

## **The Islamic Institutions in Algeria and the Resistance to Evangelization (1830 – 1914)**

 **Abdelhafid Bouabdallah**  
University Setif 02 (Algeria)  
a.bouabdallah@univ-setif2.dz

### **Abstract:**

Evangelization is one of the foundations upon which colonialism has been based throughout history. The Crusader tendency was one of the reasons behind the French occupation of Algeria in 1830. The religious dimension of the French military campaign against Algeria is evident from the beginning of the occupation, as well as the various means and methods employed by missionaries, such as Cardinal "Lavigerie" (1864-1892), to achieve the colonial goal of proselytism and to wipe out Islamic institutions

### **Article info**

**Received:****21/04/2025****Accepted:****14/05/2025****Key words:**

- ✓ Evangelization
- ✓ Colonization
- ✓ Resistance
- ✓ Religion

## Introduction

Evangelization is one of the foundations upon which colonialism has been based throughout history. The Crusader tendency was one of the reasons behind the French occupation of Algeria in 1830. The religious dimension of the French military campaign against Algeria is evident from the beginning of the occupation, as well as the various means and methods employed by missionaries, such as Cardinal "Lavigerie" (1864-1892), to achieve the colonial goal of proselytism and to wipe out Islamic institutions.

It was also a fundamental means of eliminating the Arab and Islamic component of the Algerian people's identity, while consolidating the foundations of colonialism, ensuring the evangelization of Algeria, and imposing its French identity. This was part of a subversive French colonial project aimed at erasing the historical existence of the Algerian people and undermining their civilizational immunity. What supported this policy was the collaboration between the military and the clergy in this effort to attack Islam. They considered their occupation of this land as a reclamation of a country that had once been Christian.

In this way, the colonial authorities revealed their true intentions to integrate Algeria with France intellectually and religiously by spreading French culture, including Christianity, and targeting the religious backgrounds of the Algerian society. However, the colonial efforts to support the evangelization movement, during the period 1830-1914, were confronted with the activity of Islamic institutions such as mosques, Zawiyyas (Islamic religious institution) and katatibs (Qur'anic schools), which maintained social and religious cohesion against missionary activities. These institutions preserved the cultural and spiritual identity of the Algerian society and proved effective in responding to that movement while safeguarding the Islamic identity of the Algerians.

### 1. The Role of Mosques

Religion was a fundamental aspect of social life in Algeria before the French occupation in 1830, as well as it was an undiscussable constant. Building mosques, taking care of them, and endowing properties to them were common phenomena within the Algerian society. Mosques were widespread throughout the country, especially in the major cities, where they were places of worship and, in addition, centers for education and education in general.

Mosques are significant religious, educational, and cultural institutions that helped preserve the Algerian national identity from disintegration and melting. It is almost throughout the country, in every village and city, there is a mosque. It was a center for worship where people gather to perform congregational prayers and listen to guidance and sermons. Additionally, mosques played an essential role in instilling Islamic principles in the hearts of children. In rural areas, children used to receive their basic lessons in reading and writing at the mosque before beginning to memorize Qur'an, preparing to join a zawiya (Islamic school) where they would continue their education and intellectual development.

Therefore, mosques were places of worship, meeting places for dignitaries, and centers for scientific and social life. They were the heart of the village in rural areas and

the spirit of the neighborhood in cities. Around them, houses, markets, and Quranic schools spread. They were also the bond between the villagers and the urban areas or neighborhoods, as everyone contributed to their construction and participated in fulfilling the duties within them.

Mosques were spread throughout the country, in every village, and Algerians were generally keen to build, renovate and expand them whenever the need arose. Mosques also ensured the continuity of Arabic teaching in Algeria by providing Arab Islamic education that is accessible to all Algerians. At known times after the obligatory prayer, adults and children attend the lectures, and students could move from one mosque to another in order to benefit and to be able to attend the largest number of lessons (Meziane, 2008-2009, p. 389).

In fact, the role of mosques in education often is confused with the role of the zawiya (Islamic school) and sometimes with that of the general school. Some mosques and zawiyyas served as schools for spreading education in all its forms. Some schools were annexed to the zawiyyas, while others were attached to mosques, as it was often stipulated to establish a zawiya, a mosque, and a school simultaneously. Therefore, it is difficult to distinguish the specific functions of these institutions collectively in a society where education was prioritized, and where mosques and zawiyyas played the central role (Abdelkader K. , 2010, p. 271).

From what has been mentioned above, these Islamic and cultural institutions, such as mosques, Zawiyyas, and Quranic Katatibs, resisted, endured, and continued their religious and educational mission thanks to their teachers on one hand, and the endowment properties (Awqaf) on the other. The main purpose was to preserve Islam in Algeria, maintain the Arabic language, history, and everything that connects the Algerian society to its true civilizational belonging (Meziane, 2008-2009, p. 390) during that long period of occupation, Algerian students went everywhere seeking knowledge wisdom. Due to the unwavering will of the people and the loyalty of these noble sons, Algeria managed to preserve its religion and language with resilience, despite the relentless violence, the colonizer's cruelty, and his oppressive, deceptive tactics. He spared no effort in attempting to erase Algeria's rich history, erase its landmarks, and sever its profound ties to its history and identity.

