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The French Cultural and Religious Policy in Algeria and National Reactions

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Abstract:

During the Ottoman era in Algeria (1518-1830 CE), education was widespread and religion was respected. However, when the colonizers set foot in Algeria in 1830 CE, they began implementing a cultural/religious policy with the help of experts and theorists. Their main pillars were assimilation, proselytization, and Frenchification. They achieved this by suppressing Arabic education, combating Islamic religion, and attempting to eliminate the Arab-Islamic identity of the Algerian people through the Frenchification of educational curricula and promoting Christian evangelism. They employed both intimidation and inducement strategies. Nevertheless, the brave Algerian people, through their military and cultural resistance, and later through politics, thwarted all colonial schemes and policies.

Keywords: Algeria, France, colonial policy, cultural resistance, national identity.

Introduction:

After more than three centuries of Ottoman presence with its positives and negatives (1518-1830 CE), Algeria fell victim to the most brutal colonization of the modern world, the detestable French colonization. It aimed to destroy both the land and its people, making life in this geographic region almost impossible. The French implemented a criminal policy across various domains, including the economy, society, culture, and religion, with the intention of maintaining their presence in the country indefinitely. However, the valiant resistance of the Algerian people, militarily, politically, and culturally, shattered all their ambitions and projects.

Now, what were the manifestations of colonial policy in the cultural and religious spheres? And how did Algerians respond to it?

Firstly, French cultural policy in Algeria: It appears that there is a consensus among Algerian and fair-minded French scholars and historians that the cultural situation in Algeria¹, although lagging behind, was better before the French occupation than it became during the colonial era. Travel accounts of foreign explorers who visited Algeria during the Ottoman era attest that education was widespread throughout the territory, and all Algerians were literate before the occupation².

The German traveler Schimper provides the following observation on this matter: "I deliberately searched for a single illiterate Arab in Algeria, but I could not find one, whereas I found such individuals in countries of southern Europe. It is rare to encounter someone there who can read among the general population."³ During that era, Algerians were concerned with sciences and literature. Among them were poets, writers, historians, and legislators⁴.

Arabic was the official language of the country, and education was organized. General de Vialar noted in 1834, "All Arabs are proficient in reading and writing, and in every village, there were two schools. The number of schools reached around two thousand, and there were institutes and universities in Algiers, Constantine, Mascara, Tlemcen, and Oran. Education in the major religious centers such as El Hamel, Chellala, Tidjania, Sidi Ali, and Mayssa flourished. The subjects taught in these institutes were not different from those taught in the rest of the Arab world."⁵

France, since its occupation of Algeria, sought to eradicate the Islamic identity by targeting its fundamental elements: religion and language. It partially achieved its goals by seizing all endowments that provided funding for education and demolishing many mosques that served as schools. Additionally, the French authorities did not expand the opening of French schools for Algerian children, depriving the people of education, which meant depriving them of knowledge of their language and religion.

¹ Abdelmalek Mertad, *Literature of National Resistance in Algeria 1830-1962, Survey of Resistance Images in Artistic Prose, Part One*, Dar Homa for Printing, Publishing, and Distribution, Algeria, 2009, p. 38.

² Michel Habart, *History of a Perjury*, Les Editions De Minuit, Paris, 1960, p. 138.

³ Abu Al-Aid Dudu, *Algeria in the Works of German Travelers (1830-1855)*, National Company for Publishing and Distribution, Algeria, 1975, p. 13.

⁴ Hamdan bin Othman Khawaja, *The Mirror*, Introduction, Translation, and Verification by Mohammed Al-Arabi Al-Zubairi, National Company for Publishing and Distribution, Algeria, 1982, p. 105.

⁵ Ferhat Abbas, *The Algerian War and Its Revolution (1) Night of Colonialism*, translated into Arabic by Abu Bakr Rahal, Fadala Printing Press, Mohammedia, Morocco, undated, p. 60.

The colonizers believed that the only means to eradicate the idea of independence from the minds of nationalists and extinguish the spirit of resistance was to undermine Islamic education and obliterate the principles of Sharia law, which they mistakenly believed were the sole source of civil strife and a means to escape foreign rule⁶.

From the early days of the occupation, France took control of the endowments in Algeria and demolished certain mosques for various reasons, converting some into churches. The endowments provided financial support, while mosques provided teachers and a place for education. France was keen on spreading ignorance among Algerians compared to what it spent on educating settlers. The campaign of ignorance did not stop there but extended to interference in educational curricula and methods. Quranic schools were prohibited from teaching Arabic language books such as *Al-Ajrummyah* and *Ibn Malik's Alfiya*, as well as the prohibition of Quranic interpretation⁷.

