The 'Ulama and Islamic Renaissance in Algeria

Salah ElDin ElZein ElTayeb

Introduction

This work is concerned primarily with the activities of the Algerian 'Ulama in the social and religious field. The most organized activities of Islamic reformism in Algeria started in 1931 with the establishment of the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama. The 'Ulama declared the ultimate goal of their Association to be only religious and cultural. The subsequent Islamic renaissance which they instituted in Algeria concentrated on the independence of the Muslim Creed, and social and cultural revivalism. The objective was to reform the practice of Islamic religion along the lines of the Islam of *Salafiyah* and not the Islam of *Sufi* sects. This was pursued by attacking the negative aspects of *al zawāyah* (Sufi centers) and by encouraging the spread of *al ta'līm al hurr* (the 'Ulama type of education).

The most significant role of *al ba'thal dīnī* (religious reformism) was that it ventured to prepare the Algerian masses for the violent conflict with France. Had it not been for this movement, the Algerian masses would have remained under the influence of the saints whose followers supported and consolidated the French colonial administration. In the following pages, the question will be posed as to how the liberation of Algeria was facilitated by the Algerian religious renaissance, which managed to liberate the consciousness of the masses. As a result, the Algerian masses were prepared morally and psychologically for political liberation from France.

The Origins of Islamic Renaissance In Algeria

The origins of the Islamic renaissance in Algeria were directly linked to the *Salafiyah* movement, which flourished in *al Mashriq al 'Arabī* during

Salah ElDin ElZein ElTayeb is a Professor in the Department of Politics, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

the nineteenth century. The thought of the *Salaftyah* movement was established in Algeria by the Old Turbans. They were the traditional indigenous Algerians who studied mainly Arabic and Islam in Algerian native schools and proceeded for further education to *al Mashriq al 'Arabī*. They absorbed all the ideas and views of the *Salaftyah* movement during their further training in Cairo and Damascus. When they returned to Algeria, they started preaching these ideas in their private native schools. The Algerian 'Ulama[1] were the product of their schools and the Association of Algerian 'Ulama was the organization that was concerned with the diffusion of *Salaftyah* movement ideas. In this respect, the Association of reformist 'Ulama in Algeria did not constitute a novelty in Islam, which had known several reformist movements throughout its long history. In fact, the Prophet himself had prepared the Muslims for these successive reformist movements when he declared that "My community will have a renovator each hundred years." This had proven to be true in that the Prophet was successively followed by many reformers, among them being Ibn Hanbal, al Ash'arī, Ibn Hāzm, al Ghazālī, and Ibn Taymīyah. Besides these individual reformists there were another three Islamic reformist movements which included Sufism[A] in the eighth century, the *islāh*[B] in the thirteenth century, and the *Salaftyah*[C] in the nineteenth century. The Algerian Islamic reformism was established and developed within this vast and deep *Salaftyah* movement that the Islamic world witnessed at the end of the nineteenth century. Egypt was the most active center of the *Salaftyah* movement. The three personalities who founded this movement were Jamāl al Dīn al Afghānī (1838-1897), Muhammad 'Abduh (1849-1905), and Rashīd Riḍa (1865-1935). The reformist ideas of the *Salaftyah* were discussed in the Journal of al 'Urwah al Wūthqāh (Intimate Friendship) established

[1]Inasmuch as *'ilm* was knowledge of traditions and of resultant canon law and theology, the 'Ulama – as custodians of that tradition – were canonists and theologians. See H.A.R. Gibb, and J. H. Kramers, *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam* (Leiden, 1961), p. 599-600.

Notes

A. Sufism and the adjective Sufi are both derived from *taṣāwwuf*, which is the act of devoting oneself to mystic life.

B. *Islāḥ* was an attempt to purify Islam from dogmatic innovations not in accordance with traditional sources (*uṣūl*) of faith and from innovations that represented ways of life different from those of the Prophet.

C. *Salafīyah* was an attempt to say that Islam, properly understood, was compatible with the modern world. It was an effort to say that Muslims, if they interpreted their religion correctly and then lived by it, could rebuild strong, effective societies in the modern world.

by al Afghanī, and *al Manār*, which was established by Riḍa. The first Algerian Islamic reformists were influenced by the ideas advocated in these two journals, which were available in Algeria toward the end of the nineteenth century.[D] The *Salaftyah* movement in Algeria was started by al Amīr 'Abd al Qādir (1807-1883), who joined the Society of *al 'Urwah al Wūthqah* after he was expelled from Algeria (*Al 'Urwah al Wuthqah* was the name given to both the *journal* and the *society*, which were established by al 'Afghanī in Egypt). He was followed by 'Abd al Halīm Ibn Simāyah and Muhammad Ibn al Khudjah, who used to read *al Manār* regularly. However, the direct influence of the *Salaftyah* movement in Algeria was attributed to Muhammad 'Abduh, who visited Algiers in 1903. He addressed the Algerians in Belcourt Mosque, where he commented upon Sūrah al 'Asr (the hundred and third surah of the Qur'an). The Muslim reformist ideas of 'Abduh were concerned with education and emancipation. In this regard, 'Al Murad stated that Muhammad 'Abduh proposed that Muslim Algerians follow the road of education and emancipation. He thought that was the only possible way to safeguard the future of the new society that had been shaped by reformist school principles[2]. The political reformism of the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama, *al iṣlāḥ al siyāsī*, was also heavily influenced by 'Abduh. This indicated that Muhammad 'Abduh was the real godfather of Algerian reformism with regard to its religious and also political aspects.[3] In connection with colonial politics, 'Abduh advised the Algerians not to discuss the politics of the French Government. He stated this in his letter to 'Abd al Ḥamīd Ibn Simāyah.

The most organized activities of Islamic reformism in Algeria were started in 1931, with the establishment of the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama.[4]

[2]See Murad, 'A. "l'enseignement Politique du Muhammad 'Abduh aux Algerien" (*Orient, 1963*), 28, p. 720.

[3]After Muhammad 'Abduh died, his disciples in Algeria, especially Muhammad Ibn al Khudjah and Muhammad Ibn al Qā'd 'Alī had confirmed that they were influenced by him and belonged to his school of reformism. See al Ṭālibī, Amār, *Ibn Bādīs, Hayātuhu wa thruhu (Ibn Bādīs, His Life and His Influence)*, (Damascus, Dar al Yaqẓah al Arabīyah, 1968), p.35.

[4]Murād, Alī, *Le Reformisme Musulman en Alcerie de 1925 a 1940; Essai d'Histoire Reliqieuse et Sociale*, (Paris, 1967) Mouton. The classical work on the history of Islamic reformism in Algeria was the work of 'Alī Murād. Nadhīr, Aḥmad, "Le Reformisme Musulman en Algerie," These de doctorat (3e cycle), Paris, IV, 1968. Being unaware of the existence of Murād's work, Amad Nadhīr has also attempted the same topic. The two works of Murād and Nadhīr were concerned with the history and theological arguments of Islamic reformism while it concentrates on the socio-political aspects and their role in the liberation of the consciousness and minds of the Algerian masses.

D. It is important to note that *al Shihāb* was in total agreement with the ideas of Rashid Riḍa which were expressed in *al Manār* especially in connection with the subject of the religious party.

The ideas of Islamic reformism were very significant for Algerian national ideology and its transformation from assimilation to nationhood. In fact it would be very difficult to claim objectivity or give proper explanation to the transformation of ideology without examining the role played by Islamic reformism in Algeria. This point of view was echoed by Lucien Lafage when he stated that "When one attempts to study the process of maturation of the modern nationalist movement that led to the independence of Algeria, one must examine thoroughly the role played by the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama. If this role has been neglected, then the study would certainly be unobjective and inaccurate.[5] According to Ernest Gellner[6], it is more important to know why the soil was so ready for this seed, than to know just who did the sowing, and how, when, and why this seed prospered. In other words, it was important to focus on the structural basis of Islamic reformism in Algeria. Without taking this structural basis into consideration, it would not be possible to explain the institutionalization of the *Salaftyah* movement in Algeria and the failure of the French policy of assimilation. In connection with the flourishing of Islamic reformism in Algeria, 'Alī Murād argued that there were internal and external factors for this.

The internal factors were concerned with the Muslim community, where the ideas of Islamic gathering and a religious party were central to the consciousness of Muslims. The external factors were related to the influences of the Zaytūnah mosque in Tunis and al Azhar in Egypt. Most of the Algerian 'Ulama who established the reformist Association in Algeria had graduated from institutions such as 'Abd al Ḥamīd Ibn Bādīs (Zaytūnah), Aḥmad Ṭawfīq al Madanī (Zaytūnah) al Ṭayyib al 'Uqbī (al Azhar), and Bashīr al Ibrāhīmī (al Azhar). The date of the establishment of the Association was also significant. In 1930, the French imperialists in Algeria celebrated the hundredth anniversary of French Algeria. The celebration was very humiliating to the indigenous population in Algeria[7]. Even the reformists themselves recognized the fact that France had facilitated the job for them by the psychological errors that it made during the celebrations. In this regard al Madanī stated that "all the Algerians have watched with bitterness how the colonists celebrated the conquest of Algeria and the defeat of the Algerians." The colonists' celebrations manifested their belief that Algeria became French and it would remain French forever. On the other hand, indigenous Algerians interpreted the celebrations as a severe insult to themselves, to their history,

---

[5]See Lafage, Lucien, "Le Benbadisme et les Culema Reformistes D'Algerie." Memoir presented in the CHEAM on 21.12.64.

[6]See Gellner, Ernest, "The Unknown Apollo of Biskra: The Social Base of Algerian Puritanism," *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 9, No. 3, Summer, 1974.

[7]Mercier, Gustave, *Le Centeaire de l'Algerie*, (Alger, 1931), 2 vol.

religion, and language. In this respect, the hundredth anniversary of *Algrie Francaise* antagonized Muslim Algerians and helped the struggle against French colonial administration in the country[8]. This indicates that there were several objective factors for the establishment of Islamic reform in Algeria. These objective factors would negate the assumptions of Augustine Berque, who claimed that Islamic reformism was a desperate endeavor of an incapable bourgeoisie to adapt to the new situation. This paper will focus primarily on the reformist program of the 'Ulama which included its doctrine of religious reformism *(ba'th dīnī)*, cultural reformism *nahḍah thaqāfīyah*), and political reformism *(iṣlāḥ siyāsī)*. The reason behind this is to show how Islamic reformism managed to morally and psychologically prepare the Algerian masses for violent conflict with France.

