arabīyah, 2011, p. 250.

⁷⁰ Ṣāliḥ ibn 'Abd Allāh, *al-Qarārah min Bidāyat al-Ḥarakah al-Iṣlāḥīyah ilā al-Istiqlāl*, 1st ed., Guerrara: Jam'iyat al-Turāth, p. 309.

⁷¹ Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Nāṣir, *Abū al-Yaqzān wa-Jihād al-Kalimah*, vol. 1, op. cit., pp. 79–94.

⁷² For further details on the educational reform document authored by Abū al-Yaqzān, see: Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Nāṣir, *Abū al-Yaqzān wa-Jihād al-Kalimah*, pp. 230–235.

Abū al-Yaqẓān described the institute as "a candle in the desert gathering students," relying on the memorization of the Quran and Prophetic traditions alongside instruction in calligraphy and orthography⁷³. The complementary partnership between Abū al-Yaqẓān and Shaykh Ibrāhīm Bayyūd manifested in effecting a bold, qualitative shift in academic standards; they expanded the scope of education by incorporating contemporary disciplines echoing intellectual centers like the Khaldūnīyah School in Tunis. These included history, geography, philosophy, mathematics, physics, chemistry, French, and English, alongside traditional arts such as Arabic grammar, morphology, literature, and jurisprudence⁷⁴.

Abū al-Yaqẓān's contributions did not cease at its establishment; starting in 1926 CE, he continually advocated for the ongoing improvement of institutes' material, moral, and aesthetic conditions, expanding their numbers, adapting modern methods from official curricula, selecting modern educational textbooks, implementing mandatory examinations, founding libraries, and urging parents and wealthy patrons to support educational projects—efforts that yielded profound, enduring dividends for the modern Arab-Islamic renaissance in Algeria⁷⁵.

The concept of establishing the Literary Youth Association crystallized and reached fruition through intensive scholarly correspondence between Abū al-Yaqẓān and Shaykh ‘Addūn, through which the former transmitted aspects of the Tunisian scientific and literary renaissance to the Algerian desert. The Literary Club founded by Abū al-Yaqẓān in 1924 CE also exerted a direct, effective influence in shaping the initial nucleus of this association⁷⁶. Regarding the genesis of this youth incubator and the role played by Abū al-Yaqẓān and his brethren, the historian Muḥammad ‘Alī Dabbūz notes: "Shaykh Abū al-Yaqẓān and senior Mozabite students in Tunis were likely among those who inspired this association; the students embraced its creation, recognizing its great benefit for themselves, and Shaykh Bayyūd welcomed it wholeheartedly"⁷⁷.

5.5. His Organization and Supervision of Foreign Educational Missions

Sisterly Tunisia constituted the primary destination for the Algerian elite yearning for free, uninhibited educational pursuit. In this regard, Dr. Abū al-Qāsim Sa‘d Allāh elucidates the dimensions of this destination, stating: "Tunis was the magnet for Algerian emigrants—both permanent settlers and transients—and served as their gateway to the East... Algerians found in the Ez-Zitouna Mosque a sweet, abundant spring at a time when their own homeland was starved of such a civilizational landmark"⁷⁸.

⁷³ Muḥammad al-Ḥasan Fuḍalā’, *al-Masīrah al-Rā’idah li-l-Ta’līm al-‘Arabī al-Ḥurr bi-l-Jazā’ir*, op. cit., p. 18.

⁷⁴ Abd al-Qādir Qūba’, *al-Ḥarakah al-Iṣlāḥīyah fī Miṭṭaqatay al-Zībān wa-Mizāb 1920–1954*, Master's thesis, Department of History, Youssef Ben Khedda University, Algiers, 2007–2008, pp. 191–193.

⁷⁵ Muḥammad ‘Alī Dabbūz, op. cit., vol. 4, p. 286.

⁷⁶ Ṣāliḥ ibn ‘Abd Allāh Abū Bakr, *al-Qarārah min Bidāyat al-Ḥarakah al-Iṣlāḥīyah ilā al-Istiqlāl*, Guerrara: Jam‘iyat al-Turāth, pp. 389–390.

⁷⁷ Muḥammad ‘Alī Dabbūz, *Nahḍat al-Jazā’ir al-Ḥadīthah wa-Thawratuhā al-Mubārakah*, vol. 2, 1st ed., Algiers: ‘Ālam al-Ma‘rifah, p. 120.

⁷⁸ Abū al-Qāsim Sa‘d Allāh, op. cit., vol. 5, pp. 490–491.