The colonial authority considered education a strategic sector that needed to be carefully employed. It was seen as a factor in cultural and social transformation and a dangerous ideological weapon that could help consolidate European influence but was also susceptible to being turned against the colonizers. The educational policies were based on a comprehensive strategic vision, harnessing Western culture to undermine the components of national identity and relying on the formation of cultural intermediaries, whether dual or mono-cultural, whose task was to control the population and establish a connection between them and the authority⁸.

Accordingly, the "dissemination" of education was subjected to a set of ideological constants and political objectives. Firstly, it involved refusing to open the doors of education to the general public and disregarding the secular principles of the republican school. This was done within the framework of establishing two parallel educational systems. The first was modern, aiming to educate the children of settlers and a selected minority from the local population. The second system was traditional, based on Sufi lodges and religious scholars, and it was limited to the general population. From this, we can deduce that the goal of modern colonial education was not to integrate with the prevailing culture of the colonized peoples but rather to provide basic vocational education to the locals, producing a medium-level workforce and skilled workers whose expertise could be exploited by the administration⁹.

The French colonial oppression intensified in its persecution of national culture and waged a relentless war against it using all possible means. This was driven by at least two objectives that truly reflect the nature and course of every colonization in the nations it colonized, especially the French colonization, which was particularly eager to erase national cultures and replace them with French culture.

Firstly, the colonization in Algeria aimed to combat national culture, allowing dissolution and decay to infiltrate it. It sought to erode its essence and introduce elements of disappearance, leading to a lack of cultural identity among the people. Consequently, they embraced the adoption of imported colonial culture.

Secondly, Algerian national culture relied on the Arabic language as a tool for expression and thought. However, French colonization targeted this national and nationalist expressive tool, aiming to blur its features, undermine its structure, cast doubt on its effectiveness, and diminish its learning by favoring the exclusive use of the French language¹⁰.

The reason behind this approach was the colonizers' desire to steer Algerians towards vocational and agricultural education, especially since the settlers needed them for their farms. Conversely, Algerian representatives in this council emphasized the necessity of providing the opportunity for Algerian children to receive primary education first and foremost. In 1920, a vote was held to allocate an additional ten million francs for education in Algeria: should it be allocated to vocational or primary education? Naturally, the vote favored the colonizers' position, resulting in the allocation of this amount to vocational education.

From the beginning, France pursued a policy of complete cultural assimilation in Algeria. It declared French as the official language for administration while suppressing Arabic language education. Colonial extremists forcefully intervened to restrict the enrollment of Arab students in modern schools, justifying it by the need to retain a significant reserve of cheap labor. Consequently, the local population was excluded from the benefits of compulsory and free education laws that were enacted in France in 1881-1882. After a period of fluctuation, the situation stabilized by allowing opportunities for learning to be accessible to the children of loyal elites, preparing them for specific roles in a society controlled by settlers. A limited minority from other social classes were directed towards vocational education¹¹.

We will not delve into the organization of this education, as everyone knows, observes, and experiences it. Its programs are recognized in secondary schools, colleges, schools, and even in schools or makeshift establishments that parents themselves often take care of and finance. This is due to their observation of the French administration's inability to accommodate every student and provide financial support for them¹².

The French educational policy in Algeria faced criticism from moderate French individuals, some supporters of colonization among Algerians, and also nationalists. While schools may appear impressive from a distance, with beautiful buildings, spacious

⁶ Lothrop Stoddard, *The Present of the Islamic World*, translated into Arabic by Professor Ajaj Nuweihed, Comment by Prince Shakib Arslan, Volume One, Part Two, Third Edition, Dar Al-Fikr for Printing, Publishing, and Distribution, Beirut, undated, p. 178.

⁷ Mazen Salah Mutbqani, Abdelhamid Ben Badis: *The Spiritual Leader and Political Leader*, Second Edition, Dar Al-Qalam, Damascus - Dar Al-Shamiyah, Beirut, 1420 AH - 1999 AD, p. 23.

⁸ Nour al-Din al-Daqi, *The Arab Maghreb and French Colonialism*, Surra Publishing, Tunis, 1997, p. 127.

⁹ Same reference, pp. 127-128.

¹⁰ Mertad, previous reference, pp. 44-45.

¹¹ Al-Daqi, previous reference, p. 129.

¹² Sharif bin Hubeilis, *French Algeria as Seen by a Local*, translated by Abdullah Hamadi, Faisal Al-Ahmar, Wayla Bousis, First Edition, Dar Bahaa Al-Din for Publishing and Distribution, 2009, Constantine, Algeria, p. 32.

courtyards, tall doors, and lofty ceilings, deep down they are no different from medieval monasteries. They require numerous reforms to become distinct from the current institutions, which seem untouched by the hand of the colonizer and lack renewal¹³.

