

## **French orientalism in Algeria between academic epistemological image and colonial background.**

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### **Abstract**

The axes of this intervention revolve around the relationship of French colonialism to the French oriental school and the stages that this orientalism has gone through here in Algeria, and the characteristics that have imprinted oriental studies at each stage. We have also approached in this research the institutions of French Orientalism in Algeria, such as institutes, universities and research centers belonging to the French authorities in Algeria. Finally, we have dealt with areas of research that interested French Orientalism in Algeria. We have concluded this research with a number of results that we have come to.

**Keywords :** Orientalism; French Oriental School; colonialism.

### **1. Introduction:**

Orientalism in general is the interest shown by the West towards Islam and Muslims in the Middle Ages when Muslims came into contact with the West in Andalusia, southern France and in the Crusades, but as an actual movement it emerged at the beginning of the nineteenth century AD. Orientalist studies escalated and developed with the wave of European colonization of the Islamic world in order to get to know the people of the Muslim East, their customs, cultures and beliefs ... and considering that Algeria is a French colony it was not exempted from this rule as French Orientalism directed the study of it.

Hence, it is undeniable that French Orientalism is an institution of France's colonial administration in Algeria, and that Orientalism was employed in various forms to serve French colonial purposes in Algeria. This duality used by French Orientalism between the academic and knowledge image and the colonial religious and political background had a great impact on the continuation of French colonialism in Algeria for a long time.

If Orientalism, which logically represents the scientific research interested in the customs, cultures, arts and religion of Eastern Muslim peoples, is the same political ideological construction that worked and planned to impose French political and military hegemony in Algeria. is the same political ideological structure that worked

and planned to impose French political and military hegemony in Algeria, it was not surprising at the time that there were Orientalists with military and administrative ranks in the French army inside Algeria, such as: Stéphane Gsele, who was interested in the ancient history of Algeria\_ and Georges Marçais, who taught archaeology at the University of Algiers in 1919 and was very interested in archaeological excavations in Algeria ... The list is long, with names that are considered scientists in the West, but in Algeria they held administrative and military positions affiliated with the French state.

**Problematic:** From these ideas, we gain the legitimacy to ask the question: To what extent did French Orientalism in Algeria duplicate knowledge and academic theorizing, political and military practices, and religious objectives? What means did French Orientalism use to embody this duplication?

**Objectives:** This research aims to:

- Trace the course and objectives of French Orientalist studies in Algeria.
- Demonstrate the extent to which the French colonial authority benefited from the epistemological authority of Orientalism in Algeria.
- Focusing on demonstrating the duality of Orientalist thought between the dialectic of knowledge and political and religious authority.

**Approach to the study :**

To address this issue, we adopted a historical approach based on the recounting of historical information, and an analytical approach to analyze the recounted information.

**Themes of the study:**

- Conceptual Introduction: Definition of terms: Orientalism\_ The French School\_ Colonialism.
- French Orientalism in Algeria and its relationship with colonialism: Stages and goals.

## 2. Conceptual approach: Definition of terms: Orientalism\_ French School\_ Colonialism.

### 2.1 Orientalism:

• **Linguistically**, the term "Orientalism" has multiple meanings and implications. When researching ancient linguistic dictionaries and tracing the origin of the word "Orientalism", and after stripping the word of the imperative letters (alif, sin, and ta), it is derived from the tri-consonantal root "شرق" <sup>1</sup> (Ibn Manzur, n.d., vol. 2, p. 303). Several definitions are found in Arabic language dictionaries:

The word "شرق" is derived from (الشَّرْق) and (المَشْرِق) with a kasra (i.e., broken 'ra') which is more common, or with a fatha (i.e., open 'ra') which is less common but is grammatically correct, meaning the direction of sunrise<sup>2</sup> (Ahmad bin Ahmad Ali al-

<sup>1</sup> Ibn Manzur, Lisan al-Arab, edited by Abdullah al-Kabir, Muhammad Ahmad Hasab Allah and others, Dar al-Ma'arif, Cairo, Egypt, no date of publication, vol. 2, p. 303.

<sup>2</sup> Ahmad bin Ahmad bin Ali al-Fayyumi, Al-Misbah al-Munir fi Gharib al-Sharh al-Kabir, Mustafa al-Babi al-Halabi Printing Press, Egypt, printed edition, 1321 AH, vol. 1, p. 332.