The Reformist Program of the 'Ulama

1. The Religious Renaissance

During the nineteenth century, Islam in Algeria was dominated by corrupt practices. The influence of the *Sufi* brotherhoods over the Algerian masses was very great to the point that Islam itself was identified with their practices. Ibn Bādīs himself admitted this fact and had written that no one in Algeria thought Islam to be other than maraboutism.[9] The Sufi sects were so widely spread that there were three hundred and forty nine *zāwiyah* (Arabic pl. *zawāyah)* and two hundred and ninety-five thousand *muqaddam* (one who administers the revenues and shares them with the other members of the marabout family). Even the religious men who were opposed to Sufism adopted their practices and their interpretation of Islam. The Sufis asserted that there was a dynamic character in the "science of hearts." This science traced its itinerary *(safar)* to God, a journey marked by a dozen stages *(maqāmāt)* and steps *(ahwāl)*. Sufism was primarily based on the postulate that the fervent practice of worship engendered in the soul graces *(fawā'id)*, and immaterial and intelligible realities. The Sufi believed the "science of hearts" *('ilm al qulūb)* would procure for the soul an experimental wisdom *(ma'rifah)*, which implied the assent of the will to the graces received (a postulate rejected by the Mu'tazilis, who were content with a theoretical psychology). The most fundamental and intrinsic Sufi sects in Algeria included *al ṭa'ifah al 'Alawīyah ('Alawīyah sect), al ṭa'ifah al Darqawīyah (Darqawīyah sect), and al ṭa'ifah al Tījanīyah (Tījanīyah sect)*. These sects were not limited to Algeria

[8]al Madanī, A. T., *Kitāb al Jazā'ir* (*The Book of Algeria*) (Cairo, 1963), 2nd ed., p. 166.
[9]*Al Shihāb*. March, 1938.

only and they existed in other Arab countries as well.

The Algerian 'Ulama thought it was their duty to reform the corrupt practices of Islam in Algeria. These corrupt practices were related to the ceremonies of the marabouts, which were half profane and half religious. These ceremonies represented the essence of Algerian religious life at the time. In his novel, *l'Immoraliste*, Guide drew a good picture of one of the ceremonies that took place in Biskra. He stated that Biskra was a center, among other things, of prostitution. The girls were drawn (or were supposed to be drawn) from Awlād Nā'l tribe. The flocks of these Awlād Nā'l roamed two holy streets, where the holy men had their lodges, and the Awlād Nā'l themselves were much in evidence there. They took part in many of the local ceremonies, half profane, half religious. The most venerated holy men were to be seen in their company[10]. The Algerian 'Ulama were opposed to these ceremonies which were held in the name of Islam. In fact, as Gellner maintained, even Guide was at first startled with the conspicuous presence of such profanity in the holy streets. What was more interesting was the fact that local piety did not view these profane aspects badly. There were two basic ideas related to the manner in which religious reformism could be achieved. Bashīr al Ibrāhīmī advocated the idea of concentrating on the educational field and the training of a solid group of 'Ulama to undertake the job of preaching the faith among the masses. This group had to be well trained in *uṣūl al dīn* (fundamentals of religion) so that the members could counter the beliefs and activities of the Sufi. On the other hand, Ibn Bādīs thought that the 'Ulama should be involved directly in attacking the bases of Sufism such as *bida'* and innovations in Islam. The Association of the 'Ulama accepted the ideas of Ibn Bādīs at first but later on they adopted the two techniques simultanèously: attacking the *bida'* on one side and spreading their educational system on the other. As a result, the 'Ulama's first measures were aimed at reforming the degenerate and superstitious Islam of the marabouts or holy men.[E]

---

[10]Gellner, Ernest, "The Unknown Apollo of Biskra," op.cit., p. 281.

E. The name marabout is given, especially in North Africa, to a Muslim saint or to his descendants. The usual name in Algeria for a saint is *murābit*; in Morocco, however, it is less used than its equivalents *ṣāliḥ*, *walī*, and particularly *sayyid*. The saints of far-spread reputation in Algeria are the patron of Tulmūsān, Sīdī Bū-Madyan (Abū Madyan al Ghawth); the patron of Algiers, Sīdī 'Abd al Rahmān al Tha'ālibī; and the saint of Miliana, Sīdī Ahmad b. Yusuf. In regions where only Berber is spoken in Algeria; the marabout is known by the name *Agurram*.

Ibn Bādīs declared that the objective of the Association of the 'Ulama was to reform the Islamic religion along the lines of the Islam of *Salafīyah* and not the Islam of Sufi sects and *bida'*. He maintained that the Association was content to devote itself to the two duties of *al amr bī al ma'rūf wa al nahī 'an al munkar.*[11] In commenting on this program he stated, "Our major objective is to awaken our compatriots from their deep sleep and educate them to the principles of their religion which are quite human and free from all wild dreams and the inventions of impostors."[12] In the first issues of *al Sunnah al Muḥammadīyah*, he also emphasized the objectives of his religious reforms by stating that people should adopt al Sunnah al Nabawīyah Al Muḥammadīyah (opposite of *bid'a*. It meant ways of life similar to those of the Prophet)[13]. The Islam of *Salafīyah* was considered by the 'Ulama to be the genuine Islam advocated by the initial sacred texts of the Qur'an and completed by the practice of the Prophet and *al salaf al ṣāliḥ*. This was manifested in the fundamental bases of the doctrine of the 'Ulama, where *bid'a* was attacked vigorously.[14] The 'Ulama denounced the dogmatic innovations that were not in accordance with traditional sources (*usūl*) of the faith and denounced ways of life different from those of the Prophet. In this respect they stated that, "This Association is concerned with eradicating the bad social habits such as gambling, the drinking of alcohol, idleness and all that is prohibited by Islam."[15] The saints of Algeria identified Islamic religion with the totality of beliefs and practices which they inherited from their ancestors. According to this point of view, even gambling and drinking of alcohol were thought to be part of Islamic religion. In fact, Islam had strongly denounced these practices and the 'Ulama considered them *ḥarām* (forbidden by the sacred law). The Algerian people used to appeal to the marabouts to fulfill their requests. It was believed by the Algerians that the marabouts or the *Agurram* possessed *barakah* (in this case defined as miraculous power) and hence their requests could be fulfilled by the saints due to the possession of this *barakah*, or miraculous power. This was considered heresy by the 'Ulama, who believed that people should appeal only to God and hence denounced the notion of "*ghawth*" (appeal to religious saints). They emphasized that, "Let it be known that if any creature pretended that it could participate with God in the exercise of His power over the people, then that

---

[11]See letter of Ibn Bādīs in addressing the General Assembly of the 'Ulama, *al Shihāb*, September, 1937.

[12]*Al Shihāb*. July, 1932.

[13]*Al Sunnah al Maḥammadīyah*. No. 1, November, 1932.

[14]See Article VII of The Fundamental Bases of the Doctrine of the 'Ulama; see also *Sijil Jam 'īyah al 'Ulama (The Record of the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama)*, Algiers 1937, p. 61.

[15]See Contribution of *l'histoire Contemporaine de l'Algerie: la Politique des Culemas Algeriens 1911-1937," Bulletin du Comite de l'Algerie Francaise*, 1934, p. 274-281.

creature was committing an act of polytheism which was considered as heresy in Islam." The notions of "*ghawth*" and '*dīwān*' were also acts of polytheism.[16] In line with this, the 'Ulama denounced the practice of setting up *qubbah* (white domes) on the tombs of dead men and of burning candles to saints. These *qubab* (pl. of *qubbah*) were generally surrounded by *ḥawsh* (little circular walls round the *qubbah*) in order to demarcate the sacred territory (*ḥurm*). In order to appeal to the saints, the believers were supposed to pay a pious visitation (*ziyārah*) to these sacred territories. The Algerian people (especially those who lived in the rural areas) regarded these tombs as places of pilgrimage and they used to immolate animals to the dead people which these tombs contained. *'ādāt al zarad* was the name given by the Algerians to these practices. Al Ibrāhīmī noted that *'ādāt al zarad*, which declined in Algeria after the Second World War, had been revived by the colonists. Each colonist in Algeria built a tomb in his farm so that it would be considered a sacred place by the rural masses and hence would be protected against them.[17] To put an end to this, 'Ulama considered *'ādāt al zarad* a heresy and they violently attacked the sacrifice of animals with pious intention to the tombs and the beseeching of dead people. They declared that such practices were dominant *fī 'asr al Jāhilīyah* (the time before the emergence of Islam when the people were supposed to be living in darkness) and were negated by Islam and the mission of the prophet Muhammad (ṢAAS). The 'Ulama divided the Algerians into two camps with regard to these practices: those who were ignorant and to whom they undertook the task of explaining the proper Islam of the Prophet, and the others, who performed these practices out of obstinate opposition (*mu'ānadah*). The second group were considered heretics and impostors. All the practices of the Sufi sects were considered by the 'Ulama to be within the realm of *bida'* (innovations) so they condemned them. In this connection the 'Ulama stated that, "The Institution Congreganiste (marabouts confraternity) is an innovation that ignores the principles of Islam. It is based on the excessive devotion to the *shaykh*, or the director of the confraternity, and the constant submission to serve him and his family. Thus, the devotion to the *shaykh* has resulted in the exploitation and the oppression of the people."[18] This demonstrates that the monastic community of the marabouts was legitimized by excessive devotion to the *shaykh*. The marabouts, men or women, have come by their sanctity in every possible way, some during their lifetime for their knowledge, their devotion, their ascetism, their power to work miracles (*karāmah*), sometimes even for their more or less mystic madness (*majdhūb*). Others have come

---

[16]Article XIV of *The Fundamental Bases of the Doctrine of the 'Ulama* op.cit.