Thus, the mosques and all other Islamic institutions became centers of enlightenment of Arab-Islamic culture, and strongholds dedicated to preserving the authentic Algerian identity (Hamid, 2009-2010, p. 130) .

These structures were fundamental means of resistance, preserving Holy Qur'an, Arabic language, and the arab-islamic character of Algeria, as well as countering the policies of evangelization and frenchifying. They were able to maintain the values of the arab-islamic society and protect the Algerian community from all the foreign intrusions that threatened its customs and traditions.

.

### 2. The Role of Zawiyyas

The role of zawiyyas during the French colonial period in Algeria was not limited to sheltering and organizing armed resistance. In many cases, they also oversaw military operations, led battles against the French forces, and directed them through a number of their sheikhs and prominent figures. Moreover, they played a significant role in protecting the arab-islamic identity of Algeria by spreading Islam, the Arabic language, and Arab culture, using all available means and resources.

Despite the limited resources and means at their disposal, the zawiyyas were able to make a great contribution in reinforcing Islamic beliefs, strengthening national identity, and preserving Qur'an, the Arabic language, and Islamic sciences. In doing so, they were able to stand firm against the campaigns of assimilation, frenchification and everything the occupier sought to impose, including its culture, civilization, systems, behaviors, and customs. (Gherbi, 2009, pp. 38-39).

The Leading Role of Islamic Institutions, Especially the Zawiyyas is evident in their resistance to French colonialism, which sought to eliminate Arab-Islamic culture and uproot its foundations by imposing its language, its way of thinking, and its lifestyle.

The pivotal role played by Islamic institutions, particularly the zawiyyas, is evident in their resilience against French occupation, which aimed to eradicate Arab-Islamic culture and uproot its foundations by imposing its language, ideology, and way of life. Defending Islam was considered the primary duty of these institutions, alongside spreading it by all available means. Despite the policy of destruction and conversion that the zawiyyas faced, they resisted everything foreign and colonial that conflicted with Islam, local customs, traditions, and social behaviors. (Gherbi, 2009, pp. 39-40).

They managed to preserve the Islamic characteristics of Algerian society through their diverse activities, forming a solid ideological foundation upon which military, religious, and cultural resistance was based. Certainly, the French authorities faced this opposition movement, with attempts to divert them from their core mission, as well as the persecution of tutors and imams.

For *Octave Depont* and *Xavier Coppolani*, the zawiya combines both the material and spiritual aspects. The material aspect is represented by its financial resources derived from the income of endowments, such as agricultural land or charitable donations. The spiritual aspect is reflected in its significant role in maintaining the cohesion of the Muslim community. This contributed to attracting many followers, and the zawiyyas essentially functioned as “*a state within a state*”.

#### 2.1. The Educational Role

The establishment of educational zawiyyas was not limited to the Sufi orders or the Murabitun (religious scholars); even some notables from other social classes established zawiyyas to spread knowledge and preserve religion and the Qur'an.

The Sufi leaders who oversaw the zawiyyas placed great importance on education, recognizing it as a crucial and indispensable area for fostering scientific and intellectual movements within society. Education was seen as a fundamental tool for shaping and advancing individuals' conduct and civilization (Meziane, 2008-2009, p. 317)

The zawiyyas played a significant role in preserving the Arabic language and Islam by teaching Arabic, memorizing the Qur'an, and imparting knowledge related to it. They also taught popular heritage to their followers. Moreover, these zawiyyas housed rich libraries containing books and manuscripts in various sciences and arts. The role of the sheikhs and students was vital in preserving this knowledge. Through these efforts, the zawiyyas managed to lead in spreading Islamic culture and maintaining the Arabic language (Abdelkader, 2010, p. 271).

They were characterized by their preservation of Arab-Islamic heritage and the spread of the Islamic call among the people. These zawiyyas served as religious institutions, cultural centers, and social clubs where people learned the principles of their religion and the teachings of their Shari'a (Abdelkrim, 1983, p. 191).

Also they played a crucial role in preserving Arab-Islamic education and ensuring its continuity in Algeria. It welcomed students who had no place in the French schools due to their absence and who could not travel elsewhere to seek knowledge. Additionally, it succeeded in preserving the Qur'an from being forgotten, safeguarding the Arabic language from extinction, and maintaining the Islamic faith. At the same time, it focused on the spiritual and moral upbringing of the Algerian individual (Cheikh, 2012-2013, p. 169 ).

One of the very important aspects that helped preserve the Arabic language in the zawiyyas was that French was not allowed to be spoken within them. This reflects a sense of pride and appreciation for the Arabic language and Islamic culture. Additionally, many scholars and figures from the zawiyyas contributed to spreading Islamic culture and teaching Qur'an to the younger generation. Every branch of knowledge is closely linked to it, as it is both the principle and the aim. In this way, they confronted the movements of evangelization and Frenchification. They also contributed to the establishment of many zawiyyas, mosques, and Quranic katatibs in both cities and villages. Moreover, they played a role in developing educational programs and setting internal systems for the zawiyya. The education in the zawiyyas focused primarily on character building, with religious education coming first, followed by social and political education within the broad Islamic framework (Nassib, p. 194).