The Mozabite educational mission experience in Tunis began at an early date. The launch of the first student delegation came through the efforts of Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān following the French colonial authorities' shutdown of the Tebessa Arab-Quranic School. This closure prompted the guardians of Mozabite pupils enrolled there to consider transferring their children to Tunis to pursue their Islamic studies in its private schools—a direct countermeasure to French policies that denied them this right inside their homeland⁷⁹. Accordingly, the Ibādī community dispatched its first educational cohort to Tunis in May 1914 CE, entrusting Abū al-Yaqzān with its supervision and care. He fulfilled his mandate with firmness and resolve: monitoring their studies, instructing them, and managing their affairs. The mission initially comprised six students, subsequently joined by others from Ghardaïa and Beni Isguen until their number reached fifteen⁸⁰.

Abū al-Yaqzān chose to enroll them in the "Modern Arabic School," directed by Shaykh Muḥammad Ṣafar, to acquire the Arabic sciences. The youths studied there for three months before transferring to the newly established "Al-Salām Quranic School"⁸¹, which was managed by the educator al-Shādhilī al-Marālī⁸². However, wartime circumstances and unfolding developments forced this initial mission to return after a residency of only ten months in Tunis⁸³.

As for the second student mission, it set out in October 1916 CE and arrived in Tunis in early 1917 CE under the leadership and direction of Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān, who traveled at its head to complete his higher studies alongside a number of his brethren and scholars⁸⁴. This mission expanded continuously until its student body reached 92 students by the end of the First World War. They all enjoyed the care and mentorship of Shaykhs Ibrāhīm Aṭṭayyish and Muḥammad al-Thamīnī alongside Abū al-Yaqzān. Students were directed to the study circles of the flourishing Ez-Zitouna Mosque and the classrooms of the Khaldūnīyah School; Abū al-Yaqzān maintained that preparing and forming youth for the future required a balanced, comprehensive education synthesizing religious, Arabic, and modern sciences, alongside the study of the French language⁸⁵.

The mission witnessed intense enthusiasm and vibrant literary activity, embodied in the founding of clubs and associations—such as the *al-Wifāq* Association and its journal, as well as the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* Association and its journal, *al-Barq*. Scholars and leaders who visited its headquarters in Tunis bore witness to its merits, including Shaykhs ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd ibn Bādīs, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Tha‘ālibī, and Sulaymān Bāshā al-Bārūnī, who all affirmed that it augured a prosperous future for M'zab and for all of Algeria. This Yaqzānid mission

⁷⁹ Qāsim al-Shaykh Bilḥājī, *Ma‘ālim al-Nahḍah al-Iṣlāḥīyah ‘inda Ibādīyat al-Jazā’ir*, op. cit., p. 255.

⁸⁰ Abū al-Qāsim Sa‘d Allāh, *Tārīkh al-Jazā’ir al-Thaqāfi*, 1st ed., vol. 3, Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1998, pp. 273–275.

⁸¹ Al-Salām Quranic School (*Madrasat al-Salām al-Qur‘ānīyah*): A private school established in Tunis during the late colonial era to offer an educational program combining Quranic memorization with modern sciences.

⁸² Qāsim al-Shaykh Bilḥājī, op. cit., p. 572.

⁸³ Muḥammad ‘Alī Dabbūz, op. cit., vol. 3, pp. 173–183.

⁸⁴ Abd al-Qādir ‘Azzām ‘Awwādī, *Tārīkh al-Ḥarakah al-Iṣlāḥīyah li-Banī Mīzāb Khilāl al-Fatrah al-Mumtaddah 1914–1962*, 1st ed., Algiers: al-Māhir li-l-Ṭibā‘ah wa-l-Nashr, 2018.

⁸⁵ Qāsim al-Shaykh Bilḥājī, op. cit., p. 576.

continued to receive youth from the region for nearly nineteen years, until it permanently ceased upon the return of its coordinator, Qāsim ibn al-Ḥājǧ 'Īsā, in 1936 CE⁸⁶.

Despite the monumental success it achieved, the Mozabite mission was subjected, beginning in 1920 CE, to smear campaigns and misrepresentations launched by certain conservatives and detractors in the M'zab Valley. This stirred anxieties among several families, prompting them to withhold their children from joining. Confronted with this fierce opposition, Abū al-Yaqẓān's journalistic and consciousness-raising role came to the fore through fiery articles demonstrating the imperatives of holding fast to this reformist path, which he published on the pages of Emir Khālīd's newspaper, *al-Iqdām*, and in his guidance treatise titled *Irshād al-Ḥā'irīn*⁸⁷.