In terms of vocational training and professions, Algerian students, in general, are directed towards industries such as woodworking, which are not profitable due to the saturated market. Meanwhile, European students are guided towards mechanical industries that have popularity and a future¹⁴. Even in the field of employment for Algerian workers, it is determined by the colonial administration. They are assigned to physically demanding manual labor such as digging, loading, soil transportation, and cart pulling in mines, buildings, roads, and other areas. This phenomenon applies to Algerian workers, whether in France or Algeria¹⁵.

In addition to France's allocation of financial resources for the education of Algerians, they also targeted the Arabic language. The national language is considered the "spirit of the nation and its pulsating core, so eliminating it is akin to eradicating the nation's identity." Consequently, France divided primary education into two sections: one for Europeans and the other for Algerians. French was designated as the language of instruction in both sections. The danger lies in the fact that the aim is to prevent the formation of Algerian children's nationalist and patriotic personalities from an early age. Modern educational studies have determined that this stage is crucial for the development of children's national and patriotic identities, as it is the time when their capabilities and emotional readiness are at their peak.

As for secondary education, the Arabic language was optional, while the French education provided to Algerians focused more on the history and geography of France than on Algeria itself¹⁶. A contemporary witness of the period confirms this, stating, "I still remember being given the poems of the academic writer Jean Aicard to memorize, and our teacher would talk to us about the greatness, beauty, institutions, and power of France. It is noteworthy that this propaganda was imposed by Paris through the capital city of Algeria. They also taught us national anthems like 'La Marseillaise' or 'La Légion.'¹⁷"

Due to the French administration's need for appointees in the judiciary, mosque imams, muftis, administrators, and translators, they established three Arabic Islamic schools on September 30, 1850, in Médéa, Tlemcen, and Constantine. Later, the Médéa school was relocated to Blida and then to the Algerian capital¹⁸. Graduates of these schools learned Arabic from French teachers, and they did not believe in the Arabic language or its civilization. In fact, they primarily communicated with each other in French¹⁹.

The education permitted by France can be seen through an article published in the records of the Algerian Muslim Scholars Association in the year 1354 AH (1935 AD). The article expresses the following sentiment: "The current state of formal education only evokes deep sorrow and profound grief, as it remains limited to teaching reading, writing, and memorizing the Quran in a very deficient manner. (...) What indicates the barrenness of this outdated method is that it does not engage the student's intellect or concern itself with guiding their thinking, integrating what they receive with their spirit, or preparing them to be proactive individuals for themselves, let alone their society."²⁰

This cultural oppression is evident in precise form through official statistics, as depicted in the following table that illustrates the evolution of the number of students in Algeria²¹:

Year	French	Algerians
1901	75108	24975
1911	92291	40778
1921	87029	42904
1931	104702	67738
1941	137277	117155
1951	138382	212527

The table reveals that the literacy rates were around 19% and 12%, indicating the depth of France's assimilationist policy that aimed to keep the majority of the population ignorant. This explains the alarmingly high illiteracy rates, reaching 86% for men and 95% among women in 1954. From this, we can conclude that education in Algeria did not become a means of social advancement as it did in other countries. The number of students who obtained primary school certificates did not exceed one thousand at the end of the 1920s and around two thousand by the end of the 1930s. The number of high school graduates

¹³ Same source, p. 40.

¹⁴ Malik ibn Nabi, In the Whirlwind of Battle, Dar Al-Fikr Al-Mu'asir, Beirut, Lebanon, Dar Al-Fikr, Damascus, Syria, 1423 AH - 2002 AD, p. 36.

¹⁵ Yahia Bouaziz, Colonial Hegemony Policy and the Algerian National Movement 1830-1954, Diwan of University Publications, Algeria, 2007, p. 54.

¹⁶ Ibn Hubeilis, previous source, p. 32.

¹⁷ Mesalli Al-Hajj, Memoirs of Mesalli Al-Hajj 1898-1938, edited by Abdelaziz Bouteflika, translated by Mohammed Al-Ma'araji, ANEP Publications, Printed by the National Institute of Printing Arts, Righa Unit, Algeria, 2007, p. 64.

¹⁸ Ahmed Tawfik Al-Madani, The Book of Algeria, Arab Printing Press, Algeria, undated, p. 300.

¹⁹ Abdelmalek Mertad, Renaissance of Contemporary Arabic Literature in Algeria 1925-1954, National Company for Publishing and Distribution, Algeria, 1983, p. 31.

²⁰ Algerian Muslim Scholars Association, Proceedings of the Algerian Muslim Scholars Association Conference, Dar Al-Ma'arif, Algeria, undated, p. 92.

²¹ Nicolas Ziyadeh, The Story of Colonization in the Arab World, Beirut, 1981, p. 144.

remained limited to around one hundred annually²². Since 1877 until 1911, we can count only 450 educated individuals out of a population of five million, which includes Muslim learners as well²³.