The zawiyyas worked relentlessly also on memorizing and spreading Qur'an intensively among people of all ages and social classes. A French report mentions: *"The zawiyyas, most of which are led by leaders from various sects, aim to corrupt the minds of future generations by instilling religious intolerance in the hearts of the youth and encouraging them to hate the infidels. The sheikhs of the zawiyyas, in their teachings to the poor people, select Quranic texts that are hostile to us, which quickly destroys the*

## The Islamic Institutions in Algeria and the Resistance to Evangelization (1830 – 1914)

*sentiment that we have sought to cultivate in them through our institution's.* (Gherbi, 2009, p. 39).

Due to the effectiveness of the education provided by the zawiyyas, which aligned with colonial objectives, the French authorities resorted to studying this type of institution. Consequently, the French authorities were obliged to study them; the historian **Yvonne Turin** highlighted the failure of French policy to eliminate Islamic culture by stating: *"The zawiyyas remained widespread across the country despite the efforts to destroy many of them. They were centers of religion and culture, schools for both adults and children, places for healing and aiding the poor and gathering spots for influential individuals to encourage citizens to engage in jihad and resist loyalty to the infidel..."*. This institution was unlike anything the French knew in Europe. Its influence among the Algerians went unnoticed by them until much later.

In addition to teaching Quran in the zawiyyas, these institutions also offered a variety of subjects such as grammar, language, arithmetic, astronomy, and religious sciences. There were teaching syllabus and materials tailored to different levels, and some of these zawiyyas had dedicated departments that provided free housing and food for students. Some even evolved into higher institutes that taught various sciences.

Despite critics of the education in these religious institutions, along with its traditional methods and techniques, these institutions played a crucial role in filling the gap the country was suffering from. They successfully reduced the spread of ignorance and illiteracy and preserved the Arabic language from being lost within the machinery of evangelization, especially at a time when formal educational systems were disrupted by the French occupation.

In this regard, Ahmed Toufiq El Madanisays about the role of the zawiyyas: *"These zawiyyas in our country (Algeria) have a historical indeniable merit. They managed to preserve Islam in this land during times of ignorance and darkness. They fought against evangelization, opposed Frenchification, and ignited the flame of jihad against colonialism, where it sought to extinguish the light of Islam and Algerian identity. Had it not been for those immense efforts they made, efforts that one can only acknowledge and admire, we would not find any trace of the Arabic language or religious sciences in our country today".* (Abdelaziz, 2018, pp. 46-48).

Due to the significant role the zawiyyas played in preserving Islamic identity and their standing against the attempts of Frenchification and evangelization,—key aspects of the French colonial project in Algeria—most French officials came to recognize the difficulty of controlling them. Their policy aimed at undermining the effectiveness of the zawiyyas through destruction, conversion, and taking over their endowments, which were fundamental to their survival. Additionally, they exiled and imprisoned the teachers and imams responsible for running these institutions (Hamid, 2009-2010, p. 124). Mac Mahon made one of the official statements that confirmed the power of the zawiyyas in 1851, where he admitted his inability to control them, saying: *"Monitoring the zawiyyas is a difficult task. We are doing so almost without achieving results, as one would have to*

dedicate his entire life to it to fully understand what was happening within them." He added: "The inside of the zawiyyas is unknown to us" (Turin, 2007, p. 145).

The French authorities acknowledged the influence of the zawiyyas and Sufi orders (Hanoteau & Letourneux, 1893, p. 113) on the minds of the locals, as expressed by "Hanouto" during his visit to the Zawiya of SidiAberrahmanIllouli in 1886, most of the uprisings that occurred in the Kabylie region were the result of these zawiyyas and orders. Among the most prominent zawiyyas that played a significant role in education and the preservation of the Arab identity in Algeria are: Zawiya of Sheikh AbderrahmanIllouli

Zawiya of SidiAbderrahman BouKoubrine in TiziOuzou- Zawiyaof SidiAbderrahman, founded in the 17th century- Zawiyaof El-Hamel, founded by Mohamed Ben Abi Belkacem and opened in 1863 (Hamid, 2009-2010, p. 125).

Thus, the zawiyyas focused on memorizing the Quran for both children and adults, spreading it intensively and continuously across successive Muslim generations, and disseminating it among various social classes. This helped in eradicating illiteracy on one hand, and protecting the Quran from being forgotten, lost, and extinct on the other hand. They also contributed to preserving the Arabic language and Arab-Islamic culture, spreading them widely and intensively.

The zawiyyas opened their doors to students who had no place in French schools and generously (Cheikh, 2012-2013, p. 170) supported them. In doing so, they became a stronghold against the vast policy of ignorance that the French administration launched against the Algerians and their Islamic institutions, which were sources of knowledge. Illiteracy had not been widespread among Algerians before the occupation in 1830. The zawiyyas were a form of cultural resistance by the Algerian people to preserve the elements of national identity (Amokrane, 2006 , p. 170).

The French themselves admitted that their actions were futile adventures and recognized their utter failure. Some French writers attributed the failure of the Frenchification and evangelization policies to the zawiyyas, which remained widespread in the country despite the colonial authorities' attempts to eliminate many of them. A clear example of this is the statement of one French officer: "If it weren't for the zawiyyas, we would have conquered Algeria."