Fayyumi, 1321H, vol. 1, p. 332; Muhammad bin Abi Bakr al-Razi, 1981, p. 336). The term (شَرْق) refers to the direction of the sunrise, and the 'sin' in the word indicates a request, meaning a pursuit of what lies in the east. In al-Qamus al-Muhit: الشَّرْق: the sun, its movement, and the directions of its rise, and المَشْرِقُ and المَشْرِيقُ are where the sun rises and the light that enters through the door slit. شَرَقْتُ الشَّمْسُ شَرْقًا: the sun rose, thus it shone brightly. And أَشْرَقَ: to be in the act of sunrise, and the sun lit up<sup>1</sup> (Majd al-Din al-Fayruzabadi, 2008, p. 856). It is clear that all meanings derived from the linguistic root of the word 'east' revolve around the concept of the sun rising and shining, indicating that the term "Orientalism" follows this linguistic meaning in its implication of seeking the East; i.e., studying this "Oriental" civilization in terms of its history, language, culture, beliefs, traditions, and other related aspects. Mr. Muhammad al-Shahid, in his research on the word 'Orient', referred to European (German, French, and English) linguistic dictionaries, where he found that it refers to the Eastern region targeted by Oriental studies, which is a newly formulated expression characterized by a symbolic meaning of Morgen Land (Land of the Morning). Morning is known for the sunrise, and this word emphasizes a shift from a geographical astronomical meaning to focusing on the concept of morning which includes the meaning of light and awakening. Conversely, in the language, we use the word Abendland, which means land of the evening, to denote darkness and rest<sup>2</sup> (Sayyid Muhammad al-Shahid, 1994). Additionally, the term Orientate implies directing the mind towards a certain relation in the field of ethics, sociology, intellectual or literary fields, or towards personal interests in the intellectual or spiritual domain, which is why the first year in some universities is called the orientation year (Orientation), and the German term Sich Orientieren means gathering information about something<sup>3</sup>.

Thus, from the previous definitions of Orientalism, we understand that the concept extends to include individuals, geography, customs, culture, literature, history, resources, and everything of interest to the Eastern Islamic society.

#### • Orientalism as a Term:

Rudi Part considered Orientalism a recognized field of study in European countries, as it entered European universities in the form of official chairs, framed by professors who are the Orientalists, in addition to the support of European governments for these Oriental studies<sup>4</sup>.

Maxime Rodinson pointed out that<sup>5</sup> the term Orientalism appeared in the French language in 1799 and in the English language in 1838. It emerged out of the need to

/ Muhammad bin Abi Bakr bin Abd al-Qadir al-Razi, Mukhtar al-Sahah, Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, Beirut, printed edition, 1981, no edition number, p. 336.

<sup>1</sup> Majd al-Din al-Fayruzabadi, Al-Qamus al-Muhit, edited by Anas Muhammad al-Shami, Zakaria Jaber Ahmad, Dar al-Hadith, Cairo, Egypt, printed edition, 2008, no edition number, p. 856.

<sup>2</sup> Sayyid Muhammad al-Shahid, "Orientalism and the Methodology of Critique among Contemporary Muslims," Ijtihad Journal, 1994, volume not specified, Issue 22, p. 191.

<sup>3</sup> Sayyid Muhammad al-Shahid, "Orientalism and the Methodology of Critique among Contemporary Muslims," Ijtihad Journal, 1994, volume not specified, Issue 22, p. 197.

<sup>4</sup> The same reference, the same page.

<sup>5</sup> Maxime Rodinson (1915-2004): A French Orientalist of Russian origin and Jewish faith, his interests varied across Semitic languages, sociology, Arab-Islamic studies, and the history of religions. Among his works are

establish a specialized branch of knowledge to study "the East." He added that there was an urgent need for specialists to establish journals, societies, and academic departments<sup>1</sup>. It is evident from the overall definitions provided by these Western Orientalists that they repeatedly attempted to present "Orientalism" as merely an independent academic discipline; as if their work was intended only to understand Eastern sciences for the purposes of pure, independent scientific research, and not for controlling their societies or any other objectives.

Therefore, "Orientalism" is a term foreign to our Arabic scientific terminologies; because it originated in non-Eastern or non-Arab lands. Some researchers believe that Orientalism can only be considered scientific if it is objective and independent, expressing abstract truths and certain perceptions; if an Orientalist deviates from objectivity or from expressing these truths and certainties, especially in Islamic studies, it cannot be called a science; because it indicates malicious intentions aimed at undermining the values of Islam and its teachings, serving missionary work, colonialism, or both.

If we refer to Hasan Habannaka al-Maydani (1927-2004)<sup>2</sup>, we find his definition of Orientalism as: "It is a term coined by Westerners for studies related to Easterners; their people, history, religions, languages, social conditions, countries, lands, civilizations, and everything related to them."<sup>3</sup> This shows that he agrees with al-Jabri and Malek Bennabi in considering Orientalism as a broad field of knowledge, encompassing many branches all related to the Muslim East.

There are also descriptions of Orientalism as a phenomenon that accompanied the intellectual awakening experienced by Europe since it felt threatened by Muslims, through Andalusia in the west and later Turkey in the east<sup>4</sup>. This points specifically to Orientalist studies that focused on Islam as a religion and worked to attack it.