As a result, the illiteracy rate among Algerians increased, surpassing 92% in the 1920s²⁴.

This was due to the colonizers claiming that Algerians were "incorrigible" and "uneducable." Louis Tirman, who served as the governor of Algeria from 1881 to 1891, once informed his listeners, saying, "Experience has shown that the natives to whom we have given a complete education will become our adversaries."²⁵

As a consequence of France's policy of assimilation, darkness prevailed, and gross ignorance dominated the people. The wretched illiteracy settled in their minds. There were no modern Arabic schools that disseminated knowledge and enlightenment, nor a national university that provided higher education.

Furthermore, French colonialism did not hesitate to silence dissenting voices, muzzle protesting mouths, and tamper with the remnants of Arab-Islamic culture and the elements of national identity in Algeria. One expert raises a question regarding the absence of Algerian scientific and cultural innovation during the colonial period, stating: "Can a people deprived of the blessing of bread, just as they were deprived of bodily well-being and a radiant countenance, aspire to produce profound knowledge and strive for the creation of a beautiful and elevated culture? And when have we witnessed in the long history a nation deprived of the blessings of knowledge, labor, and the comfortable life, yet able to write lofty philosophy, produce sound thinking, and create splendid literature?"²⁶

Algerians fought against the French policy of marginalization. They turned to establishing independent schools, but France enacted special laws to hinder their efforts²⁷. The colonial government was more lenient in granting licenses for opening bars than it was for opening schools²⁸.

In this regard, Ferhat Abbas states: "When we demanded the opening of schools, their response was that we were not qualified for them because we were a people who neither accepted education nor knowledge. The colonizers conspired to combat Arab culture in order to eliminate it, without imparting their own culture to us. They closed the doors of higher education and technical schools in our faces, and then accused us of lacking aptitude and competence."²⁹

Algerians, divided among their various social classes and parties, did not agree on many issues. However, they unanimously called for increased educational opportunities for their children, who suffered from displacement and loss. "During the French administration, when the private sector was separated from its linguistic foundations, it could have justified its position by promoting French primary education extensively. However, the efforts made in this regard were very limited. In 1898, General Janmar complained that '97% of the young children are strangers to our language, far from any civilizing work.' The situation did not improve until before the Second World War. Out of 1,150,000 children between the ages of six and fourteen, only 110,000 found seats in schools after more than a century of colonization."³⁰

One of the reasons behind this situation may have been the meager financial benefits allocated to primary education for Algerians, especially after the Financial Delegation Council became responsible for Algeria's budget. It was evident that local administrations in some regions showed no willingness among their officials to allocate funds for the establishment of schools for the benefit of the local population³¹.

The opening of a significant number of independent Arabic schools, starting from the 1930s, made a significant contribution to the development of cultural, literary, and intellectual movements in Algeria. In every Algerian city, Arabic schools emerged, welcoming children who were eager to learn Arabic, appreciate its literature, and attempt to imitate its texts and writing styles. The number of these independent Arabic schools, established by the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars in the year 1950, reached 400 modern schools. They offered instruction in Arabic language, Islamic jurisprudence, mathematics, geography, and history. In the same year, the number of teachers in these schools was close to 700, while the number of students exceeded 75,000. None of the Islamic reform movements in the Muslim world, whether in the East or the West, achieved such a remarkable accomplishment, except for the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars. Perhaps this was due to its emergence in a country dominated by foreign occupation. The association not only combated the influence of Sufi orders due to its specialization but also defended the Arabic language, often clashing with the French colonizers who promoted French in Algeria without caring about Arabic³².

Therefore, all major Algerian cities had independent Arabic schools affiliated either with the Algerian People's Party or the Association of Scholars. The people of Ghardaia and its surroundings also made significant efforts to establish Arabic schools,

²² Al-Daqi, previous reference, p. 130.

²³ Ibn Hubeilis, previous source, p. 37.

²⁴ Abdelrashid Zrouga, Jihad Ibn Badis Against French Colonialism in Algeria (1913-1940), First Edition, Dar Al-Shihab, Beirut, Lebanon, 1420 AH - 1999 AD, p. 33.

²⁵ Abu Al-Qasim Saadallah, The Algerian National Movement, Part Two, Fourth Edition, Dar Al-Gharb Al-Islami, Beirut, Lebanon, 1992, p. 141.

²⁶ Mertad, Literature of National Resistance in Algeria..., p. 39.

²⁷ Among these laws is the Law of December 24, 1904, which stipulates that in order to open an Arabic school, a license must be obtained from the civil or military governor, and failure to comply with this requirement exposes the school to closure.

²⁸ Abbas, previous source, p. 116.

²⁹ Same source, p. 34.