### 2.2. The Social Role

In addition to their cultural role and the contribution of these scientific institutions in enriching and preserving their Arab-Islamic characteristics within Algerian society, these institutions also played a key role in strengthening social cohesion. They reinforced the organic bonds between different parts of society during both prosperity and adversity, by alleviating social disparities and uniting people into one cohesive entity. Furthermore, they helped resolve tribal disputes and ease their severity, utilizing the esteemed position of their leaders and guides in social circles. This enabled Algerian society to focus on confronting foreign domination (Gherbi, 2009, p. 40).

## The Islamic Institutions in Algeria and the Resistance to Evangelization (1830 – 1914)

Zawiyyas were complete institutions that provided housing, food, shelter, education, and worship. In addition to that, they played an important social role, such as mediating between people and securing roads, among other tasks. Over time, the public came to rely on the zawiyyas to face social crises, solve problems, and tackle difficulties that arose from time to time. As time passed, people became increasingly convinced that the zawiyyas and their leaders were the most capable of protecting society. Thus, they became the primary and ultimate reference for the masses. Zawiyyas served as a center for tribal unity, a refuge for the poor and needy, a resting place for travelers, a shelter for orphans, a gathering place for disputants, and a center of light. They preserved the traditions and customs of society in the face of the colonial policy that sought, by all means, to erase the features of this Arab-Muslim society.

Zawiyyas were quick to promote the concept of cooperation and social solidarity among people, especially during social crises such as famine, drought, diseases, and epidemics.

Moreover, the zawiyyas took on the task of resolving disputes and conflicts by reconciling individuals and communities, thanks to the respected position of their sheikhs and imams. In this way, they played the role of judges and arbitrators, reducing problems and establishing the principles of tolerance, goodwill, solidarity, and adherence to the laws of God Almighty (Ismail, 2010-2011, pp. 95-97).

The institutions of zawiyyas across Algeria took care of orphans and widows, especially those who lost their relatives during the resistance against French colonization, which left many orphans, widows, and the poor and needy. This care became particularly important during outbreaks of deadly diseases and famines, as the zawiyyas provided assistance and support. This was evident during the famine of 1868/1869 that affected Algeria. The zawiyyas also worked to preserve the customs and traditions of society. Furthermore, the health aspect was part of the duties of the sheikhs of the zawiyyas, as many Sufi order leaders were involved in herbal medicine, treating and healing various diseases (Ismail, 2010-2011, p. 97).

Therefore, the social role played by the zawiyyas was a fundamental pillar in the social structure of Algerian society during that period. They were indeed a key support for the continuation of life. Thus, we reach the conclusion that their role helped easing the suffering of the Algerian people and preserved their cohesion, solidarity, and unity. The zawiyyas also blocked the path of missionary associations, organized relationships between various segments of society, and confronted integrationist projects with patience and determination.

### 2.3. Response to the Missionary Movement

The missionary movement aimed to eliminate Islam, distort and create doubt about it, and turn people away from it in order to convert them to Christianity instead of Islam (Cheikh, 2012-2013, p. 163).

The Algerian people recognized the hidden motives behind the policy of proselytism, which led them to reject it at all levels, from education to social services and others.

The most aggressive missionary campaigns were those led by Cardinal "*Lavigerie*," who exploited the famines that struck Algeria and caused many tragedies, resulting in the displacement of thousands of children. Many locals were forced to seek refuge in missionary organizations that offered bread in one hand and a cross in the other.

The French historian *Yvonne Turin* expresses that by saying: "The conflict began to emerge when the occupier started imposing his language, thoughts, and way of life, using schools, hospitals, teachers, doctors... The Muslims returned the poisoned gift to its giver, who spent the entire period establishing schools but found no students, and creating hospitals but no patients came. The difficulties faced by the occupier multiplied, and Islam became stronger, protecting against assimilation (Amokrane, 2006 , p. 175).

In contrast to all this missionary social work, it was necessary to have a community institution that would shelter the poor and the needy, care for orphans, and provide the minimum Islamic education that would protect Algerians from converting to another religion (Cheikh, 2012-2013, p. 63).

Thus, the zawiya was, for Algerians, the only refuge that sheltered them, provided assistance, and took care of their upbringing. In general, the influence exerted by the missionary missions in Algeria was not significant; this was all due to the social activitycarried out by the zawiyyas in response to Christian proselytism. In this way, the zawiyyas played an important role in preserving the Algerian Arab-Islamic identity from being dissolvedby proselytism, as they had a major role in protecting the Islamic faith from the skeptical and missionary campaigns. They also played a key role in preserving the Quran, memorizing it, and spreading it among the Algerian generations, as well as teaching the Arabic language and some religious and linguistic sciences. Furthermore, they sheltered scholars, took in the poor, and provided them with possible material and cultural support. The zawiyyas had a profound impact on preserving the essential elements of the Algerian people (Said, 2011-2012, p. 49).

The leading role of the zawiyyas manifested in the religious and cultural aspects through the following:

- Preserving the components of national identity such as Islam, Arab identity, and belonging to the homeland.
- Responding to the missionary movement seeking to eradicate Islam, and divert the people away from it, in preparation for their conversion.
- Spreading Islam to the farregions especially the desert areas, as a propaganda against the missionary movement that had extended its influence into the Sahara.