[17]*Al Baṣṣā'ir*, No. 64, 1949.

[18]Article XVI of *The Fundamental Bases of the Doctrine of the 'Ulama*, op. cit.

into prominence by miracles and apparitions after their death. For these reasons the masses believed in the marabouts and their *karāmah*. The social standing of the marabout families was significant in the *maghrib* at the end of the nineteenth century.

Their members often acted as arbiters, protected travellers, settled differences between tribes or ethnic groups. The 'Ulama responded to this situation by condemning the attachment of the masses to the worship of saints. *Al ba'th al dīnī* (religious reformism) in Algeria was based on the dialectics between two phenomena: the phenomenon of *naqā'iṣ* which was represented by the Sufi sects,and the phenomenon of *faḍā'il*, which would make the people accept the facts of life and the inevitable change within society. A third element of intellectual nature and organizational capability was needed so that the phenomenon of *fadā'il* would dominate that of *naqā'iṣ*. This third element was the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama, which devoted its efforts to counter the colonial policy of consolidating the Sufi sects. On the other hand, French colonialism supported the Sufi sects in order to undermine the efforts of the 'Ulama.[19] This explains why, in the modern national struggle, the saints generally found themselves on the side of the French,[20] or at any rate, objects of hostility of the nationalists. It was true that modern national opposition to European colonization was inspired by puritans rather than saints. This is why the French colonial administration in Algeria was very suspicious of the activities of the 'Ulama and it believed that they were supported by *al Mashriq al 'Arabī*. Since the 'Ulama were not in a position to take any political or social measures against French colonialism, they concentrated their efforts on liberating the consciousness of the masses and declared the ultimate goal of this Association to be religious and cultural only.

In accord with this they declared that "The Association of the Algerian 'Ulama is a religious and cultural body which is basically confined to the preaching of Islam, to defend its principles and diffuse its culture. Its influence over the Algerian people is the expression of the solid religious, spiritual, intellectual and cultural links that tied it to the masses. These strong links, on the other hand, qualified the Association with the natural right of speaking on behalf of the Algerian people and of demanding the respect of Islam and Arabic by the French colonial authorities. In this manner, the

---

[19]In contrast, the British in Sudan established a "Board of 'Ulama" to try, unsuccessfully, to counteract Sufi sects and Mahdism. Ibrahim, Abdullahi A., *The Mahdi-'Ulama Conflict, Sudan Research Unit, Occasional Papers*, No. 3, (Khartoum; Uly, 1968); University of Khartoum, see also Republican Brothers, *al Dīn wa Rijāl al Dīn 'bi al 'Usur.* (Religion and the History of Sudanese 'Ulama, (Khartoum, July 1975).

[20]Gellner, Ernest, "Sanctity, Puritanism, Secularization and Nationalism in North Africa: A Case Study." *Archives de Sociolocie des Religions*, 1963, Vol. 15, p. 71-86.

Association was able to perform its religious duties and to fulfill its moral obligations toward indigenous Algerians."[21]

In addition to the liberation of the consciousness of the masses, Al Ibrāhīmī also concentrated on the liberation of their minds. In this respect, he was concerned with the concept of thought rectification. Through the 'Ulama educational system, the minds of the Algerian people could be liberated from the deception of the marabouts and the French colonial authorities. He thought that the liberation of the minds was the basic condition to the total liberation of their bodies.[22] This objective was pursued by attacking the negative aspects of *al zawāyah* and by advocating the spread of *al ta'līm al ḥurr* (the 'Ulama type of education), which will be discussed later on in connection with *al nahḍa al thaqāfīyah* (cultural reformism).[23] The 'Ulama wanted to reform these *zawāyah* so that they could be proper institutions for the spread of Islam and Arabism. Ibn Bādīs also emphasized this point in his article "Nahnū wa al Zawāyah") where he maintained that they wanted to reform *al zawāyah* and not to destroy them.[24] This issue was very sensitive to the extent that it split the Association of the 'Ulama.[25] The contest between the two groups was very intense to the extent that Shakīb Arslān had denounced the Algerian 'Ulama for being divided into traditionalists, reformists, and *Wahhābists*. He wished that they were not educated since the result of their education was to be divided into several groups. The division of the 'Ulama was manifested over another crucial reformist tool which was the separation of the Muslim cult from the French state.

2. The Independence of the Muslim Creed

The bias of French colonial administration in Algeria toward the traditional 'Ulama and the saints was manifested over the issue of the Independence of the Muslim creed. The French Government in Algeria controlled the ad-

---

[21]*Memoire sur la separation du culte et de l'Etat presente par l'Association des 'Ulama d'Algerie a l'Assemblee Algerien.*

[22]*Al Baṣṣā'ir*, No. 2, 1947.

[23]For the 'Ulama attack on the negative aspects of *al Zawāyah* see *al Ma'rikah bayn al Ṭurūqīyah wa al 'Ulama* (the struggle between the 'Ulama and the Saints) in the *Record of the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama*, op.cit., p. 25.

[24]Ibn Bādīs article, "Nahnū wa al Zawāyah (The 'Ulama and the Centers of Aggomeration) was given to the writer by Dr. 'Amār al Tālibī, head of the Department of Islamic Philosophy at the University of Algiers.

[25]The traditional 'Ulama were not wholeheartedly behind reforming *al zawāyah*. They split from the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama in September 1932 and established *Jam-'īyah 'Ulama al Sunnah* (The Association of Sunnah 'Ulama). It was said to be a reactionary organization and was dominated by Mawlūd Ḥāfiẓi and 'Umar Ismā'il.

ministration of all *al masājid* (mosques, the singular is *masjid*) in the country. All the administrative posts within *al masājid* such as *imām*, *khatīb*, *wā'iẓ*, *qāri'*, and *mu'adhdhin* were given to the traditional 'Ulama and the saints. According to Islam, the *masjid* is considered a state institution. It was inherent in the character of Islam that religion and politics could not be separated. The same individual was ruler and chief administrator in the two fields, and the same building, the *masjid*, was the center of gravity for both politics and religion. If the French Government in Algeria was a Muslim Government, it would have been acceptable to the Association of the 'Ulama that it would control the administration of *al masājid*. But since this was not the case, the 'Ulama protested against this intrusion. They were especially alarmed with what came to be known as "*Circulaire Michel*." Michel was the General Secretary for Indigenous Affairs in Algiers and the General Commander of the Police Force. He issued a circular on February 16, 1933, demanding that the Mufti of Algiers and the police force keep an eye on the activities of *al masājid*.[26] In this regard the 'Ulama stated that, "The Association of the Algerian 'Ulama considers itself to be responsible to God and to the Algerian nation for all the Islamic institutions in the country. The Muslim people are the only authorized body to appoint and dismiss the administrators of *al masājid*.[27] The Algerian 'Ulama also protested against the control of *Ḥubūs* (also known as awqāf) by the French Government. They considered this intrusion a demolition of the principal of liberty of faith and liberty of conscience. They thought that since the Muslim people were the ones who prayed in *al masājid*, it was natural that they should choose the people who would lead them in the prayers. It was also logical that they should choose the judges who would interpret the Islamic law, especially in connection with inheritance and rules of marriage. The report emphasized that genuine Islam was the one that was understood by the Algerian 'Ulama and not the French Government or its 'allies,' the saints. In addition to this, the 'Ulama demanded the independence of Muslim creed by separating from the French Government in Algeria. The Association of the Algerian 'Ulama suggested the formation of a High Islamic Congress (*Majlis Islāmī A 'la*) to be entrusted with the job of the separation of the Muslim creed in Algeria

In May, 1950, the Algerian 'Ulama submitted another report to the French Government in Algeria in connection with the separation of the Muslim creed. This report stated that there were three religions in Algeria: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, the last of which was the religion of the majority. It

---

[26]See Carret, Jacques, "Le Probleme de l'Independence du culte Musulman en Algerie", *Afrique et Asie, No. 37*, 10 trim, 1957, p. 50.

[27]*Taqrīr Majlis Idārah Jam'īyah al 'Ulama ila al Ḥukūmah al Jazā'irīyah* (The Report of the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama to the Algerian Government), August, 1944.

noted that the first two religions were absolutely independent and totally respected while the third (the religion of the majority) was completely controlled. The 'Ulama asked the French Government whether their conscience would tolerate this odd situation. They thought that the French Government was a secular Government and they wondered why it interfered in particular with Islam. The 'Ulama emphasized that it was an illusion to consider the Islamic religion dangerous to them. In this regard they stated that, "There are several colonies and protectorates in the world where Islam is absolutely independent such as India, Iraq, Syria and Egypt. The colonial governments in these countries are not threatened by Islam. This demonstrates that the fear of the French Government in Algeria from Islam is an illusion."[28] Even the advocates of the assimilation of Algerians into French culture such as Faraḥāt 'Abbas were opposed to the control of Islam by the French Government. In reference to this question, Faraḥāt declared in his '*Manifeste*' of 1943 that the Algerian problem was essentially of religious and racial nature. In order to resolve this problem, he demanded the immediate independence of Muslim creed and the application of this principle of the separation of the Church from the State.[29] The Algerian 'Ulama were very frustrated by the fact that the Jews and the Christians were absolutely free in preaching their faith while the Muslims were totally controlled. The Algerian Muslims who wanted to go to Makkah for *hajj* (pilgrimage) had to ask permission from the French Government. Any protest against French colonialism or the open declaration of one's love for one's country was considered a crime that would prevent one from making the pilgrimage. Al Ibrāhīmī maintained that the 'Ulama were in direct contrast with French colonialism in defining the meaning of a crime. He stated that the 'Ulama considered the drinking of alcohol and illicit love (which was tolerated by French colonialism) as being a crime while the French Government in Algeria considered the hatred of colonialism and the feeding of Algerian patriotism (which was encouraged by the 'Ulama) a crime too. He also wrote an article on the three religions in Algeria *al adyān al thalāthah fi al Jazā'ir*.[30] He demanded equal treatment by the Government for the three religions which existed in Algeria. Most of the editorials of *al Baṣṣā'ir* which were written by al Ibrāhīmī were devoted to the issue of the separation of Islamic religion from the French Government.[31] These editorials concentrated on the liberation of the *Ḥubūs*

---

[28]*Mudhakkirah fī Qaḍīyah Faṣl al Dīn 'an al Ḥukūmah* (Memorandum in Connection With the Separation of Religion From the Government), May, 1950.