## **2.2 The French School:**

French Orientalism, as a school, had its roots extending back to the period before France's occupation of most Arab countries, coinciding with France's interactions with the Eastern Islamic world. The interest of French Orientalists in the Arabic language grew due to their desire to understand and appreciate the Eastern countries, particularly recognizing the beauty in these nations' artifacts. "After the success of

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"Arabia Before Islam" and "Islam and Capitalism"... (Yahya Murad, Dictionary of Authors' Names, no publication information, p. 604).

<sup>1</sup> Maxime Rodinson: "The Western Image and Western Islamic Studies in the Heritage of Islam," categorized by Schacht and Bosworth, translated by Mohammad Zuhair Al-Samhour, Alam al-Ma'arif - Kuwait, printed edition, 1978, no edition number, p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> Abdul Rahman Hassan Habannaka al-Maydani: (1345 AH - 1425 AH), a Syrian Islamic scholar and interpreter, joined the Faculty of Sharia at Al-Azhar Al-Sharif in 1370 AH, and later became the director of Sharia Education under the Ministry of Religious Endowments. Among his works are: "Islamic Creed and Its Foundations," "The One Divine Nation," "Invasion at the Core." (Various authors, Series of Contemporary Scholars and Thinkers, Glimpses from Their Lives and Introduction to Their Works, edited by Ayda Raghay Al-Jarrah, Abdul Rahman Habannaka al-Maydani: The Scholar, Thinker, Interpreter, Dar al-Qalam for Printing and Publishing, Damascus, Syria, printed edition, 1990, vol. 7, pp. 15-19).

<sup>3</sup> Abdul Rahman Hassan Habannaka al-Maydani, "The Three Wings of Deceit," Dar al-Qalam, Damascus, Syria, 2nd edition, 1980, no edition number, p. 53.

<sup>4</sup> Ali bin Ibrahim al-Namlah, "Information Sources: Orientalism and Orientalists," published by Dar al-Nashr, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, printed edition, 1993, no edition number, p. 7.

the French Revolution in 1789 in implementing its ideas, France took the lead in the field of Arabic studies. These studies experienced a significant revival during the Orientalism movement in the nineteenth century"<sup>1</sup>.

The 13th century marked the practical beginning of Europe's acquaintance with Oriental studies in its broader sense; "specialized institutes for studying the East were established, which later gained academic renown, especially in Leiden, Rome, and Oxford, followed by similar institutions in major European universities."<sup>2</sup> France had long-standing relations with the Eastern and specifically the Islamic world since the conflict between the two religions began, commonly referred to as the Crusades, which had significant outcomes in the history of European civilization.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, the conquest of Al-Andalus and the push by Muslims into French cities under the leadership of "Abd al-Rahman al-Ghafiqi"<sup>4</sup>, who invaded Southern France crossing the Pyrenees, along with the existing trade between Arabs and French, and the expeditions undertaken by the French to most Arab regions thereafter, followed by Napoleon Bonaparte's campaign in Egypt in 1798, the French mandate in Syria and Lebanon, and later the occupation of some North African countries like Algeria, all played a direct role in strengthening the relationship between France as a nation and the Arab Islamic East in general. Although there was no agreement or specification on the start of the Orientalism movement in France, we can trace the beginning of this discipline to the direction taken by a group of Western monks and priests to Al-Andalus to learn from its sources of knowledge and its flourishing culture at the time. Among the earliest of these monks was the French monk "Gerbert," who was elected Pope of the Roman Church in 999 AD after studying in Andalusian institutes and returning to his country, and Peter the Venerable (1092-1156 AD) and Gerard of Cremona (1114-1187 AD)<sup>5</sup>.

The origins of the French Orientalist school can be traced back to the creation of the schools of Reims and Chartres, which reached their peak during the era of "Bernard" (1117), a native of the area, and his brother "Thierry" (1220)<sup>6</sup>. Later, institutes for Eastern languages were established in 1285, as well as chairs for teaching Arabic and Hebrew in several European capitals: "Paris, Oxford, Bologna, and Salamanca,

<sup>1</sup> Johann Fück: "History of the Orientalism Movement: Arabic and Islamic Studies in Europe up to the Beginning of the Twentieth Century," translated by Omar Lotfi Al-Alam, Dar al-Madar al-Islami, Libya, 2nd edition, 2001, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> The same reference, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Gustave Le Bon: "The Civilization of the Arabs," translated by Adel Zaiter, Hindawi Foundation for Education and Culture, Egypt, printed edition, 2012, no edition number, p. 332.