³⁰ Charles André Julien, North Africa: Islamic Nationalisms and French Sovereignty, translated by Al-Mongi Slim et al., revised by Farid El-Soudani, Dar Tunisian for Publishing, Tunis, National Company for Publishing and Distribution, Algeria, 1396 AH / 1976 AD, p. 55.

³¹ Ibn Hubeilis, previous source, p. 35.

³² Mertad, Literature of National Resistance in Algeria..., pp. 52-53.

persistently fighting to keep them open and prevent their closure by the French authorities, who would imprison their teachers. However, it was the schools of the Association of Scholars that were more numerous and had a stronger presence³³.

As for secondary and tertiary education, while it was theoretically available to all residents of Algeria without racial or religious discrimination, the reality was quite different. Algerians had very limited access to such education. In the 1929-1930 statistics, the number of Algerian students in secondary schools was 296 compared to 4752 Europeans and Jews, and there were only 97 Algerian students in universities compared to 2013 Europeans.

Secondly, French colonial policy in Algeria aimed not only to subjugate the Algerians but also to strip them of their Islamic and Arab identity. All the efforts exerted by the colonial power served this objective³⁴. To consolidate its authority, the colonial regime vehemently attacked the values of Islam and its social system. Legal scholars, who dispossessed Algerian tribes of their lands through legal manipulations, also opposed Islamic law and sought to undermine its legitimacy, much like termites erode wooden structures.

In 1847, before the National Council, Deputy Toukfeil condemned the disruptors of Algerian society in sharp language, despite his lack of affinity for the Arab world. He stated, "The Islamic society in North Africa was not only uncivilized, but its civilization was backward and deficient. It contained numerous religious institutions dedicated to charity, benevolence, and the dissemination of education throughout the country. We took control of its resources, diverted its objectives, and destroyed charitable associations. We shattered the foundations of enlightenment and scattered the unity of the religious corners. The beacons of knowledge around us were extinguished, turning into scattered dust. We neglected the scholars and jurists, reducing them to destitution. We plunged Muslims into misery and hunger, causing them to cry out and perish. Then, we treated them even more savagely than before, provoking generations of resentment and decay."³⁵

Thus, France's policy in Algeria, from the beginning until the end, was one of apparent religious tolerance with covert hostility. The colonizers benefited not only the French but also the Italians, Spaniards, Jews, and Maltese, granting them rights that they denied to Muslim Algerians. Muslims became the lower class in politics, administration, society, and every aspect of life³⁶.

It was an injustice suffered by the Algerian people that the French administration maintained control over their religious affairs, despite the explicit provisions of the law of September 27, 1907, which clearly called for the separation of religion and state. However, this law was not implemented in regard to the Islamic religion. The Algerian administration continued to interfere in mosques, their endowments, and their employees. It maintained an iron grip on religious positions and manipulated them according to its own whims and desires³⁷.

This was evident in the issue of the judiciary, where France issued a series of laws since the occupation that defined the jurisdiction of Muslim judges. According to Decree 7 June 1889, they were only granted the right to handle marriage, divorce, and inheritance cases. However, through various decrees, their authority was further restricted, and they were stripped of the right to adjudicate property-related matters and others, according to the Law of 26 July 1872. One year after this law, on 28 August 1874, a decision was made to abolish Islamic courts in the Kabylie region, leaving judicial matters in the hands of what was known as "judicial assemblies" that would rule based on customs and civil traditions, without religious judgments³⁸.

France continued its control over religious institutions. In 1933, Michel, the executive secretary of the governor-general, appointed a president for the Islamic Religious Association, which was responsible for selecting imams and preachers. These individuals were not chosen based on their qualifications, but rather on what France expected from them, namely, a leaning toward colonial administration and compliance with authorities. Sheikh El-Ibrahimi mentioned in his work "Ayn Al-Basa'ir" the opinion of one of the senior French officials, Augustin Berque, the director of civil affairs in the French administration in Algeria. He said, "Our grave mistake in our religious policy over the past twenty years is that we have tolerated the existence of religious officials in mosques who are controlled by complex ignorance, greed, lack of refinement, and have no limits to their desires to be praised for what they have not done. Incompetence and excessive submission and obedience are the only qualifications they can boast of."³⁹

The Algerian press at that time criticized the Islamic Religious Association, stating, "If we hear that the Religious Association appointed an illiterate person to the position of a mufti, someone who cannot read, write, comprehend, or reason, we are not surprised at all. We extend to it and him our utmost congratulations upon his appointment, hoping for further progress in mischief and the humiliation of religion, while he indulges in hypocrisy and deception."⁴⁰

One of the ways in which France fought against Islam was through the efforts of some of its writers and intellectuals who attacked Islam and attempted to distort its image among generations of Muslims who were long deprived of the joy of

³³ Same reference, p. 53.

³⁴ Abbas, previous source, p. 25.

³⁵ Same source, pp. 104-105.