[29]*Le Manifeste du peuple Algerien, 10 fevrier*, 1943.

[30]*Al Baṣṣā'ir*, No. 13, 1947.

[31]*Al Baṣṣā'ir*, No. 58, 1948; No. 81, 1949; No. 103, 1950; No. 75, 1949; No. 83, 1949; No. 87, 1949; No. 88, 1949; No. 89, 1949; No. 104, 1950; No. 105, 1950; No. 106n, 1950; No. 108, 1950; No. 109, 1950; No. 122, 1950; No. 137, 1951; No. 138, 1951; No. 149, 1951;

(they are also known by the name of *awqāf* in *al Mashriq al 'Arabi*), the liberation of *al masājid*, the liberation of Islamic law (*Shari'ah*), the liberation of pilgrimage (*hajj*), of fasting (*sawm*) and the nomination of Muslim administrators such as *imam*, *wā'iz* and *mu'adhdhin*. Al Ibrāhīmī was very aggressive in addressing the French Government, especially when compared with the requests of Ibn Bādīs in regard to these issues.

All the efforts of the 'Ulama in connection with the independence of the Muslim creed were in vain. It should be noted that article fifty-six of the 1947 statute referred in particular to the independence of the Muslim Creed in Algeria. It stated that "The independence of the Muslim Creed from the state is assured in the same manner as the independence of the other creeds. This has been specifically mentioned in the law of December 9, 1905, and the decree of September 27, 1907.[32] However, the principle of the separation of the Muslim Creed was to be put into practice immediately. The questions related to the administration of *Ḥubūs* were left to the Algerian Assembly to resolve. Since the Algerian Assembly was dominated by the colonists, the principle of separation remained only on paper and was not practically implemented. This meant the continuation of the frustration of the Algerian 'Ulama and the inevitability of their coming into direct conflict with the French colonial government over the total liberation of their faith. The reformist 'Ulama in Algeria were very concerned with *al ba'th al dīnī* which they pursued throughout the attack on the marabouts, the reform of the corrupt religious practices and the struggle for the independence of the Muslim Creed. The reformist program of the 'Ulama was not limited only to *al ba'th al dīnī*. It also included *al nahda al thaqāfiyah* (cultural reformism) and *Al Iṣlāh al Sīyāsī* which will be discussed later in this paper.

Social Revivalism

Education (*al tarbīyah*) was considered by the Algerian 'Ulama as the fundamental basis of social reform. The 'Ulama believed that manners originated from within the individual, therefore, they emphasized the aspect of having pure hearts in regard to social reform. They thought that if individuals had pure hearts, this would lead to changing their conscience and hence all the institutions within society would be changed. The conception of social reformism for the Algerian 'Ulama was idealist and they were very

---

No. 140, 1951; No. 142, 1951; No. 154, 1951; No. 156, 1951; No. 157, 1951; No. 158, 1951; and No. 159, 1951.

[32]See Article No. 56 of the Organic Statute of September 20, 1947.

concerned with the heart and the conscience of the individual. According to this idealist point of view, if the individuals were reformed, the institutions would be reformed and it follows automatically that the whole society would be reformed as well. This would highlight the role of the Algerian 'Ulama as engineers of human souls and would explain why they were so concerned with *al tarbīyah*. They believed that through *al tarbīyah* they could manage to formulate *al insān al kāmil* (the perfect person) and the whole society would be reformed if it consisted of perfect people. It appears that they were also in line with the modern Islamic reformists such as Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al Wahhāb, Jamāl al Dīn al Afghānī, Muhammad 'Abduh, and Muhammad Iqbāl who thought that the social degeneration of Muslims was connected with the neglect of Islam and the separation between Muslims and the facts of the Qur'an. Ibn Bādīs emphasized this by declaring that "The most essential thing in educating ourselves and other people is the correction of belief *(taṣḥīḥ al 'aqīdah)* and the construction of manners *(taqwīm al akhlāq)* because the outside appearance of human beings is the true reflection of their inner heart and conscience.[33] He also believed that the utility of people to their society should be judged by their utility to themselves. Any individual who is incapable of improving his status and that of his relatives would certainly be unable to help the members of his society. According to Ibn Bādīs, education was supposed to be the spearhead toward the correction of belief and the construction of manners. In order to reform Muslims socially, he thought he should start with educating the 'Ulama first. He considered the 'Ulama to be the heart of the Muslim community and it would not be possible to reform the Muslim community without reforming its heart first.[34] He placed strong emphasis on the analogy between the heart (being the 'Ulama) and the body (being the Muslim community) to indicate the importance of the 'Ulama to the Muslim community. Then he deduced from this analogy that if the heart was sick, one would expect the whole body to be ill and vice versa. Ibn Bādīs also emphasized that the 'Ulama would not be reformed without reforming their type of education first. In other words, education was considered by him to be the cornerstone in reforming the 'Ulama first, who would then reform the Muslim community. Above all, education itself would not be reformed unless it copied the type of education formulated by the Prophet in subject and content. The Prophet Muhammad (ṢAAS) was considered the ideal teacher for the Muslim community and his type of education was considered to be the genuine basis of social revivalism. The sayings of the Prophet (the Hadith) affirmed by Ibn Muslim referred to the fact that the Prophet was originally a teacher to the Muslim

---

[33] *Al Shihāb*, March, 1931, p. 115.
[34] *Al Shihāb*, Ibid, p. 117.

community. Ibn Muslim declared on behalf of the Prophet, "I was basically sent as a teacher." The education of the Prophet would socialize the Muslims and hence it would be possible to formulate the ideal Islamic community. In regard to the method of education, Ibn Bādīs advocated unity between thought and action or theory and practice (*al jam' bayn al fikr wa al 'amal*). In reference to priorities, he believed that knowledge (*'ilm*) should come before action (*'amal*) and he warned against acting without sufficient knowledge. Nevertheless, it would not be possible to aspire to social reform without maintaining the unity of thought and action. This fact would explain why he was concerned with technical education in addition to moral preaching.[35]

1. The Objectives of Islamic Education

The Algerian 'Ulama were influenced by the principles of Islamic education. These principles included four major objectives: the religious objective, the social, the mental, and the material. Ibn Bādīs, in particular, tried to compromise between these objectives and the social stage of Algerian society in his time. This background has played a significant role in shaping the methods of his education. As a result, he aimed at a synthesis between the individual and social life of the Algerians, bearing in mind the Prophet Muhammad (ṢAAS) as the ideal example and imitating his practice as a springboard to the ultimate goal of any Muslim. Therefore, one of his principal educational objectives was the completeness of individual and social life (*kamāl al ḥayah al fardīyah wa al ijtimā'īyah*). This indicated that he was aiming at the perfect human personality, which was supposed to be completely perfect in regard to physical fitness, mental capability, and moral aspects. In this connection Ibn Bādīs stated that, "Human perfection is dependent on knowledge, will, power and work, the latter being the foundation of noble manners and reputable behavior. Man's life from its beginning to its end, is based on these three elements: will, knowledge and work. These three are, in their turn, dependent on another three: work is dependent on the body, knowledge on the mind, and will on the behavior. Sound knowledge and strong will are the products of wise behavior, useful work and robust body. Therefore, mankind must care for and look after these three: the mind, behavior and body. The mind should be fed on knowledge, the behavior of the holy Prophet should be approximated, and strength should be given to the body by balancing diet, avoiding injury and working."[36] All the educational objectives of the Algerian 'Ulama could be traced to one ultimate

---

[35]*Al Shihāb*, No. 49, August, 1926.
[36]*Al Shari'ah*, July 17, 1933.

goal which was *al nahḍah al ijtimā'īyah wa al thaqāfīyah* (social and cultural revival) which was considered the basis of *al ḥaḍārah* (civilization). The 'Ulama believed that the first step toward *al ḥaḍārah* was the formation of the complete human being, then the joining of these complete human beings in a net of social interactions in order to satisfy the social aspects of these individuals. Muslims could not develop and be strong without an organized group to instill in them knowledge and moral strength. The basic precondition of *al nahḍah* (renaissance) to Ibn Bādīs was the formation of this leading group, which was supposed to lead the Muslim community toward *al ḥaḍārah*. His educational objectives were designed to form this group, which was the Algerian 'Ulama. In this regard he stated that "The Qur'an is taught to our students and we direct them to study it from the first day and every day in the hope that the Qur'an would mould them in the same manner as it did their ancestors. These students of Qur'an would be the leaders of the Algerian nation in the future and all the aspiration of the Algerian nation would be put into practice by them."[37] The efforts of Ibn Bādīs and the Algerian 'Ulama helped to infuse social revival, on one side, and to preserve the Algerian personality as being Muslim and Arab on the other side. The efforts of the 'Ulama in preserving the Algerian personality will be discussed later on. *Al tarbīyah* (education) was the fundamental basis of this social revival. It was supposed to formulate the 'Ulama, who would undertake the task of *al nahḍah* (renaissance) in regard to the Muslim community and lead them toward *al haḍārah* (civilization).

2. Al Masājid wa al Zawāyah

The formulation of the potential Algerian 'Ulama took place in the mosques. The Algerian mosques were very significant as institutions of learning where the 'Ulama used to teach Islamic principles and Arabic language. *Al masjid*, mosque or place of worship, from *Sajada* (to prostrate oneself) is considered by Muslims as a *Bayt Allāh* (House of God) and the sanctity of the mosque originates from this belief. As a consequence, Muslims also believed that it was their duty to teach the faith of God (Islam) and the Words of God (Qur'an) in the mosques. The Algerian 'Ulamā used *al masājid* for preaching their principles.[38] Besides the religious activities of the mosques (the teaching and recitation of the Qur'an), there were also praises of God

---

[37]*Al Shihāb*, No. 49, August, 1926.