5.6. His Membership and Role in the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulema

Shaykh Abū al-Yaqẓān joined the ranks of the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulema (*Jam'iyat al-'Ulamā' al-Muslimīn al-Jazā'irīyīn*) from its earliest foundational genesis. He continued to bolster its efforts and defend its reformist objectives across the pages of his Yaqẓānid newspapers until the outbreak of the Second World War, when national newspapers were forced to suspend publication, during which he distinguished himself as an active, dynamic member in its ranks⁸⁸, never hesitating to execute the missions entrusted to him⁸⁹.

When the scholarly forces in Algeria coalesced and founded the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulema in May 1931 CE under the leadership of Imam 'Abd al-Ḥamīd ibn Bādīs, Abū al-Yaqẓān contributed his intellect and effort to this historic establishment. He was elected as an active member of its administrative council in 1932 CE⁹⁰, and was subsequently re-elected as deputy treasurer in 1934 CE⁹¹. The high degree of trust he enjoyed among the leaders of the reformist movement derived from his stature and organizational role; he was repeatedly re-elected to the Association's administrative bodies between 1931 and 1938 CE, securing high vote tallies in secret ballots. For instance, in the meeting of 23 May 1932 CE, he secured 100 out of 104 votes—trailing Ibn Bādīs by a margin of merely four votes—and placing fifth overall. His success in elections for its successive administrative councils persisted through 1934, 1935, 1936, and 1938 CE⁹².

Abū al-Yaqẓān was elected to the administrative council succeeding his companion, Shaykh Ibrāhīm Bayyūḍ. He continued his staunch defense of the Association through his newspaper *al-Ummah*, which covered all of its conferences and activities, as well as through

⁸⁶ Muḥammad 'Alī Dabbūz, op. cit., vol. 3, pp. 223–224.

⁸⁷ Mufdī Zakarīyā', op. cit., p. 165.

⁸⁸ See Appendix No. 2 and Appendix No. 3.

⁸⁹ Mūsā Hammīsh, *al-Shaykh Ibrāhīm Abū al-Yaqẓān al-Ṣaḥāfī al-Shā'ir*, introd. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jīlālī, Algiers: Dār Baghdādī, 2014, pp. 29–30.

⁹⁰ Aḥmad al-Khaṭīb, *Jam'iyat al-'Ulamā' al-Muslimīn wa-Atharuhā al-Iṣlāḥī fī al-Jazā'ir*, Algiers: al-Mu'assasat al-Waṭaniyah li-l-Kitāb, 1985, p. 167.

⁹¹ "al-Ijtimā' al-'Āmm li-Jam'iyat al-'Ulamā' al-Muslimīn fī Ākhir Sanatihā al-Rābi'ah", *al-Ummah*, no. 43 (24 September 1935).

⁹² Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Nāṣir, "al-Shaykh Abū al-Yaqẓān wa-Dawruh fī al-Ḥarakah al-Iṣlāḥīyah wa-Makānatuh fī Jam'iyat al-'Ulamā' al-Muslimīn al-Jazā'irīyīn", *Multaqā al-Dhikrā al-Arba'in li-Wafāt Shaykh al-Ṣaḥāfah al-Jazā'irī Abī al-Yaqẓān*, Ghardaia: Jam'iyat al-Turāth, p. 63.

his articles in the journals *al-Shihāb* and *al-Baṣā'ir*. Regarding the blessed launch of the Association and its impact, Abū al-Yaqẓān noted in one of his articles: "A brief period had hardly elapsed since its inception before a wave of reform struck the country from one end to the other. People soon heard news of it, creating a tremendous resonance in both West and East, and its voice was heard across the lands of Islam... Such is the truth of the Association of Ulema, and such is its goal in broad daylight: its exterior reflects its interior, and its interior reflects its exterior, devoid of obscurity or ambiguity"⁹³.

The roots of the firm relationship between Abū al-Yaqẓān and Imam Ibn Bādīs date back to 1921 CE in Tunis, where the first meeting took place between Ibn Bādīs and the sons of the M'zab Valley at the residence of their educational mission, which Abū al-Yaqẓān headed alongside Shaykhs Ibrāhīm Aṭfayyish and Muḥammad al-Thamīnī⁹⁴. Ibn Bādīs immortalized the impact of that visit in an article published in the newspaper *al-Najāh*, marking the beginning of close journalistic and intellectual collaboration that encompassed exchanging articles, mutual promotion, highlighting new publications, and sharing anguish over the confiscation of newspapers. These fraternal ties persisted through direct visits in Algiers and Constantine, as well as through Mozabite merchants.