³⁶ Stoddard, previous reference, Volume One, Part Two, p. 178.

³⁷ See: The report presented by the Board of Directors of the Algerian Muslim Scholars Association to the Algerian government on August 5, 1944, in: Mohammed Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi, *The Legacy of Imam Mohammed Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi*, Part Two (1940-1952), collected and presented by his son Dr. Ahmed Taleb Al-Ibrahimi, First Edition, Dar Al-Gharb Al-Islami, Beirut, 1997, p. 142.

³⁸ Charles Robert Ageron, *History of Contemporary Algeria 1830-1973*. What do I know? Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1974, p. 62.

³⁹ Al-Ibrahimi, previous source, p. 210.

⁴⁰ Mohammed Nasser, *Algerian Arab Newspapers from 1847 to 1954*, Third Edition, Dar Al-Gharb Al-Islami, Beirut, 1427 AH / 2007 AD, p. 102, cited from: Mami Ismail, "The Religious Association", *Al-Najah*, Issue 696, 20/01/1929 AD.

education. Additionally, there was official interference in Muslim affairs, such as the attempt by "Mauran" (a law professor at the University of Algiers) to establish a legal journal for Islamic rulings⁴¹. However, this journal failed and was not implemented. Furthermore, colonialism opened the door for missionary evangelistic missions. They supported "Cardinal Lavigerie" in spreading his messengers, who were nicknamed the "White Messengers." They also took in many children from poor Muslim families and orphans, raising them in religious schools⁴². Cardinal Lavigerie took advantage of the opportunity presented by the Great Famine of 1867-1868 and worked on converting the orphans of this famine, in exchange for providing them with scraps of bread. His role in this field was shameful⁴³.

One of the astonishing paradoxes of colonialism is that the French government, despite being non-religious in its original country, maintained a stance abroad, as Gambetta once said, "Religious animosity is not an export commodity." This can be attributed to two reasons: first, they believed that religious preaching could support the colonial movement, and second, the military power held the most influence in the colonies, with many military leaders being affiliated with the Catholic party⁴⁴.

The French evangelistic missions were not the only ones operating in Algeria; American missions, such as the American Methodist missionary group, also had the opportunity to establish trust and secure the confidence of the local population in the Kabylie region. They adopted a remarkable approach in their interactions and dealings with the people. Despite the difficulty of gaining that trust, they managed it by sharing in their grievances and addressing their concerns. Sometimes, they even awakened and evoked feelings of discontent and anxiety. They also made it evident to the locals that they hoped for their liberation from "French captivity."⁴⁵ These missionaries gained increasing influence and posed a significant threat due to their precise knowledge of the local language, the nature of the tribes, their instincts, and their integration into the local communities. They attracted the affection and favor of the people with their lavish gifts⁴⁶.

Various European groups belonging to the Protestant movement were also found engaged in missionary activities. Among their missionary endeavors was the establishment of educational and medical centers, in addition to visits by female missionaries to the homes of Muslims. These centers for conversion and Christian evangelism, which put tremendous efforts into their work within Islamic circles, recognized the weaknesses of these Muslims. They knew that they were inclined towards anything that was free, even if it were a deadly poison. Consequently, they opened their centers and schools for the sons and daughters of Muslims free of charge. Christian sisters visited Arabic-speaking Muslim women in their homes, distributing some medicines for free. They would then bring young Muslim girls back to the centers for conversion and Christian evangelism. These missionaries continued to entice our Muslim girls with colorful gifts and small presents on Christian religious holidays, using attractive methods to endear the Lord Jesus Christ to them and beautify him in their hearts⁴⁷.

It is worth mentioning that the White Fathers' Association, whose headquarters were primarily located in El Harrach, had 26 religious institutes in 1930, including 21 in North Africa and five in France, along with 133 centers for religious evangelism where 500 monks and nuns worked⁴⁸.

The French occupation did not exempt itself from utilizing and exploiting various methods, approaches, and their agents to serve and achieve its interests. This was based on their awareness of the significant role played by Islam in awakening and inciting its followers to engage in jihad against the occupying infidels. As long as Islam remained pure and untarnished, it was taken from the righteous scholars without distorting the teachings of the extremists, the falsehood of the impostors, or the misinterpretations of the ignorant. To prevent the effective and positive role of Islam in Algerian society from materializing, France intended to reduce Islam to mere rituals and ceremonies. Those who adhered to it would lose their vitality and effectiveness, while those who turned away from it and rebelled would be embraced by French culture⁴⁹ and its civilizational philosophy.

The Sufi orders played a positive role throughout the 19th century, leading the resistance against French colonization, starting with Emir Abdelkader and ending with Sheikh Bouamama⁵⁰.