[38]See section one and two of Article 4 of "*Al Qānūn al Asāsī li Jam'īyah al 'Ulama*" (The Fundamental Basis of the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama), which declared that one of the objectives of the Association was the teaching of Islamic principles in the mosques.

which were classed as *dhikr*. These activities were particularly cultivated by Sufism. Each individual of the different staff of *al masjid*, such as the imam, *khatīb, qāṣṣ*, *wā'iz*, *qāri'*, and *mu'adhdhin* took part in preaching the Muslim faith and educating the Muslims.[39] *Al zawāyāh* were also utilized by the Algerian 'Ulama as centers of religious, cultural, and social activities. Ali Murad emphasized these activities of *al zawāyah* by stating that, "*Al zawāyah* were generally established far from the towns and far from the turmoil of mundane life. They have been concerned with the different aspects of religious life. One could rightly emphasize that each *zāwiyah* represented a school. The essential function of the marabout's school was the teaching of Qur'anic texts. The marabout's schools were also concerned with teaching the youth of the different tribes the fundamental basis of Islamic education. However, the social role of *al zāwiyah* depended mainly on the personality of its chief, the marabout, and on the personality of that of his assistant, the *muqaddam*.[40] This indicated that *al zawāyah* had a positive role to play in regard to social reformism. It had been stated previously in connection with *al ba'th al dīnī* (the religious renaissance) that the Algerian 'Ulama had attacked vigorously the negative aspects of *al zawāyah* such as being centers for the activities of the marabouts. On the other hand, the 'Ulama utilized them as institutions of learning and centers of religious and social activities. Each *zāwiyah* acted as a proper school for the teaching of the Qur'an and Arabic language. It happened that there were many *zawāyah* in the region inhabited by the Algerian Berbers. In this connection *al zawāyah* were very significant in spreading Islam and Arabic language among the Algerian Berbers. Irrespective of the ethnic divisions in Algeria, i.e., Arabs versus Berbers, *al zawāyah* played the role of integrating all the Algerians through Islam and Arabism. Both Arabs and Berbers had to learn the principles of Islam and Arabic language. Aḥmad Tawfīq al Madanī emphasized this fact by stating that "Some of the Sufi sects and *al zawāyah* have a historical significance which could not be denied by anybody. They helped greatly in spreading Islam and Arabic language especially among the Berbers in the region of *Al Zāwāwā al Amādhīkīyā*."[41] Al Madanī had particularly mentioned the following four *zawāyah* as being the most important: Zāwiyah Sīdī 'Abd al Raḥmān al Batūlī, Zāwiyah Shalāka (near Akbū town), Zāwiyah Ibn Abī Dāwūd (in Al Zawāyah region) and finally Zāwiyah Sīdī Manṣūr (in Jarjarah region). The French colonial administration in Algeria had been aware of

---

[39]See the "role of the Mosque as a Religious Centre" in H.A.R. Gibb and J. H. Kramers, *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, op.cit., p. 335.

[40]See Murd Ali, *Le Reformisme Musulman en Algerie de 1925 a 1940: Essai d'histoire religieuse et sociale*, op.cit., p.67.

[41]See A.T. al Madanī, Kitāb al Jaza'ir (The Book of Algeria), (Cairo: 1963), 2nd edition, p. 350-351.

the activities of the 'Ulama and what was going on inside the mosques and the other meeting places such as *al zawāyah*. It could predict in advance the dangerous consequences of these activities for French colonialism in Algeria. The French authorities decided to act immediately in order to stop the germs of the 'Ulama from spreading all over Algeria. The French colonial administration placed every possible obstacle in their way so that the 'Ulama could not teach in *al masājid* or preach in *al zawāyah*. The Governor of Algiers issued a decree[42] attacking the activities of the 'Ulama and preventing them from preaching in the mosques. He described the 'Ulama as being agitators and condemned them as being agents of some Arab and Muslim countries. The 'Ulama protested strongly against the decree and demanded absolute liberty in regard to the preaching of Islam. Two urgent demands were sent by trustworthy men to the Governor-General in Algiers, to the Prime Minister in France, to the Minister of Interior, to the president of the Senate and to the President of the Legislative Assembly in Paris. The first demand was related to the immediate opening of the mosques for the 'Ulama and the second was concerned with the absolute liberty for Algerian Muslims to open their own Qur'anic schools.[43] They also submitted another protest memorandum to the French Administration in Algeria which stated that "one of the major objectives of the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama is the teaching and preaching of the Algerian people. This teaching and preaching could only take place in mosques. We are very alarmed with the decree of the Governor of Algiers and we demand the freedom of preaching and teaching in mosques."[44] This protest was followed by a third one to the president of the French Republic directly which emphasized the right of the Algerians to learn their religion and language and referred to the decree that prevented the 'Ulama from carrying out their duties. The memorandum to the president of the French Republic declared, "Religious education in this Muslim country is liquidated with the closing down of the mosques and thousands of Muslim youth are eager to learn their Islamic religion, but they are unable to do so because of the fact that the mosques are closed in their faces. To learn and teach Islamic religion is a natural right for nine million Algerian Muslims but unfortunately, they are deprived of this right."[45] Ibn Bādīs also referred to these obstacles in his annual report that was presented to the General Assembly of the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama in 1935. He was quite resentful of the fact that the doors of the mosques were closed

---

[42]The decree of the Governor of Algiers was issued on February 18, 1933. It specifically stated that the Algerian 'Ulama were strictly forbidden to teach or preach in the mosques. For the actual text of the decree see *al Shari'ah*, No. 1, 17 May 1933, p. 4.

[43]See the journal of *al Sr al Saw*, No. 11, November, 1933, p. 8.

[44]Ibid., p. 8.

[45]See al Ibrahīmī, M.B., *'Uyūn al Baṣṣā'ir, The Eyes of al Baṣṣā'ir*, (Algiers: 1976), p. 77.

in front of the 'Ulama and the Association could not pursue its objectives. He appealed on behalf of the 'Ulama to the French administration in Algeria to allow the Association to carry out its mission of preaching the faith in the mosques. He declared that "In the name of the Algerian 'Uama, I declare to the higher authority the protest of the Association against the closing of the mosques and the prevention of the 'Ulama from preaching in them. In the name of the 'Ulama I protest against the prevention of the Ummah from learning its religion and the prevention of the Association from carrying out its objectives through legitimate means."[46] The French Government did not respond to the requests of the 'Ulama and it continued to prevent them from using the mosques, which were put under the supervision of the Governor-General in Algiers. Hence the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama decided to establish its own mosques and appeal to the Algerian Muslims to contribute to this sacred goal. The response of the Algerians was quite enormous, and it was reported that over ninety mosques were built by the Association of the 'Ulama in the big towns and the villages of Algeria during 1933.[47] Since the Algerian 'Ulama were limited in number, the Association decided that they should keep mobile roving from one town to another throughout Algeria. The mobility of 'Ulama (*tajawwul al 'Ulama*) from one town to another is recognized by Islam as one of the important methods for spreading the faith and teaching its principles. In this connection Article 5 of *al qānūn al asāsī* (the fundamental basis) proclaimed that, "The Association was bound to use all the means which it considered to be useful for spreading its principles. One of these effective means was that the 'Ulama should travel from one place to another in order to preach to the Algerians."[48] The visit of the Algerian 'Alim to a town was considered a significant historical event by local Muslims. All the people of the town concerned (and even from the nearby regions) would gather in the biggest square to listen to the speeches of the visiting 'Alim. Throughout his stay in the town concerned, the people would discuss the content of his speeches and show their contempt for the abuses of French colonialism in Algeria. By this method, the 'Ulama were able to mobilize all the Algerians on the basis of Islam and Arabism. French officials intervened again and prevented the Ulama from travelling within Algeria. Each 'Alim was confined to his native town, was prevented from preaching in its mosques, and was put under constant observation by the

---

[46]See the annual report presented by Ibn Bādīs to the General Assembly of the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama) on Sunday, September 15 1935, in the Record of the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama, op.cit., p. 74; see also *al Baṣṣā'ir*, No. 83, Sept., 1937.

[47]See *Majallah al Majma' al 'Ilmī al 'Arabī*, *The Journal of Arabic Scientific Confluence*, (Cairo), No. 21, p. 146.

[48]See Article 4 of the Fundamental Basis of the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama , op.cit.

police and the security forces. If he wanted to move from one town to another for a personal reason, such as a death of one of his relatives, he had to seek permission from the police of the town. In most cases, according to the writings of the 'Ulama themselves, this permission was refused.

The Clubs of the 'Ulama

In addition to their own mosques, the Algerian 'Ulama also established their own clubs. Section 4 of Article 4 and Article 6 of *al qānūn al asāsī* referred in particular to the establishment of social clubs in order to educate *al shabāb al Jazā'irī* (the Algerian youth) through public lectures and open discussions. The Algerian community, *al mujtama' al Jazā'irī*, was divided into three groups by the 'Ulama: the small school children, the youths, and the grown-up people. The 'Ulama aimed at mobilizing all these three groups. The small pupils were recruited in the Association's private schools; the grown-up people were recruited in the mosques; but the 'Ulama could not invigorate *al shabāb* (the youth) since they did not attend either their schools or their mosques. *Al shabāb al Jaz'irī* (the Algerian youth) were usually attracted to nightclubs. These nightclubs were the ones in which strong drinks were sold. All the facilities of gambling were provided in these nightclubs. The majority of *al shabāb al Jazā'irī* would waste their nights drinking and gambling in these clubs. The French Colonial administration in Algeria encouraged the opening of such clubs while the 'Ulama were very resentful of them. The consequence of this resentment was that the 'Ulama decided to establish their own alternative—social clubs. The basic objective behind the establishing the 'Ulama social clubs was to be in a position to recruit and socialize *al shabāb*.[49] The clubs were considered educational institutions and they were designed in a particular manner so as to perform the same functions that were carried out by the mosques and the private schools. Any community would need the constructive effort of its youth in the process of its development. The Algerian nation could not be expected to flourish if its shabāb (youth) were left to waste their nights in drinking and gambling. The 'Ulama started their mission of preaching among the Algerian youth within their social clubs which was concerned with the protection of Algerian youth against corrupt manners and practices, especially during the period of adolescence. They suggested that the only safeguard for Algerian youth was for them to follow the teaching of Islam. They emphasized to Algerian youth the role that was expected of them by the Algerian nation. They advised them to prepare

---

[49]*Al Baṣṣā'ir*, No. 270, 1954, p.1.

themselves for leading the Ummah (nation) in the future. The 'Ulama explained to the youth the dangerous consequences of the French colonial policy of assimilation and warned them against imitating the French manner of life. The Algerian 'Ulama believed that Algeria is a Muslim and an Arab country. They indicated to Algerian youth that they should hold to Islamic and Arabic culture in order to reject the policy of assimilation. Besides the cultural activities within these clubs, the 'Ulama also introduced most of the popular games. They were particularly concerned with sport and scout activities. Due to these activities, the social clubs of the 'Ulama became very popular among Algerian youth. This fact did not please the French colonial administration in Algeria, which decided to discourage the activities of the 'Ulama among the youth. In 1938, the French Minister of Interior issued a decree forbidding the 'Ulama from selling any soft drinks *al mashrūbāt al mubāḥah* within their social clubs without his consent.[50] By this decree, the Minister of Interior wanted to weaken these clubs financially by depriving them of the profit which they used to get from selling the soft drinks. In addition to this, he wanted to discourage the Algerian youth from going to these clubs, since they could not find even tea or coffee to drink. Bearing these two reasons in mind, the decree was an attempt to keep the Algerian youth away from the influence of the 'Ulama. The 'Ulama did not accept the decree and agitated against it, but the agitation was unsuccessful.