Within the scope of his local activism in his birthplace, Abū al-Yaqẓān was appointed a member of the *Ḥalqat al-‘Azzābah*⁹⁵ in Guerrara, frequently deputizing for Shaykh Bayyūd in delivering sermons at the Grand Mosque until he was incapacitated by paralysis in April 1957 CE⁹⁶. He was also chosen as a leading member and later as president of the administrative board of the *Jam‘īyat al-Ḥayāt al-Iṣlāḥīyah* in Guerrara in 1937 CE⁹⁷, contributing his experiential and intellectual weight to the success of its trajectory. In one of his addresses, he praised the lectures of its scholars, stating: "Now then, O gentlemen, you have heard from my brothers, the learned scholars, precious guidance and valuable counsel that illuminates for you the pathways of the right course, informing you of who you are and the nature of the bonds

⁹³ Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Īsā Abū al-Yaqẓān, "Mawjāt al-Iṣlāḥ al-Dīnī wa-l-‘Ilmī bi-l-Quṭr al-Jazā’irī", *al-Baṣā'ir*, vol. 1, no. 1 (27 December 1935), p. 6.

⁹⁴ Muḥammad al-Thamīnī: (1893–1970 CE) A prominent figure from Beni Isguen who studied at Ez-Zitouna and was a member of the Tunisian Destour Party, assisting Abū al-Yaqẓān in managing the mission and the press. He founded the *al-Isti qāmah* Association in Guelma in 1930 CE, to which the famous *al-Isti qāmah* library is attributed. See: Muḥammad ibn Mūsā Bābā‘ammī et al., *Mu‘jam A‘lām al-Ibādīyah*, 1st ed., vol. 2, Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1999, pp. 383–384.

⁹⁵ *Ḥalqat al-‘Azzābah*: A religious and social body overseeing religious, social, educational, and endowment affairs in Mozabite society. Its organization was established in the eleventh century CE and typically consists of twelve members representing the administrative framework of the town (*al-qaṣr*). See: A Group of Researchers, *Mu‘jam Muṣṭalahāt al-Ibādīyah*, 2nd ed., vol. 2, Muscat: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa-l-Shu‘ūn al-Dīniyah, 2011, pp. 702–704.

⁹⁶ Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Nāṣir, *Mashāyikhī kamā ‘Araṭuhum*, 1st ed., Algiers: Dār al-Rayyām, 2008, pp. 60–61.

⁹⁷ *Jam‘īyat al-Ḥayāt al-Iṣlāḥīyah*: A charitable educational association established by Shaykh Ibrāhīm Bayyūd and notables of Guerrara on 24 July 1937 CE to oversee education and its institutions in Guerrara, with Abū al-Yaqẓān serving as president of its administrative board.

between you and God, between you and yourselves, and between you and fellow human beings"⁹⁸.

The Shaykh held an esteemed position with Imam ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd ibn Bādīs, who praised him stating: "Abū al-Yaqzān, alongside his Mozabite heritage in which he justly takes pride, is an Arab who struggles and strives for the cause of Arabism, a patriot who fights and contends for the cause of the homeland, and a Muslim sincere to God in his faith, placing Islam in the foremost rank of his endeavors. When Abū al-Yaqzān speaks in anguish over events in the Algerian territory, his words bleed, wounding the heart with emotion, and instilling in the soul a vibrant feeling and sublime sensation"⁹⁹. In another passage, Ibn Bādīs added: "He is among those who acquired knowledge for action and reflection, and who were imbued during their student years with a passion for inquiry and advancement... He is considered a cornerstone of our intellectual and reformist renaissance, and a leader among the rising figures of our Mozabite brethren."

His organizational struggle was not confined to theoretical discourse; rather, he placed his Arab Printing Press at the disposal of publishing the Association's literature. When the Governor-General appointed Shaykh al-Ṭayyib al-‘Uqbī as a member of the "Supreme Reform Commission" (*Elite des Hautes Réformes*) in 1946 CE to constitute the High Islamic Council, al-‘Uqbī called upon his friend Abū al-Yaqzān to join the temporary negotiating body¹⁰⁰. The historian Aḥmad Tawfīq al-Madanī revealed the priority of Abū al-Yaqzān's role stating: "I believe I divulge no secret when I say before you that Abū al-Yaqzān did not merely join the Association of Ulema; rather, he was among the founders of the Association of Ulema. He participated with us in the preparatory committee through his thought, his knowledge, and his efforts"¹⁰¹.