To avoid these Sufi orders and religious brotherhoods from initiating further resistance, the colonial administration resorted to studying them from all angles, exploring their strengths and weaknesses, and exploiting that knowledge to devise a policy aimed at weakening and domesticating them. The studies and recommendations of Louis Rinn in his book titled "Marabouts and Brothers" in 1884, as well as the studies of Octave Depont and Auguste Coppolani on "Sufi Orders in Algeria" in 1897, were among the most significant studies taken into consideration by the colonial administration in formulating its policies towards these Sufi orders and religious brotherhoods. This colonial policy was implemented two decades later⁵¹.

⁴¹ Al-Shihab, "Moran Magazine and Legal Judgments", Issue 31, Year One, 6 Dhu al-Qi'dah 1344 AH corresponding to June 17, 1926 AD, p. 615.

⁴² Stoddard, previous reference, Volume One, Part Two, p. 178.

⁴³ Bouaziz, previous source, p. 25.

⁴⁴ Stoddard, previous reference, Volume One, Part Two, p. 179.

⁴⁵ Ronnie Vanland, *The American Methodist Missionaries in the Tribal Regions* (3), Al-Shihab, Volume Five, Part Six, 1st of Safar 1348 AH corresponding to July 1929 AD, p. 277.

⁴⁶ Same source, p. 277.

⁴⁷ Al-Zaheri, "Reform Between Two Fires", Al-Basa'ir, Year One, Issue 6, Algiers, 13 Dhu al-Qi'dah 1354 AH corresponding to February 7, 1936 AD, p. 3.

⁴⁸ Al-Madani, previous reference, p. 217.

⁴⁹ Mohamed Fathi Osman, *Abdelhamid Ben Badis: Pioneer of the Islamic Movement in Contemporary Algeria*, First Edition, Dar Al-Qalam for Publishing and Distribution, Kuwait, 1987, p. 36.

⁵⁰ Rabeh Lounisi, *Intellectual Trends in Contemporary Algeria Between Agreement and Disagreement (1920-1954)*, First Edition, Dar Kawkab Al-Ilm, Algeria, 2009, p. 77.

⁵¹ Same reference, pp. 77-78.

The colonial administration took advantage of the general public's naivety, superficial knowledge, simplistic beliefs, and ignorance about Islam, as well as their strong attachment to zawiyas (religious lodges), tariqas (Sufi orders), saints, and spiritual leaders. They resorted to cunning tricks and deceitful schemes to deceive and socially paralyze them. For example, they deliberately set fire to European colonial wheat stacks, refusing to lend their tools to harvest the wheat, and the commentator would say, "Do you see the dignity of so-and-so? The colonialist who refused to lend him his tools had his harvest burned"⁵² The purpose of such actions was to achieve the occupation's goal of gathering people around the tariqa (Sufi order) that they wanted to become a broadcasting apparatus, responsible for conveying their message and project, surrounded by an atmosphere of devotion and sanctity. In the perception and belief of the people, these tariqas symbolized religion and faith. The occupation did not hesitate to employ any means or deceitful methods to achieve its objectives. "You would be amazed to learn that during the recent revolution - the November Revolution - it was discovered in some eastern regions that one of the shrines, frequented and venerated by the people, turned out to be the tomb of a Christian monk. The people did not believe it until they found the cross in the grave"⁵³.

Therefore, the colonial administration greatly encouraged the activities of the Sufi orders, revitalized their works, provided them with the resources and means they desired, and granted them wide-ranging opportunities in Algerian society, so they could qualify for the role assigned to them.

The result of their efforts in this field was that they assimilated many of these orders, to the point where the message they conveyed was nothing more than a manipulation of people's minds with a sorcery foreign to authentic Islam, serving the colonizers by harnessing the simple-minded masses to their cause.

Indeed, weakness began to infiltrate these tariqas (Sufi orders) and zawiyas (religious lodges) since the beginning of the 20th century, as the colonizer subjected them to its authority through its policies and schemes. From the very early days of its presence in Algeria, it recognized them as centers of resistance and opposition, which led to a negative stance towards them. Additionally, their influence in society weakened, although their positive role in preserving religion and language should not be overlooked.

This weakness can be attributed to several factors:

- The new colonial policy towards them, which facilitated their domestication, built upon scientific studies conducted by numerous researchers⁵⁴.
- The migration of many rural inhabitants to cities and to France after the First Imperialist War, especially since the countryside was considered a stronghold of their influence and effects.
- The influence of propaganda from some immigrants who returned from the Islamic East with their ideas of renewal and reform.
- The emergence of graduates from French schools and their efforts to disseminate certain secular ideas in society.
- The supportive stance of some of these tariqas and zawiyas towards France against the Ottoman state during the First Imperialist War, which led to the loss of much of their influence in Algerian society, which was predominantly sympathetic to the Muslim Ottoman caliphate⁵⁵.