The preaching of the 'Ulama was the fundamental basis for their social reformism. *Al Tarbīyah* was considered the right instrument for the formation of the perfect human being. In this regard, the 'Ulama utilized *al zawāyah wa al masājid* and even the social clubs (*al andīyah al ijtimā'īyah*) to pursue their goal of *al nahḍah al thaqāfīyah* (cultural revival), which will be discussed next.

Cultural Revivalism

Social reform was based on the usage of social institutions for educational purposes. On the other hand, cultural reform relied basically on the usage of proper educative institutions for the teaching of Islamic principles and Arabic language. In other words, *al islāh al ta'līmī al mubāshir* (direct educational reform) constituted the fundamental aspect of *al nahḍah al thaqāfīyah* (cultural revival). These institutions were owned and run by the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama, and they were known by the name of *al ta'līm al ḥurr* ('Ulama-independent type of education) in Algeria. It referred

[50] *Al Baṣṣā'ir*, No. 108, April 1938, p. 4.

in particular to the private schools, which were established by the Algerian 'Ulama. These schools were also referred to as *madāris khāṣṣah* (private schools) in order to make a distinction between them and the schools which were run by the colonial administration in Algeria. Besides the private schools, cultural reform also relied on *ṣaḥāfah al 'Ulama* (the press of the Algerian 'Ulama). The Algerian 'Ulama had their own press which they utilized as an instrument of instruction. *Al ta'līm al ḥurr* and *ṣaḥāfah al 'Ulama* played a crucial part in educating the Algerians in Islam and Arabism. They were both brought together by the 'Ulama to fulfill their desired goal of cultural revival.

The Press of the 'Ulama

Section 3 of Article 4 of the fundamental basis of the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama stated that the Association should establish its own journals and reviews. *Ṣaḥafah al 'Ulama* was entrusted with the mission of educating Algerian Muslims and mobilizing them in opposition to French colonial policy. All the Algerian papers that were owned by the indigenous population had three major characteristics: educative, ideological, and multitudinous. *Ṣaḥāfah al 'Ulama* had three further characteristics: agitational, critical, and concerned with mobilizing the Algerian masses against the French policy of cultural assimilation.[51] In July, 1925, Ibn Bādīs established the Journal *al Muntaqid* (the critic or the estimator). The choice of the name was very significant. The *marabouts* at that time used to emphasize the slogan "*I'taqid wa la' tan'taqid*" (believe but do not criticize). Ibn Bādīs thought that the Algerian Muslims should believe and criticize at the same time. This was why he had chosen the name *al Muntaqid* for his Journal in order to highlight the significance of criticizing French colonialism. The slogan *al Muntaqid* proclaimed that "*Al Ḥaqq fawq kullī Aḥad Wa al Waṭan qabl kullī Shay*" (Truth is above everybody and the native country is before everything). Underneath the main slogan it was written that *al Muntaqid* was a political journal, educative and critical. It was emphasized that it was an independent journal which aimed at the happiness of the Algerian nation with the support of democratic France. The first editorial of *al Muntaqid* stated "We are an Algerian Muslim entity which has been put under the domain of French colonialism. Being Muslims, it is our duty to safeguard our religious traditions (*al taqālīd al Islāmīyah*) which are concerned with human perfection and the promotion of fraternity and peace among all the people. Our national identity *qawmīyatuna*

[51]For the titles and the slogans of *ṣaḥafah al 'Ulama* (The 'Ulama Press), see Ali Murad, *le Reformisme Musulman*, op.cit., p. 184.

and our moral and material happiness resided in observing these Islamic traditions. This highlighted for us the fact that no people could live without religion, which represents a considerable force in the life of all human beings. Any government is mistaken if it underestimates the religion of any people and this considerable force which it possesses. As long as we want to remain an Algerian separate entity, we should continue to unify the Algerians and instill their children with the Algerian national spirit. This can be achieved by educating the Algerian youth along the principles of Islam and make them love the doing of useful deeds for their country and for humanity."[52] The slogan of *al Muntaqid* "Truth is above everybody and the native country is before everything" was quite daring at that time especially if we bear in mind that the French were about to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of French Algeria. The French colonial administration was not prepared to tolerate any criticism in connection with its belief that Algeria was a French department and it banned *al Muntaqid* after eighteen issues had been published. Coincidentally, *al 'urwah al wuthqah*, which was published in Egypt, had also been stopped from entering Algeria after the eighteenth edition. *al Muntaqid* was immediately followed by the Journal *al Shihāb*. The slogan of *al Shihāb* was taken from the book *al Muwaṭṭā'* by Al Imām Mālik. It stated that "*La yaṣluḥ ākhir hādhihi al ummah illa bi mā ṣalaḥ bihi awwaluha*" (The reformation of this ummah is only possible through following the teachings of the Prophet). The second slogan of *al Shihāb* stated that *al ḥaqq wa al 'adl waal ukhūwah fī i'ṭā' jamī' al ḥuqūq li ladhīna qāmū bi jamī' al wājibāt* (rights, justice and fraternity in giving all the rights to those who had fulfilled their duties). The following words were written at the different corners of the first page of *al Shihāb*: liberty, justice, fraternity, and peace. In addition to these different slogans, two Qur'anic verses were also written on the top of the page. The first Qur'anic verse stated: *Ud'u ila sabīl Rabbika bi al ḥikmah* . . . (preach the faith of God with erudition). The choice of this Qur'anic verse was also very significant. It related to the manner in which Muslims should argue with the infidels. God addressed the Muslims to preach his faith with erudition and patience. He also asked them to approach the infidels in a peaceful manner and to argue with them in a logical and systematic style because He would know in advance those who would accept the Muslim faith and the others who would reject it. The second Qur'anic verse had the same meaning as the first and it stated: *Qul hādhā sabīlī* . . . say this is my way). The extraction of these two Qur'anic verses in particular indicated that the 'Ulama were bound to follow the instructions of God in regard to their preaching of the Islamic faith. In February, 1939, *al Shihāb* became a monthly revue instead of a journal. The above slogan of "rights, justice

[52]*Al Muntaqid*, July 2, 1925, p. 1.

and fraternity in giving all the rights to those who had fulfilled their duties" had been abandoned in 1937. It was replaced by another slogan which stated that "*Li naʿūl ʿala anfusina wa li nattakil ʿala Allāh* (we should rely on ourselves and depend on God"). The Algerian 'Ulama were disappointed by the Government of the popular front in France and they were not particularly pleased with the results of the Islamic Congress in 1936. These two incidents had shattered their hopes in democratic France and they arrived at the conclusion that rights are taken and not given (*al ḥuqūq tuʿkhadh wa la tuʿta*). The new slogan, "We should rely on ourselves and depend on God," indicated that the Algerian 'Ulama had lost any hope of getting any concessions from France and it represented a turning point in the Algerian national struggle against French colonialism. The last issue of *al Shihāb* was published in September, 1939.

In addition to *al Shihāb*, the Algerian 'Ulama had published several journals. *Al Shihāb* belonged to Ibn Bādīs personally and not to the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama. In fact, the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama established the Journal of *al Sunnah* in *Dhu al Ḥijjah* 1352 (April 1933) and it was stopped by the French Government in July, 1933. Then *al Sunnah* was followed by *al Sharīʿah* in July 1933. Ibn Bādīs protested against the decree of the Minister of Interior, which stopped the Journal of *al Sunnah*. He asked why the French Government should blame the Algerian 'Ulama for establishing a religious and cultural society which would help it in raising the standard of the Algerians. In the first editorial of the Journal of *al Sharīʿah*, Ibn Bādīs emphasized that *al Sharīʿah* would carry the same mission as the banned journal of *al Sunnah*. Along these lines he stated that "In the light of our steadfast plan—the dissemination of knowledge and virtue of the fighting of ignorance and vice; in the light of our noble aim—the refinement and education of the Algerian people, who are linked to France, the upgrading of their standards of behavior, work and their mental capabilities to befit the French image and prestige; and in the light of our confidence in the justice of France, the freedom and democracy of the French people, the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama established the banned *Sunnah* newspaper and we have today, established the purified *Sharīʿah* newspaper to take the place of the former. The latter, we hope, shall come to occupy in our hearts the place hitherto occupied by the *Sunnah* newspaper. To achieve the goal, we shall always look forward to the Almighty for help and strength."[53] *Al Sharīʿah* was allowed to produce six issues and it was stopped in August, 1933. After the closing down of *al Sharīʿah*, the Association of the 'Ulama started *al Ṣirāṭ al Ṣawī* in September, 1933. The Minister of the Interior intervened as usual and stopped it in January, 1934. In December, 1935, the 'Ulama established