## The Islamic Institutions in Algeria and the Resistance to Evangelization (1830 – 1914)

- Establishing a religious reference for Algerians, such as imams and preachers who graduated from the zawiyyas and took on the task of reform among the Algerian people.
- Preserving the religious and cultural background of the Algerian community.
- Providing Arabic-Islamic education, following the colonial administration destruction of the existing Islamic institutions that carried out this task (Cheikh, 2012-2013, pp. 161-165).

However, the Sufi orders around the zawiyyas and Islamic institutions were not all, by principle, involved in resistance or jihad, nor were all of them involved practically in spreading knowledge. Nevertheless, most of them were indeed active during the period of colonial (Crusader) domination. Some of the prominent Sufi orders in the last century were: El-Qadiriya, Er-rahmaniya, and Eshaykhiya. The first gave Emir Abdelkader, the second produced Lalla Fatima N'Soumer and Cheikh El Haddad, and the third had Cheikh Bouamama.

Colonial experts realized the dual adversarial role played by the Sufi orders against them, so they worked to undermine their activity. The dual adversarial role we mean is:

- A-Preserving national unity by maintaining Islamic values and teachings.
- B-Calling for jihad and martyrdom in defense of religion and the homeland.

Thus, the attention of those experts (from fields such as psychology, anthropology, religion, languages, etc.) turned to neutralizing the Sufi orders through various means, including promises and threats, such as bribing, appointing individuals in civil positions, and division, etc (Saadallah, 2007 , p. 18). Both General "*Daumas*" in 1853 and General "*Decrau*" in 1860 reached the same conclusion and presented a plan to accelerate the destruction of the zawiyyas and deprive Algerians of Quranic schools, according to the *Daumas*, was the only way to strip the people of their moral weapon and force them to submit to our control. Captain "*Rinn*" succeeded in creating a map of the zawiyyas across Algeria, which he published in 1884 in a book titled "*Marabouts and Khouans: A Study on Islam in Algeria*" (*Marabout et Khouans* étude sur L'islam en Algérie). (Saadallah, 2007 , p. 18).

These were used by the Bureaux Arabes (Arab Offices), military leaders, and informants for surveillance, espionage, and infiltrating these organizations to tame them and ensure their submission, which I have partially concluded (Larbi Ould Khelifa, 2007, pp. 60-61) The Sufi orders had already been controlled before the beginning of First World War (1914). They became, at times, voluntarily and at other times involuntarily, in the service of colonialism. Perhaps the most flagrant phenomenon of this period was the disappearance of the spirit of jihad within these orders, which, in reality, became tools for executing the commands and desires of the occupier, such as numbing the people and supporting colonial policies.

### 3 .The Role of the Quranic Katatibs (Quranic Schools)

The function of these Quranic Katatibs was to teach, memorize and recite the Quran for children. The need for their establishment arose in order to spare the mosques from the mess and noise of children and to maintain their purity, cleanliness, and reverence, so that worshippers and those engaged in prayer could find the atmosphere of humility required for worship.

These katatibs were sometimes individual houses and sometimes groups of houses, varying in size and shape, most of which were established by Quranic memorization teachers to earn a living and provide for their daily needs.

Quranic katatibs began to appear since the early days of Islam, then spread across all Islamic world, including Algeria and the Maghreb countries, where they developed extensively in modern times. They became more prominent during the French colonial period in the 19th and 20th centuries as a method and means of resisting the policy of proselytism, evangelization, and Frenchification, while also protecting the Arab-Islamic identity of Algeria and resisting the policy of ignorance that the colonial administration pursued in the country (Yahya, 2009, p. 13).

Thanks to these katatibs, Quranic education was widespread among the Algerians, despite the fact that it was limited to religious studies, which was acknowledged by the French themselves, especially the military, after 1830. These small institutions were able to perform their educational and cultural functions, as well as preserve the Arabic language and Islamic culture at a respectable level, challenging colonial abuses despite the surveillance of their activities. Furthermore, they continued to spread their educational message and remained the only centers of education in a country dominated by illiteracy and cultural deprivation.

The persecution of these Quranic katatibs by the French led to a decrease in their number and a reduction in their scope of activity. The focus on monitoring them necessarily meant paying attention to their teaching framework. The decree of (16/04/1852) was issued to regulate the selection of teachers for the katatibs and to pay their wages (Abdelkader H. , 2010 , pp. 135-136). Therefore, it is clear that the efforts made by these institutions in memorizing the Quran and spreading Arabic-Islamic culture, under oppressive conditions and despite the colonizers' opposition to the education of Algerians, cannot be denied. The settlers explicitly stated on several occasions that "without these centers, all Algerian children would have been exposed to ignorance and illiteracy," as declared by the committee appointed in 1891 by the French National Council to investigate education in Algeria. (Taher, 1993, p. 14).

Katatibs formed a stronghold against the policy of proselytism and the attempts to distort and alter the Arab-Islamic culture that had deeply rooted in the hearts of the Algerians.