<sup>4</sup> Abd al-Rahman al-Ghafiqi: Abu Sa'id Abd al-Rahman ibn Abd Allah al-Ghafiqi al-Aki was the governor of Al-Andalus twice. The first time, he was appointed by the people of Al-Andalus as their governor after the killing of the governor, Al-Samh ibn Malik al-Khawlani, until the Umayyad state appointed governor Anbasa ibn Suhaym al-Kalbi in the year 103 AH. The second time, he was appointed by the governor of Ifriqiya, Ubayd Allah ibn al-Habhab, in the year 113 AH. (Mohammed Ali Qutb, Abdul Rahman al-Ghafiqi: Martyr of Balat al-Shuhada, Al-Maktab al-Islami, Damascus, Syria, 1st edition, 1981, no edition number, pp. 8-12, 25-30).

<sup>5</sup> Mustafa al-Sabai, "Orientalism and the Orientalists: Their Merits and Demerits," Dar al-Waraq, no place, printed edition, no date, no edition number, p. 18.

<sup>6</sup> Najib al-Aqiqi, "The Orientalists," Dar al-Ma'arif, Egypt, 3rd edition, 1964, vol. 1, p. 138.

thus the University of Paris established a chair for Semitic languages."<sup>1</sup> The decision issued by the Council of Vienne in 1312 played a role in expanding these chairs for Eastern languages, "when the University of Paris was established in 1325, this language (Arabic) had its own department"<sup>2</sup> Then, a chair for Arabic and Islamic studies was established in every French university, such as the universities of Paris, Toulouse, and Bordeaux. King Francois I also established a chair for Arabic and Hebrew in Reims (1519 AD), and not stopping there, he founded the Institut de France (1530 AD), which included two chairs for Hebrew and Greek, followed by King Henry III adding a chair for Arabic (1587 AD)<sup>3</sup>. Later, seeing a pressing need for scholars proficient in Semitic languages in writing and oratory, the minister of King Louis XIV initiated a mission known as the "language boys" mission, whose role was to teach Semitic languages to French youth in Parisian institutes at the king's expense. After their education, they were assigned to political or translation roles, or appointed as professors of Semitic languages in France.<sup>4</sup>

**2.3 Colonialism:** The concept of colonialism is crucial in defining the specific form of cultural exploitation that grew alongside European expansion towards developing countries. Despite the emergence of many civilizations prior to this European orientation, the colonizers promoted the idea that their presence was not to colonize individuals, but rather to develop and modernize the occupied regions.<sup>5</sup>

### **3 French Orientalism in Algeria and its relation to colonialism: Stages and objectives.**

#### 3.1 Stages of French Orientalism in Algeria:

The interest of French Orientalism in Algeria began before colonization with the writings of "Thomas Shaw."<sup>6</sup> Westerners utilized the writings of other Orientalists such as "The Complete History of Algeria" by "Joseph Morgan" and what was written by German travelers during their visits to Algeria<sup>7</sup>. The stages of French Orientalism in Algeria can be divided into three:

- The first stage: (1830-1879):

Most French historians endeavored to remove the military term from the description of a historical historian, but this was impossible because most members of the historical school that entered Algeria with France were military personnel known for their mastery of the Arabic language and local Algerian dialects. They were particularly interested in documenting the early stages of the French occupation of

<sup>1</sup> The same reference, p. 139.

<sup>2</sup> Abdul Mut'al Muhammad al-Jabri, "Orientalism: A Facet of Intellectual Colonialism," Wahba Library for Publishing, Egypt, 1st edition, 1995, no edition number, p. 120.

<sup>3</sup> Najib al-Aqiqi, "The Orientalists," vol. 1, p. 139.

<sup>4</sup> See: the same reference, p. 139.

<sup>5</sup> Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, "Postcolonial Studies: Key Concepts," translated by Ahmad al-Ruby, Ayman Helmy and others, National Center for Translation, Egypt, printed edition, 2010, no edition number, p. 310.

<sup>6</sup> Masouda Yahiaoui, "Algeria Through the Colonial Lens," Historical Studies Journal, History Department, University of Algiers, 1933, volume not specified, Issue 7, p. 155.

<sup>7</sup> See: Abu al-Qasim Saad Allah, "Research and Opinions in the History of Algeria," Dar al-Basair, Algiers, printed edition, 2007, Vol. 1, pp. 313-314.

Algeria<sup>1</sup>. It was known that the French campaign against Algeria brought with it 69 translators, both French and non-French, who became associated with France after Napoleon Bonaparte's campaign in Egypt, such as George Pharaon and Abraham Daninos.<sup>2</sup> It was imperative for the colonial administration to employ a team of translators proficient in Arabic, as they were the effective intermediaries enabling direct communication with the locals in their own language.<sup>3</sup> In general, Orientalism was linked to French colonialism in this stage through translation by military translators who strived to collect information about the Algerian people and everything related to Algeria and make it available to the colonial administration. These translators also worked on teaching the French language to Algerians.<sup>4</sup> The first to initiate translation in the military ranks in Algeria was Kazafir Bianché (1783-1864)<sup>5</sup>.