[53]See the editorial of the journal *al Sharīʿah*, July 17, 1933.

the Journal *al Baṣṣā'ir*. The Association of the 'Ulama had chosen the following Qur'anic verse to be the main slogan of *al Baṣṣā'ir*: (*qad Jā'akum baṣṣā'ir min Rabbikum* . . . This light was given to you by God). The 'Ulama indicated that *al Baṣṣā'ir* was similar to a torch which was sent by God to show the Muslims the correct passage to salvation. Those who would follow *al Baṣṣā'ir* would be enlightened by it and those who disregarded it would live in darkness. It was stopped by the 'Ulama during the Second World War. In 1947, it resumed publication again under the editorship of Muḥammad al Bashīr al Ibrāhīmī who succeeded Ibn Bādīs in 1940 as the president of the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama. Under Al Ibrāhīmī, *al Ba'ṣṣāir* was very critical of French colonialism and it stopped finally in April, 1956, after the start of the Algerian war for national liberation *(ḥarb al taḥrīr al kubrah)*. Some of the Algerian 'Ulama had their own journals which were sympathetic to the course of the Association of the 'Ulama. These sympathetic journals included *al Thabāt, al Nūr, al Mirsād*, and *al Iṣlāḥ*. They followed the guiding lines of *al Shihāb* and *al Baṣṣā'ir* while they echoed the ideas of the Association in regard to the religious renaissance, and the social and cultural revivalism. It was noticeable that all the journals of the Association of the 'Ulama were published in Arabic. Nevertheless, certain 'Ulama had published their journals in French. For example, Al Amīn al 'Āmūdī had published the Journal *La Defense* in French. Besides *La Defense* there were also some sympathetic journals to the 'Ulama in French such as *l'Ikdam* and *l'Entente*. This revealed that the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama was not prejudiced against the French language and that it published all its documents and reports in both Arabic and French. *Ṣaḥāfah al 'Ulama* played a crucial role in cultural revivalism. The Algerian 'Ulama utilized their journals and revues as a medium to communicate their ideas to the Algerian Muslims. The utility of *Ṣaḥāfah al 'Ulama* as an effective medium of communication was demonstrated by the constant intervention of the Minister of the Interior and his regular banning of the journal. The press of the Algerian 'Ulama constituted one aspect of cultural revivalism. The other significant aspect of cultural revivalism was Islamic education, which was provided by the 'Ulama's private schools.

The 'Ulama Independent Schools

The ultimate goal of the 'Ulama Independent schools was the extension of formal education in Arabic and religion to Algerian pupils (*al talāmidhah al Jazā'irīyin*). *al iṣlāḥ al ta'līmī* (educational development) was primarily based on the proper instruction of classical Arabic and orthodox Islam of the Algerian 'Ulama in their private schools. The indigenous Arabic dialect

was equated with traditional Islam by the Algerian 'Ulama. The emancipation of the Algerian Muslims from the influence of traditional Islam would also require as a prerequisite their proper knowledge of classical Arabic. In this regard, *al Balāgh*[54] declared that "Arabic language and Islamic religion are twins to the extent that you can't neglect one without also slipping from the other. By conserving the language of the Qur'an one would also conserve the Muslim soul and who missed the Arabic language would also miss by definition of the Islamic religion. *Al Najāh* indicated the significance of the Arabic language to Algeria by stating that languages were very crucial to the existence of nations. It declared that "It is through language that nations exist, and by learning your language you become a patriotic person. The most noble work for Algeria is to propagate Arabic and so resuscitate the people who spoke it."[55] The 'Ulama were very much concerned with the field of education because they were essentially teachers by occupation. They believed that any human being would need desperately water, air, education, and food in order to survive. Since the French colonial administration was not particularly concerned with educating Algerians, they decided to carry out this mission through their own private schools. In regard to their educational principles, they stated that "In the same manner as the body needs food and beverage, the spirit also needs to be nourished by real knowledge (*ma'rifah ṣaḥīḥah*)."[56] The fundamental basis of the Association of the 'Ulama also emphasized this educational role. Article 4 (Section 6) and Article 6 stated that the Association should establish its own private schools in order to teach Muslim children the Arabic language that was the tongue of their Islamic religion. The Muslim children should also be taught how to read and write, the principles of Islamic religion and the fundamentals of education (*usūl al tarbīyah*). The private schools of the 'Ulama should be under the supervision and the responsibility of the Association of the 'Ulama. Besides the elementary schools (*katātīb Qur'anīyah*), the Association was supposed to establish its own Institutes (*ma'āhid dīnīyah*) and even send the outstanding students on scholarships to *Jāmī' al Zaytunah* in Tunis, al Azhar in Egypt, and *Jāmī' al Karawīyīn* in Morocco. These three institutions, which were originally mosques, were considered as colleges for higher studies in Arabic language and Islamic religion. The three institutions have developed now into recognized universities for the study of the social sciences, with a particular bias toward Islamic studies. Only al Azhar, in comparison with the two other universities, had its own faculty of medicine that was supposed to graduate doctors who were also preachers at the same time. The Algerian 'Ulama utilized *al ta'līm*

---

[54]*Al Balāgh*, October 25, 1930.

[55]*Al Balāgh*, October 25, 1930.

[56]See the editorial of *Al Muntaqid*, July 2, 1925, p. 1.

al ḥurr for cultural revival. This meant specifically the regeneration of Arabic language and Arabic culture. The 'Ulama were very keen about these two aspects because French colonialism had been very systematic in eliminating any traces of Arabism in Algeria since its occupation in 1830. They started their free education by establishing primary schools throughout Algeria. It was reported in 1948 that the Association of the 'Ulama had one hundred and forty primary schools in Algeria.[57] In 1951, the Association of the 'Ulama published the names of all its intermediate schools in Algeria.[58] In 1947 the Association established its own secondary schools. The first secondary school was established in Constantine and it was called "Institute of Ibn Bādīs." Al Ibrāhīmī declared the Institute of Ibn Bādīs to be a crucial turning point in educational development in Algeria.[59] Muḥammad Khayr al Dīn (vice-president of the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama) had written a long article in *al Baṣṣā'ir* indicating the significance of having a higher institute for Islamic studies such as Ibn Bādīs Institute. The naming of the Institute after Ibn Bādīs reflected the recognition by the 'Ulama of his efforts in regard to *al ta'līm al ḥurr*. Khayr al Dīn mentioned that there were 702 students in the Institute of Ibn Bādīs in 1950 to 1951. In 1955, their number increased to 913 students and they were distributed among the different classes as follows: 310 (in the first year); 284 students (in the second year); 227 students (in the third year); ninety-two students (in the fourth year). Out of the ninety-two graduates in 1955, forty students had managed to get their higher certificate of education.[60] Ibn Bādīs Institute was followed by two other Institutes in Algiers and Tulmusān. This indicated that the 'Ulama higher education in Algeria was confined to three institutes only. These institutes were equally divided among the three departments of Algeria which included Constantine, al Jazā'ir (the capital), and Tulmusān. The Association of the 'Ulama also devoted some efforts to the proper training of the 'Ulama. Since there were no special colleges for the training of the Algerian teachers, the Association made further efforts by sending the potential 'Ulama on scholarships to *al mashriq al 'Arabī*.[61] The Journal of *al Baṣṣā'ir* played a significant role in regard to the training of the Algerian teachers and their preparation for the profession of teaching. Through the editorials of *al Baṣṣā'ir* al Ibrāhīmī used to address the Algerian teachers by stating that they should consider their schools battle grounds and they were expected by the Algerian nation to be

---

[57]*Al Baṣṣā'ir*, No. 65, January, 1949, p.7.

[58]For the complete list of the 'Ulama Intermediate schools see *al Baṣṣā'ir*, No. 135, December, 1951, p. 7.

[59]*Al Baṣṣā'ir*, No. 54, October, 1948, p. 1.

[60]For the complete article of Khayr al Dīn see *Al Baṣṣā'ir*, No. 226, August, 1955, P. 1.

[61]In connection with the training of the 'Ulama and the scholarships of the Association, see *Al Baṣṣā'ir*, No. 173, October, 1951, p. 3; see also *Al Baṣṣā'ir*, No. 262, March, 1954, p. 1.

the heroes of these fighting fields. He told them that inefficiency would be considered a crime and advised them to be ideal examples for their students. In this regard he emphasized "Be careful when you give advice to your students. What you say to them verbally, should be identical to what you do practically. If you advised them not to tell lies, you should always tell the truth yourselves. If you advised them to be patient, you should be patient yourselves."[62]

The French colonial administration in Algeria had tolerated the indigenous type of education up to the end of the First World War. The reason behind this toleration was that the indigenous education was disorganized, very limited and totally ineffective in mobilizing the Algerian masses. After the end of the First World War, the French became alarmed by the indigenous type of education because the 'Ulama increased in number and started to organize their educational activities. With the formation of the Association of Algerian 'Ulama in 1931, it became clear that the Independent education of the 'Ulama started to constitute a threat to the future of French Algeria.[63]

At that stage French authorities decided to intervene in order to jeopardize the educational efforts of the 'Ulama. The response of the French colonial administration to the Independent education of the 'Ulama came with unequivocal brutality. The Minister of the Interior issued a decree in which Arabic was described as a foreign language in Algeria. The 'Ulama were prevented indirectly from teaching Arabic and the Security Forces were ordered to put the decree into action. The 'Ulama were puzzled and disappointed to hear that Arabic was a foreign language in an Arabic country. The decree inflicted severe pain on the 'Ulama. This pain was manifested in their report to the French Government in 1944.[64] The Association of the 'Ulama protested vigorously against the decree that considered Arabic to be a foreign language in Algeria. They protested to the Governor-General in Algiers and they submitted several petitions to the French Government in Paris, but their

---

[62]See *al Baṣṣā'ir*, No. 94, 1949; the editorials of the following issues of *al Baṣṣā'ir*, were also addressed to Algerian teachers by Al Ibrāhīmī. *al Baṣṣā'ir*, No. 132, 1950; No. 133, 1950; No. 145, 1951; and *al Baṣṣāi'r*, No. 149. 1951.