## The Islamic Institutions in Algeria and the Resistance to Evangelization (1830 – 1914)

Everyone eagerly sent their children to these katatibs without hesitation, as the Quran represents the symbol and identity of the Islam practiced by all. Despite, in some cases, the miserable appearance of these Quranic schools, their simplicity, the poverty of their owners, and their limited financial resources, as well as the old methods applied within them, their role was crucial in preserving the Quran and maintaining the Arab-Islamic character of Algeria. They played an essential role in resisting and fighting the policy of proselytism and Frenchification. In the quarter of Casbah, in Algiers, there were several katatibs: The Mosque of Barqis- The MosqueSidiBoukriha- The Mosque of Sidi Ibn Ali and its mausoleum - HammamatM'sid- HwanitSidi Abdullah M'sid - The Zawiya-Mosque-M'siad (Zawiya of Sidi Mohamed CherifZehar) - The Mosque-M'sid of Safir (Yahya, 2009, p. 15).

Through these institutions, Algeria preserved its identity from distortion and disappearance over long historical periods, especially during the French colonial era, where it strongly resisted the evangelization movement carried out by the white fathers in their fierce war against Islam. The katatibs, with their steadfast walls, repelled the attacks of the Christians and their policies and schemes aimed at extinguishing the light of Islam. They responded to the European Christian challenge with similar determination. Generations of Quran memorizers, teachers, scholars, and jurists confronted the efforts of education and religious scholarship, spreading the light of knowledge and learning. They received great and wide encouragement from the Algerian community, which clung to its Arab identity and Islam, rejecting French policies of proselytism and ignorance (Yahya, 2009, p. 49).

The Algerians managed to keep these katatibs open to educate their children despite the restrictions and the decline in their numbers, especially in the vast rural areas. Teachers' salaries were sometimes paid from the incomes of endowments and properties that they dedicated to this cause. On other occasions, the children's families in the form of material or monetary gifts paid the teachers' wages.

In general, katatibs played a vital role in preserving the primary source of Islamic law, the Quran, despite the limited resources and means.

### 4. The Consequences of Missionary Policy

Despite the missionaries' ingenuity in their methods of proselytization and their efforts to spread French culture, they did not achieve significant success in changing the Arab identity of Algerians. This was because the deep-rooted Islamic faith in their hearts and their attachment to the Qur'an acted as the strongest shield against the policy of distortion, deformation, and Frenchification. Even the church leaders themselves acknowledged this moral resistance and religious immunity enjoyed by the population. It was religious faith and love for the homeland that gave the Algerian people the strength to resist, and religious sentiment was always the driving force behind their resistance to missionary policy (Meziane, 2008-2009, p. 411).

Jacques Berque confirms this in his book: *Le Maghreb Entre Deux Guerres*. He mentions that the number of Algerians who converted to Christianity during the time of the missionary pioneer in Algeria, Cardinal Lavigerie, did not exceed a thousand, despite the resources he mobilized, the support of the colonial system, and Lavigerie's exploitation of famine and epidemics to achieve his goal (Berque, 1962, p. 231). This explains that the resistance was not solely for the sake of bread, but rather an expression of complete rejection of the temptations presented by these missionaries, who exploited the crucial social and economic conditions of the Algerians to pressure them into changing their religion.

The events of history have shown that the Algerian people's commitment to Islam was not a mere coincidence, but rather a deeply rooted and steadfast attachment that was not dependent on the fall of any leader or chief. This is confirmed by the response received by Marshal Bugeaud in 1844 from the leaders of the tribes when he demanded the surrender of Ahmed Ben Salem, the representative of Emir Abdelkader in the region, threatening severe punishment if they refused. Their response was as follows: "As for today, your treatment of us reflects your belief that we have abandoned Islam after the fall of Abdelkader... You have made a grave mistake. We too are Muslims. A third of our mountains are natural fortresses, and Allah grants victory to the Muslims. So do not consider us among your subjects" (Gherbi, 2009, p. 35).

Another clear example of the Algerians' rejection of missionary activity was the heroic resistance of Zouaoua. They stood firm against of relentless efforts by both French military forces and missionaries to intensify their proselytizing campaigns in the region, attempting to break the unity of Algerian society as part of the "divide and rule" strategy. The response from the people of Zouaoua was resolute and defiant: "We will never abandon our religion. If the government insists on forcing us to do so, we will ask for a way to leave the country. If we cannot find one, we would rather die than embrace your religion..." (Ferrad MohamedArezki, 2014 , pp. 118-119).

The rejection of proselytism by the Algerians did not stop there; it extended to the boycott of those who converted to Christianity, where the relationship between the Algerians and those who converted did not differ from that with the missionaries and might even have been worse. The missionaries aimed to create a generation with confused thinking, living between two contradictory realities. The baptized child carried this contradiction in his name, such as Robert ben Abdelkader, Joseph ben Abdellah, and Claude Arezki. Christian propaganda, especially in the Kabylie region, faced the obstacle of the strong solidarity that linked the individual to the family, the family to the community, and the community to the village. As for the individual who wanted to renounce Islam, or the family that converted, they had to leave the country either voluntarily or by force (Meziane, 2008-2009, pp. 415-417).