- The second stage: 1879-1939:

The issuance of the law on September 20, 1879, concerning higher education in Algeria, which decided to establish higher education schools in Algeria, marked the beginning of this Orientalist stage in Algeria<sup>6</sup>. The specialties of these schools varied between literature, science, and medicine, but they agreed on studying everything related to Algeria, including tribal systems, dialects, and ancient history.<sup>7</sup> In this stage, a group of Orientalists who were trained at the School of Letters in Algeria emerged, such as Douté, specialized in social research, and René Bassé, who focused on linguistic studies and local dialects<sup>8</sup> (Abu al-Qasim Saadallah, previous reference, vol. 1, pp. 24-25).

The Orientalists in this stage moved to study what they called "Algerian Islam." Zais wrote two volumes on Ibadi jurisprudence, and Montil Niski published Ibn

<sup>1</sup> Mariam Saghir, "The Development of Historical Studies During the French Colonial Period," *Journal of Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences*, University of Algiers, 2009, volume not specified, Issue 12, p. 272.

<sup>2</sup> Jamal Fanan, "The Colonial History School Between Ideology and Awareness Regarding Some Issues of Algerian History," *Historical Studies Journal*, Algeria, 1988, volume not specified, Issue 5, p. 131. (Abraham Daninos: (1797-1872) Born in Algeria and naturalized French before the French entry into Algeria, he created a French-Arabic dictionary distributed by the occupation administration to French officers, and served as the translator for the African Committee that entered Algeria in 1833.) See: Abdelhamid Barakat, "French Orientalism and Algeria between 1879 and 1962: An Intellectual Historical Study," doctoral dissertation, published, History Department, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of May 8, 1945, 2021-2022, p. 86.

<sup>3</sup> Souhila Driouche, "French Orientalism in Algeria between 1830-1930: A Reading of an Article by Henri Massey," translated by Mohammed Yahiaten, *Journal of Linguistic Practices*, Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi Ouzou, Algeria, 2017, volume unspecified, Issue 39, p. 170.

<sup>4</sup> Hanafi Helailey, "Translators in the French Army: Mechanisms and Pillars of Colonial Administration in Algeria 1830-1962," *Mediterranean Dialogue Journal*, Laboratory for Research and Studies in Orientalism in the Islamic West, Djillali Liabes University, Sidi Bel Abbes, Algeria, 2016, volume unspecified, Issue 11-12, p. 180.

<sup>5</sup> The same reference, p. 185.

<sup>6</sup> Baghdad Khaloufi, "Higher Education in Algeria During the Colonial Era," *Al-Mawaqif Journal for Research and Studies in Society and History*, Algeria, 2015, volume unspecified, Issue 10, p. 168.

<sup>7</sup> See: Abdelhamid Barakat, the previous reference, p. 95.

<sup>8</sup> Abu al-Qasim Saad Allah, "Research and Opinions in the History of Algeria," Vol. 1, pp. 24-25.

Ghanem's code on Ibadi jurisprudence.<sup>1</sup> French Orientalists like André Basset, Motylanski, and Mascaray focused on Algerian Arabic and Berber dialects during this period, benefiting from Algerian personalities like al-Hashimi bin Lunis, Belkacem bin Sedira, and others.<sup>2</sup> It is clear from the above how deeply French Orientalist studies penetrated Algeria during this stage to the extent that Orientalists dissected the Islamic religion of Algerians and introduced Algerian dialects into the Orientalist research lab. This, of course, indicates the colonial administration's need at that time for precise intelligence information that could only be obtained through its scholars and experts, whom they called Orientalists.

In the same stage, the Historical Monuments Commission was founded in 1880, with a major focus on the Roman cities of Jamila and Timgad. In Paris, the North Africa Committee was established in 1883 with the goal of reviving historical artifacts, inscriptions, and documents. The most significant event in this stage from an Orientalist perspective was the convening of the fourteenth Congress of Orientalists in Algeria in April 1905<sup>3</sup>. From all that has been mentioned, it is evident that this stage was the actual phase of French Orientalism in Algeria, where several institutions were established, and the interests of this stage varied between language, religion, history, and archaeology—fields that any colonizer would focus on.

- The third stage: 1930-1962:

This phase of French Orientalism in Algeria was characterized by the Orientalists' efforts, supported by the colonial administration, to expand academic institutions. This led to the establishment of the Institute of Meteorology and Astrophysics in 1931, the Institute of Saharan Studies in 1937, the Institute of Urban Planning in 1942, and the Institute of Genealogy and Racial Origins in 1956<sup>4</sup>. During this period, Orientalism and French colonialism celebrated the centenary of the founding of the Algerian Historical Society in 1956 and the African Journal<sup>5</sup>. Despite these efforts, French Orientalism in this period declined significantly, especially with the outbreak of the Algerian War of Independence and World War II<sup>6</sup>.