These new circumstances imposed either adaptation to the times or decline upon the Sufi orders and zawiyas. Since the beginning of the 20th century, Muhammad Sa'id bin Zakri called for the reform of the zawiyas through his book "A Clearer Guide to Reforming the Zawiyas in the Land of the Tribes"⁵⁶. However, his call did not find receptive ears until two decades later when Ahmed bin Mustafa bin Alioua, the leader of the Alioua tariqa in Mostaganem, attempted to modernize the tariqa he established in 1921 after breaking away from the Shadhili tariqa. This led some to dub him as the "modern or innovative Sufi"⁵⁷.

The early days of the Alioua tariqa had a reformist character that was not significantly different from the Badissi trend. Since its emergence, the newspaper "Lisan al-Din" continually lamented the deteriorating religious conditions in Algeria and called for religious reform. In 1923, even before the idea of the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars emerged by a few years, the newspaper proposed: "The formation of a religious party that spans all regions, composed of sincere men in their actions, truthful in their words, who dedicate themselves, with all their efforts, to the struggle for religion and the preservation of morality"⁵⁸.

⁵² Malik Bennabi, *Memoirs of a Witness to the Century*, Second Edition, Dar Al-Fikr Al-Mu'asir, Beirut - Lebanon, Dar Al-Fikr, Damascus - Syria, 1404 AH - 1984 AD, p. 182.

⁵³ Saleh Kharfi, *Pages from Algeria, Studies and Articles from 1962 to 1972*, National Company for Publishing and Distribution, Algeria, p. 324.

⁵⁴ Among these studies, we mention:

C. Rinn, *Marabouts et Khouan*, Study on Islam in Algeria, ed. Jourdan, Algiers, 1984.

- Depont (Octave) and Copolani (Xavier), *Les Confréries Religieuses Musulmanes*,

⁵⁵ Lounisi, previous reference, p. 79.

⁵⁶ See: Abu Al-Qasim Saadallah, *Cultural History of Algeria*, Part Seven, First Edition, Dar Al-Gharb Al-Islami, Beirut - Lebanon, 1998, pp. 163-164.

⁵⁷ Augustin Berque, "A Modernist Mystic: Sheikh Benalioua", *Revue Africaine*, vol. 79, Year 1936, pp. 691-776.

⁵⁸ Lounisi, previous reference, p. 79.

However, this tariqa somewhat deviated from its reformist inclination after clashing with Ibn Badis and his group, becoming their adversaries, especially after Ibn Badis' followers accused Ben Alioua's supporters of attempting to assassinate Ibn Badis in 1926⁵⁹.

Nevertheless, throughout the colonial period, the Alioua tariqa remained modern in its methods. It established its own printing press in Mostaganem, which published some philosophical and Sufi books by Ben Alioua. It also released the newspaper "Al-Balagh Al-Jazairi" in 1925, which focused on religious, Sufi, and sometimes intellectual issues, particularly by publishing philosophical articles by Ben Alioua, which were compiled in the book "Alioua Research in Islamic Philosophy"⁶⁰.

The reformist movement recognized the danger posed by the Tariqas (Sufi brotherhoods) to the Algerian people, and thus fought against them for two reasons: Firstly, because they propagated innovations, superstitions, and deviant beliefs. Secondly, because they supported colonialism due to the material benefits they derived from it.

It can be said that France waged a comprehensive war against Islam in Algeria through various means and in all spheres. France stripped Islam of its true essence, prohibiting Quranic schools from fulfilling their mission and restricting the activities of Islamic jurists (fuqaha), isolating them from direct engagement with the people. Furthermore, France worked towards weakening the fifth pillar of Islam by imposing strict regulations on travel permits for Hajj pilgrimages, ensuring that Algerian Muslims would not be influenced by the reformist ideas emerging in the Islamic East during the Islamic Renewal Movement. Additionally, France only allowed Algerians to engage in limited religious celebrations of their annual festivals⁶¹.

Conclusion

France employed various means and methods to maintain its presence in Algeria and retain it indefinitely. It relied on its intellectuals and scholars in different fields such as history, anthropology, religious studies, sociology, and others. France applied several rules and claimed to have derived multiple theories, believing that these would extinguish the spark of struggle and resistance within the Algerian people's hearts. However, the Algerian people remained resilient and steadfast, preserving their identity against assimilation, dissolution, and disappearance. Ultimately, the November 1st revolution in 1954 marked the end of this oppressive colonization.

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⁶⁰ Lounisi, same reference, pp. 79-80.

⁶¹ Abdul Karim Boualsaf Safsaf, *Algerian Muslim Scholars Association and Its Relations with Other Algerian Movements 1931-1945: A Comparative Historical and Ideological Study*, National Institute of Communication, Publishing, and Advertising, Algeria, 1996, p. 194.

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