The marriage of converts to Christianity with Algerians was the second obstacle they faced against the Algerian society, and one of the means of deterring them. Getting married was one of the difficulties that they could not easily overcome. Marriages of

## The Islamic Institutions in Algeria and the Resistance to Evangelization (1830 – 1914)

converts were significant in the proselytization process, and the missionaries paid great attention to them, aiming to create a generation of children with Christian fathers, thus enabling them to spread Christianity in the country. However, the Algerians thwarted this plan, and even the marriages that took place were in the lowest levels of society due to the conversion of the married individuals. The Algerians considered the converts as a disgraceful and dishonorable group, and thus, the converts became unwelcome in their families and even in their villages. The situation reached the point of threatening them with death. This was a clear indication of the hostility of the Algerians toward those who sought a religion other than Islam (Meziane, 2008-2009, pp. 417-420).

France failed to reach the minds of the Algerians through the emotional religious methods led by the missionaries, despite their efforts to convince the locals that their affiliation with Christianity would improve their situation in this world and recompense them with the best rewards in the afterlife. However, they overlooked the fact that what they did, in the face of the Algerians' inherent stubbornness and the resilience of their moral foundations, was actually a factor that strengthened Islam in their hearts. This is exactly what happened. The Algerians became fiercely devoted, defied all laws enacted against them, and practiced their faith secretly in their homes, openly in the streets, in their mountains and plains, and in the mosques they rebuilt. They entered prisons, were sent to detention camps, and paid heavy fines for violating the laws that fought against Islam. (Fodil, 2009 , p. 84) .

### CONCLUSION

Through studying the role of Islamic institutions in Algeria in resisting proselytism during the period from 1830 to 1914, the results can be concluded as the following:

Evangelization and colonization are two interconnected phenomena, as evidenced by the French religious policy in Algeria, where both the military and religious figures worked together to eliminate all Islamic characteristics of Algerian society. This began with the initial initiatives taken by the French authorities to fight against and seize Islamic endowments (waqf). Then, there was a systematic destruction of mosques, zawiyyas, and educational institutions, turning them into administrative and military centers or public facilities. The French also took over private and public properties, confiscated lands, and destroyed all forms of ownership in Algeria. They controlled the revenues that were the primary source of funding for education in the mosques, zawiyyas, and katatibs, which led to the disruption of their educational, religious, and cultural functions in society. By eradicating the endowments, the Algerians lost one of the pillars of their cultural life, particularly in the Arabic education sector. They became among the most persecuted by the occupation due to their commitment to education and the spread of the Arabic language, resulting in their imprisonment, persecution, and torture.

The next step in the French religious policy was the attempt to frenchify the Islamic judiciary and replace Islamic courts, which derived their laws from Shari'a, with French courts, a move that contradicted the French political agenda. France proceeded to enact a

series of laws, gradually and in successive stages, stripping Muslim judges of their powers. These included: the 1841 law, which took away the right of muslim judges to rule on misdemeanors and felonies; the 1866 law, which shattered the Islamic judiciary by allowing Muslims to litigate before French judges of peace; and the 1873 law, which deprived Muslim judges of the authority to handle property and inheritance cases. The situation of the Islamic judiciary did not change throughout the colonial period, in line with the colonial objectives aimed at abolishing the Islamic judiciary in favor of the French one.

To consolidate the colonization, the French administration sought to activate the role of the church and the school for spiritual and intellectual conquest by spreading French education. This was seen as a first step in enabling the locals to get along with the principles of 'civilization'. The second step was an attempt to make education a means to bring the Algerians closer to them. France considered education in Algeria a tool for achieving its colonial ambitions, foremost among which was separating the people from their history and the core of their Arab-Islamic identity, as well as stirring up tribal divisions and regionalist calls. This was clearly visible through the material and moral means deployed by the French authorities. This took multiple forms: education in schools, healthcare in hospitals, the building of churches, and the financial and moral support provided to various missionary organizations tasked with organizing and directing the proselytism and frenchifying project across different regions of Algeria, particularly during the period of Cardinal *Lavigerie* (1867-1892), a time marked by extensive activity under his supervision.

As for the schools, due to the general circumstances at the beginning of the occupation, the French policy was not clear. However, starting in the mid-19th century, the experience of schools emerged as an inevitable necessity. Therefore, the French administration established government Islamic schools in 1850. The goal behind them was to meet various needs and facilitate relations between the French administration and the locals, including making it easier to control them and solidifying the colonization. This became evident during the period of Republican rule, where the educational policy aimed at the complete administrative integration of European Algeria and, consequently, the total annexation of Algeria to France. Thus, the school became a political tool to serve colonization, in addition to the role of the church in creating an education system that rivaled the educational role of zawiyyas, mosques, and katatibs, with the goal of spreading Christianity.

However, despite all the material and human resources that the French authorities and the church devoted to the success of the evangelization project under the guise of education and charitable work, these combined efforts did not fully achieve their desired results. This failure was due to a number of factors, the most important of which was the role played by Islamic institutions in the social, political, and cultural life of Algeria, despite the severe destruction inflicted by the colonizer on all aspects of life in Algerian society. These institutions, in addition to being educational bodies that provided education

## The Islamic Institutions in Algeria and the Resistance to Evangelization (1830 – 1914)

to hundreds of Algerian children, also served as a refuge for many patients, the elderly, and travelers.