Furthermore, the Shaykh undertook meticulous field assignments; the Association entrusted him with guidance and proselytizing tours throughout the Algerian South, particularly in Ouargla, Tougourt, and Djelfa. Regarding his tour in Djelfa, the writer Aḥmad Farṣūṣ notes: "The Association used to dispatch its members to various regions to spread religious awareness... Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān was appointed as an envoy to the region of Djelfa and its environs to fulfill his role in disseminating knowledge and calling to a pristine Islam free from distortion. He spent three weeks moving from one locality to another and from one neighborhood to another, met with hospitality, reverence, and generosity"¹⁰². He continued to fulfill his mission within the Association until circumstances surrounding the

⁹⁸ Nūr al-Dīn Thanīw, *Jam‘iyat al-‘Ulamā’ al-Muslimīn al-Jazā’irīyīn: Fahras Mawḍū‘ī Taḥlīlī li-l-Wathā’iq al-Muta‘alliqah bi-l-Jam‘iyah*, Constantine: Manshūrāt Jāmi‘at al-Amīr ‘Abd al-Qādir li-l-‘Ulūm al-Islāmiyah, 2011, p. 13.

⁹⁹ ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd ibn Bādīs, *al-Shihāb*, vol. 10, pp. 606–608.

¹⁰⁰ Muḥammad Sālīh Nāṣir, "al-Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān wa-Dawruh fī al-Ḥarakah al-Iṣlāḥīyah wa-Makānatuh fī Jam‘iyat al-‘Ulamā’ al-Muslimīn", *Mawsū‘at al-Shaykh Abī al-Yaqzān (I)*, Guerrara: Jam‘iyat al-Turāth, 2020, pp. 58–84.

¹⁰¹ Muḥammad Zagħīnah, op. cit., pp. 66–67.

¹⁰² Aḥmad Farṣūṣ, op. cit., p. 91.

Second World War, the deteriorating health of Ibn Bādīs, and the dispersion of scholars between imprisonment and house arrest forced his withdrawal¹⁰³.

7. His Social Reforms

Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān maintained that the righteousness or corruption of the nation hinges entirely upon the integrity of knowledge and the scholarly class. Accordingly, he delineated a clear distinction between two archetypes of scholars in his celebrated poem, *Al-Muṣliḥūn wa-l-Mufsidūn*, praising the reformist scholars by stating:

*They draw forth from knowledge that which illuminates... the path for the nation amidst dark eras. They evolve alongside time to bring about... that which holds righteousness, repelling every ill phase*¹⁰⁴.

Conversely, he depicted corrupt, stagnant scholars by writing:

They stand in the path of advancement like an obstacle... opposing the natural flow of rivers. They suffer anguish from knowledge whenever... its lights appear, like a thief exposed by the moonlight.

He believed with deep conviction that the mission of a social reformer within an afflicted society—such as Algerian society, burdened as it was by ignorance, poverty, and fanaticism—must transcend individual emotions and rise above narrow partisan or sectarian loyalties. He held that social realities ought not to succumb to colonial political pressure; rather, society was obliged to defy it, emphasizing that the overarching interests of the homeland supersede factional interests, just as the solidarity of collective groups takes precedence over individual whims¹⁰⁵.

His primary focus centered on the individual as the fundamental building block of society. He combated social ills that had taken deep root in Algerian circles, characterizing the triad of national suffering by writing: "Three factors have gained dominion over the nation; had even a single one of them gained power over a great nation, it would have shaken its foundation and demolished its structure: ignorance, poverty, and division. Ignorance stripped the nation of the awareness of its existence and how to defend it; poverty incapacitated it from labor and paralyzed its limbs; and division dissolved its strength and dissipated its momentum. Thus situated, the nation remained vulnerable to ruin, decay, and destruction—a natural outcome of that lamentable condition brought about by tyranny and despotism"¹⁰⁶.

To confront this degradation, he called upon society to hold fast to noble education and virtuous morals, stating: "The foundation of true life is correct education (*al-tarbiyah al-ṣaḥīḥah*), a form of education whose principles God and His Messenger established in the Noble Quran and the sound Sunnah"¹⁰⁷. He stressed the imperative of combating superstitions

¹⁰³ ‘Abd al-Karīm Būṣafṣāf, *Jam‘īyat al-‘Ulamā’ al-Muslimīn al-Jazā’irīyīn wa-Dawruhā fī Taṭawwur al-Ḥarakah al-Waṭanīyah al-Jazā’irīyah*, Constantine: Maṭba‘at al-Ba‘th, 1981, p. 214.

¹⁰⁴ Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Nāṣir, *Dīwān Abī al-Yaqzān*, vol. 1, Algiers: Jam‘īyat al-Turāth, 1989, p. 151.

¹⁰⁵ Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Nāṣir, *Abū al-Yaqzān wa-Jihād al-Kalimah*, vol. 1, op. cit., pp. 69–70.