[63]Because of the efforts of the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama, *al Katātīb al Qur'an īyah* (Qur'anic elementary schools) spread all over Algeria, even in the remote regions of Wādī Mīzāb. Bayūd Ibrāhīm 'Umar indicated in a special report on Arabic education (in the region of Mīzāb) to Turkī Rābih, that the schools of the 'Ulama were very influential in the region. The people of the Wādī Mīzāb boycotted conscription into the French army due to the influence of the 'Ulama. The conscription was considered *kufr* because Muslims would fight Muslims for the sake of infidels and the Algerians would develop bad habits from the camps. The pubs and houses of prostitution in the region were also closed down due to the influence of the 'Ulama. The report of Bayud Ibrāhīm 'Umar on Arabic Education in the Region of Mīzāb was passed to the writer by Turkī Rābiḥ himself, who was a lecturer in the Department of Education at the University of Algiers.

[64]See the report of the Algerian 'Ulama to the Algerian Government in 1944, op.cit.

protests were in vain. In March, 1938, the French Government issued another decree which stated that the Algerian 'Ulama should seek permission for the teaching of the Arabic language.[65] The March decree specified categorically that any *ālīm* who taught Arabic without permission would be severely punished by the French Government. Due to this decree, most of the 'Ulama were fined and sent to prison because they refused to seek permission for the teaching of Arabic. Ṣāṭi' Al Ḥuṣarī described in this report how the French Government humiliated the Algerian 'Ulama for teaching Arabic without permission. He declared that in 1948-49 there were twenty-seven cases before the Algerian courts. All the 'Ulama involved were fined and three of them were imprisoned.[66] The 'Ulama believed that it was absurd to seek permission to teach their own language and their own religion. As a result of this belief, they accepted imprisonment for the sake of carrying out their sacred mission of teaching the language of their faith. The March decree also indicated that the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama should seek permission before opening a new school.

The 'Ulama were particularly embittered by the March decree because it aimed primarily at jeopardizing their educational efforts. The French and the Jews had their own private schools in Algeria and they were not requested by the March decree to seek permission in opening a new school. No French or Jewish teacher was obliged to seek permission in order to teach French or Hebrew. Even if the Association applied for permission to open a school, it would take time before the application was cleared and in the end, the permission would be refused. The Association demanded that the French Government inspect its private schools but the demand was turned down.[67] All the Algerians, including those who were educated in French, had protested against the March decree. All the indigenous Algerians who did not even know the Arabic language, such as doctors, lawyers, or lecturers, had joined the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama in their struggle for the liberty of teaching Arabic. It was significant to note that the March decree had even inflicted pain on some of the French people. Jacques Madoul (a French historian) who visited Algeria in 1954 with a French delegation declared in regard to the March decree that "One of the strange things that puzzled me was that Arabic language which was the language of the majority in Algeria was considered as a foreign language. That was the major reason why the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama devoted all its efforts in organizaing *al ta'līm al ḥurr*."[68] In connection with the protest of the Europeanized

---

[65]*Al Baṣṣā'ir*, 8 April, 1938.

[66]See the article of Sāti' al Ḥusarī in the periodic of Arabic culture, Cairo, 1950, p. 568, quoted in Turkī Rābiḥ, *Education and the Algerian Personality*, (Algiers, 1974), p. 173.

[67]*Al Baṣṣā'ir*, No. 65, 1949.

[68]*Al Baṣṣā'ir*, No. 270, May, 1954.

Algerians against the March decree, Ibn Bādīs stated that "Some people thought that Islam and Arabic language were only the concern of those who believed in Islam and read Arabic. Those people thought that the Europeanized Algerians had nothing to do with Islam and Arabic language. The protests against the March decree by the Europeanized Algerians proved that they were equally concerned with the future of the Arabic language in Algeria."[69]

The Algerian 'Ulama supported by some French sympathizers and all the Algerian people, demanded their absolute liberty in teaching Arabic and the opening of their private schools. Al Ibrāhīmī was very critical of the French Government for obstructing the mission of the 'Ulama in Algeria. He stated that the French Government was secular (in name) and Christian (in action). He interpreted the decrees of the French Government as being a reflection of the struggle between Islam and Christianity and associated colonialism with Christianity. He declared that "The truth that our people ought to know about the present battle is that it is a struggle between Islam and Christianity. The effects of this struggle are manifested by the Government programs which are directed mainly to undermine Arabic and Islamic education. The Government proved to be secular in name and Christian in essence, identity, practice, and appearance—in fact, all colonialism is Christian by nature. Hence, we persist in demanding the Independence of Arabic education, the freedom of preaching in the mosques, and the separation of Islamic jurisprudence from the French legal system. These three issues we consider to be our rights in life and we believe that our religious well-being will remain incomplete without their realization. Freedom of belief is man's natural right."[70] In regard to the teaching of Arabic language, he protested against the idea of seeking permission for this purpose. He believed that French colonialism was scared of the teaching of Arabic language and it considered Arabic as its chief enemy just as Satan considered the doing of good *al 'amal al ṣāliḥ* as his worst enemy. Under the heading of *al ta'līm al 'Arabī Wa al ḥukūmah* (Arabic education and the French Government) he had written several articles attacking these hinderances and demanding their urgent removal.[71] The report of the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama to the French Government in 1944 specified the Association's demands in regard to the teaching of Arabic language. The report demanded the repeal of all the decrees issued by the French Government in connection with the teaching of Arabic. This demand was first stated in the first issue of *al Baṣṣā'ir* in

---

[69] *Al Baṣṣā'ir*, June 10, 1938.

[70] *Al Baṣṣā'ir*, No. 74, 1949.

[71] For the articles of Al Ibrāhīmī on *al ta'līm al 'Arabī wa al ḥukūmah* (Arabic Education and the Algerian Government) see *Al Baṣṣā'ir*, No. 1, 1947; No. 2, 1947; No. 9, 1947; No. 47, 1947; No. 65, 1949; No. 66, 1949; No. 68, 1949; No. 69, 1949; No. 70, 1949; No. 71, 1949; No. 72, 1949; No. 73, 1949; and No. 74, 1949.

1947. Under the heading of *al ta'līm al 'Arabī* (Arabic education) *al Baṣṣā'ir* produced the request of the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama.[72] The 'Ulama demanded that a new decree should replace all the previous decrees and it should clearly state that the Algerian 'Ulama were free to open their private schools or to teach Arabic. If the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama wanted to establish a new school, it should only have to inform the French Government of the name, place of the school, and the names of the teachers. No permission should be necessary. The new decree should also include satisfactory guarantees against the closing down of the private schools of the 'Ulama for political reasons. Instead of responding to some of these requests favorably, the French administration took further measures to weaken the status of Arabic language. It was decided that the news should be broadcast in both Arabic and Berber and there should also be a translator for both languages within the Algerian legislative Assembly. al Ibrāhīmī had protested against these two resolutions and stated that "These two resolutions meant to say that Algeria was inhabited by different races who spoke different languages. Therefore no one of these different languages deserved to be the official one. If all the Kabyles' members of the Assembly spoke French, why should the French colonial administration appoint a translator for them? The Kabyles are Muslim Arabs and Algeria is a Muslim and an Arab country and Arabic should be the official language in the country."[73] The basic objective of the French behind these two resolutions was to counter the argument that Arabic should be elevated to the same level as the French language in Algeria. The Association of the Algerian 'Ulama demanded that Arabic language should have the same status as the French language. It demanded that all the official publications and reports should be published in both French and Arabic. Finally, the 'Ulama insisted that the Arabic press should be granted similar facilities as those accorded to the French press.[74] The French wanted to indicate that Algeria consisted of different ethnic groups and neither Arabic nor Berber should have the upper hand while opening the way for the French language to dominate both of them.

In spite of the tough measures that were taken by the French Government against the 'Ulama independent education and their private press, cultural revivalism remained strong in Algeria. It was characterized by the 'Ulama's perpetual struggle for the recognition of their private schools and press. This fact was confirmed by some of the French people who praised the activities of the 'Ulama in the educational domain and criticized the French authorities for obstructing their activities. M. Metteran, the leader of the French delegation

---

[72] *Al Baṣṣā'ir*, No. 1, 1947.
[73] *Al Baṣṣā'ir*, No. 41, 1948.
[74] *Al Shihāb*, July, 1936, p. 211.

that visited Algeria in 1954, declared in this connection, "We have seen the activities of the Association of the Algerian 'Ulama in regard to *al ta'līm al ḥurr*. The Association established about 150 schools, which included about 45,000 students. It also became clear to us that the French colonial administration was against the teaching of Arabic and Islamic principles while the Algerian 'Ulama were devoted to countering the activities of the religious saints and the teaching of Arabic and Islam."[75] *Al ta'līm al ḥurr* and *ṣaḥāfah al 'Ulama* combined together to constitute the fundamental basis of *al nahḍah al thaqāfīyah* in Algeria. On the other side of the coin, *al tarbīyah, al masājid wa al zawāyah* and *andīyah al 'Ulama* played a significant role in *al nahdah al ijtimā'īyah*. The Association of the Algerian 'Ulama successfully utilized the two sides of the coin (*al nahḍah al thaqāfīyah wa al ijtimā'īyah*) to mobilize the Algerian people toward Islam and Arabism.

Conclusion

This work demonstrates that modern national opposition to European colonization in Algeria was inspired by the puritans rather than the saints. The Association of the Algerian 'Ulama devoted its efforts to countering the colonial policy of consolidating the Sufi sects. The liberation of Algeria started with the liberation of the Algerians from the influences of the corrupt practices of Islam which were related to the ceremonies of the *marabouts*.

The 'Ulama-inspired social and cultural revivalism produced a psychological and moral atmosphere that dominated the Algerian people. This dimension was totally neglected in the interpretation of Algerian violence and the excessive heroism of *al fidā'īyīn al Jazā'irīyīn* (fighters who offer up their lives courageously). The psychological and moral atmosphere was particularly relevant and significant during the Algerian war for national liberation. In this connection, the Algerian 'Ulama prepared the masses morally and psychologically for their noble violent conflict with France.

---

[75] *Al Baṣṣā'ir*, No. 270, May, 1954, p. 1.