Prominent French Orientalists of this period included Henri Peres, who taught at the Faculty of Arts at the University of Algiers and was known for his works such as "Customs, Systems, and Beliefs of the Nationals in Algeria." Another was Evariste Levi-Provencal, born in Algiers to a Jewish family, who taught Islamic history at the University of Algiers and authored significant works, including "The Collection of the Constantine Archaeological Society." Jean Cantineau, who taught the science of languages and Semitic languages at the University of Algiers, authored works like "The Linguistic Geography of the Arabic Dialects in Algeria."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See: the previous source, Vol. 6, p. 53.

<sup>2</sup> See: the same source, Vol. 6, pp. 53-56.

<sup>3</sup> For further details, see: Abdelhamid Barakat, the previous reference, pp. 98-99.

<sup>4</sup> Baghdad Khaloufi, the previous reference, p. 172.

<sup>5</sup> Abu al-Qasim Saad Allah, the previous source, Vol. 1, p. 26.

<sup>6</sup> The same source, Vol. 6, p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> See: Abdelhamid Barakat, the previous reference, pp. 100-101.

### **3.2 Mechanisms and tools of French Orientalism in Algeria:**

To ensure complete control over Algerian territory, the French colonizers deemed it necessary to establish Orientalist institutions to conduct specialized and precise research on everything related to Algeria.

#### **• Institutions of French Orientalism in Algeria:**

##### **Higher Education Institutions:**

According to the law of December 30, 1909, the higher education schools established by France over 30 years were transformed into colleges affiliated with the University of Algiers to accelerate French Orientalism in Algeria<sup>1</sup>. The university was divided into several colleges including Medicine, Law, Science, and Arts. It quickly developed to the point where it was called "The African Sorbonne" and was considered the third French university, becoming a major center for Orientalism and French colonial ideology in Algeria. It is clear that the University of Algiers was one of the most significant achievements of French Orientalism in Algeria<sup>2</sup>, serving colonial purposes, with many of its administrators being Orientalists specialized in their fields.

##### **Institutes:**

Some examples include:

##### **The Saharan Research Institute:**

Established by the law of July 10, 1937, following the idea of the Algérie-Afrique Occidentale Française committee which requested the Dean of the Zigmouy College to create an institute for Saharan research<sup>3</sup>. Its mission was to publish and organize documents about the Sahara and establish a specialized library on the subject<sup>4</sup>. France recognized the strategic value of the Saharan region in Algeria and endeavored to gather information to anticipate any resistance from this area and to control the region's resources.

In the same context, Abu al-Qasim Saadallah mentioned several other institutes established during the French colonization of Algeria, such as the Institute of Urban Planning in 1942, the Institute of Political Studies in 1949, the Institute of Philosophical Studies, and the Institute of Genealogy and Racial Origins in 1956<sup>5</sup>, among others. Through these institutes, the colonial French authority in Algeria conducted research on all aspects of Algerian society, including intellectual and ethnic origins.

##### **The Institute of Eastern Studies:**

Supervised by the French Orientalist Georges Marçais and established in 1934, its aim was to create research teams focused on the history, civilization, and languages

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<sup>1</sup> See: Baghdad Khaloufi, the previous reference, p. 171

<sup>2</sup> For details, see: Abu al-Qasim Saad Allah, the same source, Vol. 6, pp. 304-309.

<sup>3</sup> See: Abdelhamid Barakat, "French Orientalism in Algeria between 1879-1962: An Intellectual Historical Study," p. 152.

<sup>4</sup> Abu al-Qasim Saad Allah, "Cultural History of Algeria," Vol. 6, p. 101.

<sup>5</sup> The same source, Vol. 6, p. 101.

of the East, especially in North Africa. Georges Marçais<sup>1</sup> and later Henri Peres<sup>2</sup> oversaw this institute.

This overview highlights some of the key institutes established by French Orientalism in Algeria, serving the colonial authority and subjecting Algeria to precise scientific research covering all areas.

Societies:

The Algerian Historical Society: Founded on April 7, 1856, by the idea of the French General in Algeria "Randon," who later became its honorary president<sup>3</sup>. Barbrouger stated about this society, "The African Journal should particularly concern itself with unpublished material, useful and positive works, original documents, and anything that can shed light on local history in its various epochs." Its scope of activity focused on studying and understanding all events related to the history of Africa, particularly concerning Algeria from the Libyan era to the end of the Ottoman period and the early French occupation. It focused on history, geography, languages, arts, and sciences of North Africa<sup>4</sup>.

The societies established in Algeria during the colonial period included: the Archaeological Society of Constantine in 1852, the Algerian Historical Society in 1856, the Geographic and Archaeological Society of the Oran region in 1878, and the Académie d'Hippone in 1860, among others<sup>5</sup>.

It is evident that these societies, with their historical, archaeological, and geographical interests, served to expand French colonial influence in Algeria. Despite their scientific contributions, it cannot be denied that these research efforts provided valuable intelligence material for French colonization, greatly aiding its penetration into Algeria.