¹⁰⁶ Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Īsā Abū al-Yaqzān, "Shu‘ūr al-Ummah Nā’im fa-Mādhā Yunabbihuh?", *Wādī Mīzāb*, no. 42 (29 July 1927).

¹⁰⁷ Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Īsā Abū al-Yaqzān, "Naḥnu ilā al-Tarbiyah Aḥwaj", *Wādī Mīzāb*, no. 2 (8 October 1926).

and delusions, and liberating souls from whims and selfishness, asserting that the press must serve as a beacon of guidance, while leaders of associations and political parties ought to form a unified, solid front bound by a single national charter, regardless of the diversity of their methods¹⁰⁸.

The Shaykh recognized that ignorance was the primary malady upon which colonialism fed, expressing its gravity by stating: "Through ignorance, honor has been violated; through ignorance, morals have been corrupted; through ignorance, dignity has been trampled; through ignorance, religions have been insulted; through ignorance, nations have been annihilated; and through ignorance, lands have been ruined... Why then this appalling indifference toward perilous ignorance?!"¹⁰⁹.

His sensitivity to the moral decay of his era reflected in his articles, wherein he denounced ethical deviations and dissolution, proclaiming: "We observe certain transgressors, evildoers, criminals, and wretches feeling no shame in committing the crimes of drunkenness, debauchery, gambling, and the like; rather, they cast off all restraint and plunge headlong into every form of licentiousness"¹¹⁰. His writings reveal that the networks of colonial policy aimed at enforcing ignorance left an impact on youth, manifested in signs of neglect, moral dissolution, and laxity toward religion¹¹¹.

His social reformist endeavors synthesized into a comprehensive vision targeting scientific, literary, intellectual, and cultural reform. This was accomplished by utilizing independent newspapers as platforms for public enlightenment and maintaining active field engagement within local and national associations, establishing his status as the doyen of the free Algerian press and its social reformer.

8. His Educational Reforms

Proper education—grounded in sound, gradual development of youth and structured planning to resist ignorance and corrupters—served as the cornerstone of Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān's reformist project. His stance rejecting the reactive, oppressive measures of the colonial administration toward institutes and private schools was manifested in his famous article, *Hālatunā al-Ta'limīyah*, published in the newspaper *Wādī Mīzāb*, wherein he wrote:

"Indeed, proper education is a overflowing spring granted by God to the rational human being who strives to benefit from this bounty without neglect. After nearly a century has elapsed, minds have remained stumbling in the assemblies of the wicked without an Islamic education, whose light had nearly been extinguished entirely. How could it flourish when most of those who claim to practice it pursue an unproductive method that would yield no

¹⁰⁸ Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Nāṣir, op. cit., p. 49.

¹⁰⁹ Ibrāhīm ibn 'Īsā Abū al-Yaqzān, "Ilā Riyāḍ al-'Ilm wa-Manāhil al-'Irfān", *al-Ummah*, no. 3 (2 October 1934).

¹¹⁰ Ibrāhīm ibn 'Īsā Abū al-Yaqzān, "al-Amr bi-l-Ma'rūf wa-l-Nahy 'an al-Munkar", *al-Ummah*, no. 23 (4 March 1935).

¹¹¹ Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Nāṣir, *Abū al-Yaqzān wa-Jihād al-Kalimah*, op. cit., p. 80.

result even if continued for the lifespan of Noah? And how could it flourish when the individuals who stood up to protect it are subjected to relentless assaults?!"¹¹²

Abū al-Yaqzān maintained that the first step toward Algeria's renaissance had to launch from a solid foundation built upon knowledge and education. For this reason, he made it an obligation upon the entire nation and its notables to direct their energies and resources above all else toward knowledge, instruction, and moral refinement¹¹³. He also emphasized the necessity of involving all segments of society in elevating education, given that the nation is its primary stakeholder, which obliges it to offer both material and moral encouragement. Questioning the nation's apathy, he wrote:

"In vain do you attempt to alert and awaken it; elaborate your discourse as you wish, and vary your methods of warning and admonition as you desire, yet it does not comprehend you nor understand what you say. Indeed, it hears you only as a sleeper hears the sound of an alarm in the depth of dreams. From where could a glimmer of the light of knowledge reach it, or how could it recognize the value of education?! Unless it be by way of mere imitation, as occurs with a child where conviction plays no role whatsoever—and whatever does not stem from conviction is vulnerable to ruin, loss, and dissipation."¹¹⁴

The Shaykh was consistently eager to engage with the academic year, accompanying its opening—which he termed the "seeding season"—and monitoring its conclusion—which he designated the "harvest season"—reviewing results and outcomes. His educational vision rested upon long-standing field practice; he engaged directly with instruction for years when supervising the first Algerian mission to Tunis in 1914 CE, and subsequently when he opened the first regular school in Guerrara in 1915 CE, procuring modern textbooks for it and establishing an advanced curriculum for its students that included subjects considered objectionable at the time¹¹⁵.