Islamic institutions represented a form of cultural resistance in order to preserve the national identity, represented essentially by Islamic and Arabic language. Through their religious activities alongside social and cultural engagement within Algerian society, these institutions stood against proselytism and integration projects.

The deep-rooted Islamic belief in the hearts of the Algerians and their attachment to the Qur'an were the greatest defenses against the policies of distortion, misrepresentation, and frenchification. This is acknowledged by the churchmen themselves, who recognized this moral resistance and the religious immunity enjoyed by the population.

The failure of the missionaries to convince the Algerians to change their religion, despite all the temptations they offered, exploiting the locals' dire economic and social conditions, is immense. It is reported that the number of Algerians who converted to Christianity during the era of the leading missionary, Cardinal 'Lavigerie,' did not exceed a thousand, despite the resources he mobilized. This was reflected in the refusal of Algerian children to join French schools, seeing them as an attempt to erase their Arab-Islamic identity, while they eagerly turned to Arabic-Islamic education because they understood that the goal was to assimilate the Algerian Muslim community into French society and eliminate their backgrounds.

This rejection was also supported by the activities of Islamic institutions such as the zawiyyas, mosques, katatibs. Thanks to the efforts of scholars and Qur'anic teachers, who worked both secretly and openly using all available means, the Algerians succeeded in maintaining their Arab-Islamic identity.

### Bibliography List:

#### Books

- A. Hanoteau, A. Letourneux, (1893) **The Great Kabylie and Kabyle Customs** A. Challamel Paris
- Aboul Kacem Saadallah ( 2007 ) ,**the Cultural History of Algeria**, Dar El-Bassa'er, Algiers;
- Bouaziz Yahya (2009), **The Revolutions of Algeria in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries**, Dar Al-Bassa'er for Publishing and Distribution, Algiers;
- Chahbi Abdelaziz (2018) ,**Zawiyyas, Sufism, Azabah, and French Occupation in Algeria** , Editions Dar El-Gharb. Algiers;
- El Ouartilani Fodil ( 2009 ) ,**The Revolting Algeria**, dar-elhoda, Ain M'Lila
- Ferrad Mohamed Arezki ( 2014 ) ,**Insights into the History of Algeria**, Landmarks and Figures ,Dar El-Oumma for Printing,Algiers;
- Hellouche Abdelkader ( 2010 ) ,**France's Policy in Algeria**, Dar El-Oumma for Printing and Publishing, Algiers;
- Isli Amokrane ( 2006 ) ,**The Religious and Reformist Movement in the Kabylie Region 1920-1945** ,Dar Al-Amal Publications, Algiers;
- Jacques Berque (1962) , **Le Maghreb Entre Deux Guerres**, Le Seuil Esprit, paris;

- Khelifi Abdelkader (2010) ,**Stations from the History of Struggling Algeria 1830-1962**, OPU, Algiers;
- Mohamed Nassib ,**The Zawiyyas of Knowledge and Quran in Algeria**, Dar El-Fikr, Algiers;
- Yvonne Turin (2007) ,**Cultural Clashes in Colonial Algeria**. Schools, Medicine, Religions, 1830-1880, Casbah Editions, algiers ;
- Zerhouni Taher (1993) ,**Education in Algeria Before and After Independence** ,Moufem for Publishing;

### Theses:

- Boukhaouch Said ( 2012-2011 ),**The Algerian Resistance to the French Linguistic Policy 1830-1945**, (thesis Magister) ,Collège of Humanités and Social Sciences ,University of Algiers 2..
- Bousafsaf Abdelkrim .(1983) .**The Algerian Muslim Scholars Association and Its Relations with Other Algerian Movements (1931-1945)** (thesis Magistere) , University of Constantine.
- Darram Cheikh .(2013-2012 ) ,**Educational Systems in the Zawiyyas The Zawiya of El-Hamel as a Model**, ( thesis Magistere), university of Sétif-2.
- Gritli Hamid (2010-2009) ,The Religious Dimension in French Politics in Algeria 1830-1907 ( Thesis Magistere ) , University of Algiers2.
- Khenfoug Ismail (2011-2010 ),**The Role of Sufi Orders in the Aurès Region 1844-1931** (thesis Magistere ) .Batna 'University of Larbi Ben M'hidi ',Algeria
- Saïdi Meziane .(2009-2008 ) ,**French Colonial Policy in the Kabylie Region and the position of the Population Towards It 1871-1914** (Thesis Doctorate) , University of Algiers

### Seminar article:

- Lghali Gherbi (2009), **The Role of the Spiritual Factor, in Popular Armed Resistance during the 19th Century** .Works of the National Conference on LallaFatmaN'soumer: Between Resistance and Sufism . University of Médéa 13-12 May ,Algeria;
- Mohamed LarbiOuldKhelifa 26-25) .May, (2007) .**The Role of the Zawiyyas During the Resistance in the Liberation Revolution** ,Works of the First and Second National Conference on the Zawiya Institution as a Reservoir of Resistance, Fortress of Faith, and Heritage, university of Sania May 25-26, Algeria.