• Research Areas of French Orientalism in Algeria:

French Orientalism in Algeria covered many research areas, diligently examining detailed aspects of Algeria linguistically, ideologically, historically, socially, and archaeologically. Since it is impossible to cover all these fields here, we chose to study examples:

The Arabic Language and Penetration into Algerian Society:

French Orientalism recognized the necessity of focusing on the Arabic language as it was the gateway through which the inner workings of Algerian society could be understood. They fully realized that dissecting Algerian society in their Orientalist

<sup>1</sup> George Marçais: (1876-1962) studied fine arts and archaeology at the University of Algiers in 1919 and later headed the Institute of Eastern Studies in Algiers in 1939. His works include "History of Religious Morocco," "Islamic Art in the Land of the Berbers"..... (For details, see: Najib al-Aqiqi, "The Orientalists," Vol. 2, pp. 285-287).

<sup>2</sup> See: Mariam Saghir, "The Development of Historical Studies at the University of Algiers During the French Colonial Period," Journal of Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Algiers, volume unspecified, Issue 12, 2009, p. 278.

<sup>3</sup> Hanafi Helailey, the same reference, p. 151.

<sup>4</sup> Abdelhamid Barakat, the same reference, p. 111, citing: Berbroger. "Statuts de la société historique algérienne." Revue africaine. ALGIERS. Vol. 9, No. 49.

<sup>5</sup> For further details, see: the same reference, pp. 109-110.

"lab" would be impossible without the most important tool in this process—the Arabic language. Abu al-Qasim Saad Allah mentions a statement by a French expert saying: "The new masters—the French—had to use the Arabic language in administration and understanding the population, and studying it seriously could provide many benefits to the French, such as establishing numerous relationships with the locals and gaining deeper insights into the society."<sup>1</sup> For this purpose, French Orientalists produced a series of texts and dictionaries that provided the basics of learning Arabic, while the colonial administration encouraged settlers to learn Arabic with financial incentives.<sup>2</sup> Examples of these dictionaries include: "Cours de la langue Arabe" produced by the French Orientalist Louis Berbrugger in 1855, and another dictionary titled "Grammaire arabe Idiome D'Algérie" authored by the Orientalist Alexander Bellemare in 1854.<sup>3</sup> The intent of this focus was not cultural exchange and openness to languages, but rather to extend influence and understand the language of the Algerian people.

#### Berber Dialects and the Separatist Background:

There was significant interest among Orientalists in the Berber dialects of Algeria. Orientalist Motylinski focused on the dialects of the Nafusa Mountains and Ghadames in two highly valuable studies for gathering social information. Orientalist M. Destaing wrote about the Béni Snous dialect, and in the same vein, René Basset worked on Amazigh dialects and their instruction. Orientalist Skrai showed interest in the Tuareg dialect, and Orientalist Georges Marçais wrote about the Shawiya dialect in the Aurès region.<sup>4</sup> This interest indicates that this type of colonialism aimed not only at exploiting the country's resources but also at fragmenting Algerian society into minorities and segments by highlighting these linguistic differences.

#### Historical Studies and the Erasure of Periods from Algerian History:

The French Orientalist school divided the history of Algeria into three major periods: the ancient Roman period, the medieval period during the Islamic conquest, and the modern and contemporary period starting with the arrival of the French. French Orientalism focused on the Roman period, working on Roman and Christian artifacts to construct a narrative of a Roman-French civilizational link. Famous Orientalists in this field included Charles André Julien, Émile Félix Gautier, Gabriel Camps, and Stéphane Gsell<sup>5</sup>. The aim was clearly to entrench the notion of Algeria being Christian before the advent of Islam.

The medieval era, representing the period of Islamic conquest in Algeria, attracted the attention of French Orientalists who searched for dubious incidents in the Islamic history of North Africa, labeling this period as an Arab invasion (conquête Arabe).

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<sup>1</sup> Abu al-Qasim Saad Allah, the same source, Vol. 4, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> See: Ibrahim Lounissi, "Research on the Social and Cultural History of Algeria During the French Occupation," Dar Houma, Algiers, printed edition, 2003, no edition number, p. 100.

<sup>3</sup> For details, see: Abdelhamid Barakat, the same reference, pp. 157-159.

<sup>4</sup> For further details, see: the same reference, pp. 131-132.

<sup>5</sup> For further details, see: Abdelhamid Barakat, the previous reference, pp. 157-158.

Their studies focused on mythological narratives, with Orientalists like Ernest Mercier and Georges Marçais<sup>1</sup> taking particular interest.