Abū al-Yaqzān never hesitated to call for the intellectual nourishment of youth and the eradication of illiteracy within the nation, emphasizing the essential pairing of moral upbringing (*tarbiyah*) with formal instruction (*ta'lim*), stating:

"We have demonstrated in preceding sections what constitutes proper upbringing, its impact, and the necessity of intertwining it with educational curricula to nourish youth with it. Instruction without it is dead seed devoid of spirit; indeed, it produces only the inverse of its intended purpose, as is tangibly observed. Now, we demonstrate what constitutes sound knowledge and proper instruction, and the necessity of generalizing it among all classes so long as they remain functioning organs in the body of the nation, so that the spirit of life may permeate throughout. For knowledge is an effective remedy containing healing for all apparent and hidden, physical and spiritual, individual and social maladies across all times

¹¹² *A'māl al-Multaqā al-Waṭanī al-Awwal ḥawla al-Ta'lim fī al-Jazā'ir Athnā' al-Iḥtilāl 1830–1962*, Algiers: Manshūrāt al-Markaz al-Waṭanī li-l-Dirāsāt wa-l-Baḥṭh fī al-Ḥarakah al-Waṭanīyah wa-Thawrat Awwal Nūfamhir 1954 / al-‘Ālamīyah li-l-Tibā‘ah wa-l-Khidmāt, 2011, pp. 44–45.

¹¹³ Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Nāṣir, *Abū al-Yaqzān wa-Jihād al-Kalimah*, vol. 1, op. cit., p. 52.

¹¹⁴ Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Īsā Abū al-Yaqzān, "Qabla an Na'khudh fī al-Ta'lim Yajib an Nanntabih ilā Āfātih", *al-Ummah*, no. 16 (1 January 1935).

¹¹⁵ Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Nāṣir, op. cit., p. 54.

and places... Knowledge is blood flowing through all branches of social life... Knowledge is water through which God revives lands and servants after their death, conveying it through various mediums to dead lands and impoverished souls, whereupon souls blossom with the flowers of knowledge and virtues after dryness and aridity."¹¹⁶

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the brilliance of Shaykh Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Īsā "Abū al-Yaqzān" was by no means an accident of history; rather, it was the culmination of a deeply integrated social and educational environment that nurtured him in his birthplace of Guerrara and accompanied his scholarly pursuits across Beni Isguen, Tunis, and Medina. The rigorous formation he received under the leading scholars of his era—foremost among them the *Quṭb al-A’immah* Mḥammad ibn Yūsuf Aṭfayyish, Shaykh ‘Umar ibn Yaḥyā, and Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Tha‘ālibī—established a formidable intellectual and scholarly foundation. This training enabled him to master foundational texts in Islamic jurisprudence, Arabic language, and literature, augmented by an exceptional passion for reading and research from an early age—qualities that refined his extraordinary character and prepared him for civilizational resistance and the struggle of the pen.

His journalistic career, launched in 1926 CE with the publication of the newspaper *Wādī Mīzāb*, marked a defining turning point in the history of the free Algerian press. He boldly confronted pressing educational, social, and political issues through a radical reformist lens. The Shaykh’s resilience manifested in his defiance of the colonial apparatus of repression through the issuance of eight consecutive newspapers, establishing a new title whenever the French authorities confiscated or suppressed the former. He anchored this continuous press campaign with a national support network, culminating in the establishment of the Arab Printing Press (*al-Maṭba‘ah al-‘Arabīyah*) in the capital in 1931 CE as the first modern Arabic printing house created through purely Algerian initiative. This press guaranteed him intellectual and publishing independence, transforming "Yaqzānid journalism" into an institution in its own right that produced over 800 issues and printed publications for the national movement, the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulema, and the Algerian People's Party.

Neither his intense journalistic endeavors nor the illness that later afflicted him hindered him from enriching the Algerian and Arab library with a robust intellectual repertoire exceeding sixty books and treatises. These works spanned Quranic studies—such as *Faṭḥ Nawāfīdh al-Qur’ān*; jurisprudential and educational texts—such as his pedagogical series *Sullam al-Isti qāmah*; and historical treatises and prosopographies that filled a crucial void in the history of the Ibādī school and the region, such as *Mulḥaq Siyar al-Shammākhī*. This was in addition to his poetic *dīwāns* that solidified the literature of resistance and reform, led by his famous poem *Ma’sāt Filasṭīn*.