For the modern and contemporary period, French Orientalism briefly covered the Ottoman era, emphasizing the tyranny and injustices of Ottoman rulers, as well as coups, conspiracies, and strife. They focused on Ottoman-European relations, with the primary goal of justifying French colonization as a rescue of Algeria from Ottoman oppression.<sup>2</sup>

In contemporary times, French Orientalists highlighted the heroics of French generals, with scholars like Louis Rinn writing about the Mokrani and Haddad revolts to glorify France's efforts, and Paul Azan chronicling Emir Abdelkader's resistance in his book "Emir Abdelkader: From Islamic Zealotry to French Citizenship," among others. Ultimately, these historical studies<sup>3</sup> by French Orientalism aimed essentially at writing the history of France, not Algeria, universally aiming to justify French colonial presence in Algeria.

Archaeological Studies and the Revival of the Roman Era in Algeria:

French Orientalism in Algeria took a keen interest in archaeology, particularly Roman artifacts, collecting related documents and artifacts. For this purpose, the Scientific Discovery Group was formed, including engineers, officers, and professors. Charles Texier was tasked in 1845 with cataloging historical landmarks in major Algerian cities. The likely reason for this Orientalist interest in Algerian archaeology was to detach the Algerian people from their civilizational and religious heritage and to justify their presence as a continuation of Roman civilization.<sup>4</sup>

Among the most prominent French Orientalist institutions active in Algerian archaeology were the Archaeological, Historical, and Geographic Society of Constantine, founded by Orientalist Cruly in 1852, and the Algerian Historical Society, established by Orientalist Adrien Berbrugger in 1856 in Algiers<sup>5</sup>. Studies in this field are numerous, including translations of archaeological inscriptions by Mr. Dellater in 1886-1887, studies on the mosaics of Tébessa by Mr. Hiron de Villefosse, and local text studies by Vars on the ancient history of Cirta<sup>6</sup>. These efforts culminated with the establishment of the Higher Institute of Letters managed by Émile Masqueray, where university-level archaeological activity began in Algeria in the late 19th century, featuring a cadre of Orientalists like Waille and Édouard Cat, and spawning a range of specialized journals and extensive

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<sup>1</sup> For further details, see: the same reference, pp. 207-215.

<sup>2</sup> Moulay Belhamissi, "The Stance of French Historians on Algeria During the Ottoman Era," *Historical Studies Journal*, History Institute, University of Algiers, unspecified volume, Issue 5, 1988, pp. 105-106.

<sup>3</sup> For further details, see: Abdelhamid Barakat, the previous reference, pp. 223-225.

<sup>4</sup> Ismail Al-Arabi, "Colonial Efforts in Rooting the History of Algeria as a Background for the Cultural Alienation Project," *Al-Mi'yar Journal*, Prince Abdel Qader University, Constantine, Volume 5, Issue 10, 2005, p. 100.

<sup>5</sup> For further details, see: Abdelhamid Barakat, the previous reference, pp. 239-240.

<sup>6</sup> Abu al-Qasim Saad Allah, the previous source, Vol. 6, p. 92.

archaeological excavations in cities they called 'the cities of gold': Cherchell, Tipasa, Djemila, Tébessa, and others.<sup>1</sup>

The discussion in this field is extensive and too vast to cover in full detail here, but it is clear that French Orientalist efforts in Algerian archaeology focused on erasing national identity and emphasizing Roman artifacts while neglecting Islamic ones, to justify French colonialism in Algeria as part of a succession of civilizations, with France being one of them.

## **2. Conclusion:**

- Orientalists consistently resist the label of "orientalist" due to the negative connotations associated with it that do not befit a scholar. However, history has indeed shown that their research and studies were conducted to serve colonialism in Islamic countries.

- Through our research, we observed that scientific and academic institutions were established based on the ideas of military generals, clearly illustrating the link between Orientalism and colonialism.

- French Orientalism in Algeria went through three major phases. The first was exploratory, focusing on understanding Algerian society. The second phase marked the rejuvenation of French Orientalism in Algeria and the beginning of establishing its foundations through the creation of related scientific institutions. The final phase continued from the second and culminated in the establishment of the University of Algiers.

- The studies conducted by French Orientalists in Algeria were meticulous, covering all areas including linguistic, social, historical, religious, and anthropological aspects. Regardless of the backgrounds of these studies, we must benefit from them.

- In historical and archaeological studies, we noticed that French Orientalism focused on the Roman Christian period in Algeria, almost completely ignoring the Islamic period and artifacts. This was clearly not coincidental but rather aimed at obliterating the Arab and Islamic identity from Algeria's history.

- Our research contents demonstrated that despite their precision, French Orientalist studies in Algeria could not shed their Orientalist background and the principle of European superiority over others. These studies aimed to justify the colonial presence in Algeria as an extension of the Roman civilization that had passed through the region.

- It is evident that French colonialism in Algeria mobilized all these energies and scientific institutions to benefit from various studies in dialects, history, and archaeology... to support its continued presence in Algeria.

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