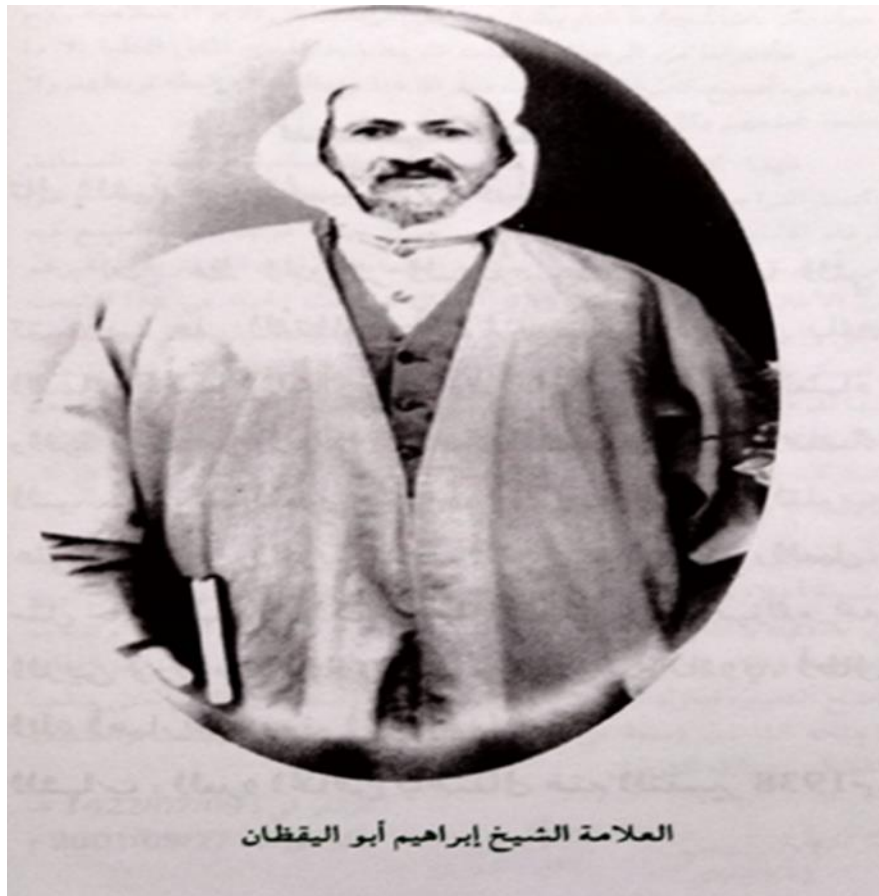
A careful reading of Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān’s career demonstrates that his three primary domains of engagement—journalism, educational thought, and active field-based associational work—were not isolated spheres; rather, they constituted an integrated reformist

¹¹⁶ Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Īsā Abū al-Yaqzān, *Wādī Mīzāb*, yr. 1, no. 4 (22 October 1926).

system serving a singular overarching objective: the preservation of Arab-Islamic identity and the awakening of the collective consciousness. While journalism provided the consciousness-raising platform to reach elites, his educational philosophy formulated the theoretical frameworks for modernizing instruction, and his associational work—channelled through private schools, literary clubs, and the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulema—supplied the practical mechanisms for field implementation and social empowerment. Abū al-Yaqzān thus provided a unique model of the comprehensive reformer who synthesized theory with practice, employing the tools of his era to keep the flame of hope and freedom burning bright within the hearts of his compatriots.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Abū al-Yaqzān Ibrāhīm ibn al-Ḥājǧ ‘Īsā, Guerrara (1888–1973 CE).



Source: Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Nāṣir, *Mashāyikhī kamā ‘Araftuhum*, 3rd ed., Algiers: Dār Nāṣir, 2016, p. 57.

Appendix 2: The Administrative Board of the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulema, featuring Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān seated in the front row, first from left to right.



Source: Mūsā Ḥammīsh, *al-Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān al-Ṣaḥafī al-Shā'ir*, introd. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jilālī, Algiers: Dār Baghdādī, 2001, p. 29.

Appendix 3: Shaykh Abū al-Yaqzān alongside senior members of the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulema.



Source: Abū al-Qāsim Sa'd Allāh, *Tārīkh al-Jazā'ir al-Thaqāfī*, vol. 10, 6th ed., Algiers: Dār al-Baṣā'ir, 2009, p. 332.

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