

## **French colonial anthropology in Algeria 1830-1962 - The Algerian Sahara as a model.**

**Dr. Tahri Abdelmalek<sup>1</sup>, Dr. HarmaAbd Alkarim<sup>2</sup>.**

<sup>1</sup>University of Adrar Ahmed Draia (Algeria).

<sup>2</sup>Manuscript Laboratory of Algerian Manuscripts in Africa, University of Adrar Ahmed Draia(Algeria).

**The Author's E-mail:**[abdelmalek.tahri@univ-adrar.edu.dz](mailto:abdelmalek.tahri@univ-adrar.edu.dz)<sup>1</sup>,

[harma30@univ-adrar.edu.dz](mailto:harma30@univ-adrar.edu.dz)<sup>2</sup>

**Received: 11/2023**

**Published: 01/2024**

### **Abstract:**

Anthropology is considered the most appropriate social science for historians because anthropologists and historians face many common problems. Whereas history is concerned with the past of peoples over certain periods of time, anthropology analyses and explains the social systems of these peoples. Although anthropology in the context of European colonialism placed the peoples of the colonies outside of history, by the mid-19th century there was an urgent need to study the peoples of the colonies anthropologically.

Colonial anthropology's approach to Algerian society was linked to the goals and plans of French colonialism, which aimed to strip the Algerian nation of its identity and tighten control over it. Colonial anthropology was also used to implement policies aimed at sowing discord, hatred and division among the people of the same nation. The Arab-Berber dichotomy became a focal point of colonial studies, as this dichotomy provided a fundamental entry point for sowing seeds of doubt, discord and division among the members of a single community.

**Keywords:** History, Anthropology, Algeria, French colonialism.

### **Introduction:**

“He who has no history has no present.” This is a saying that we firmly believe in, as history has always been the motivation and impetus for mankind to progress and achieve. Human history in general is a field in which scholars have specialised and devoted a significant part of their attention. There is no doubt that the science of history, like other sciences, is based on established scientific

facts derived from narrative evidence about places and people, as well as from observable evidence available to the eye. The science of history seeks to trace significant events and occurrences that took place on earth before human life, as well as events that occurred due to human actions, which is known as human or anthropological history.

History is considered a branch of the social sciences and is therefore closely related to other social sciences such as psychology, geography, economics and anthropology. This connection makes it imperative for historians and historians of history to have knowledge of these sciences. Without this knowledge, they cannot fulfil their role as historical researchers in the way that is required. In addition, historians must be aware of the sciences that support their effectiveness, among which anthropology stands out because it serves as a mirror of human life and culture. Anthropology provides access to human thoughts and emotions, making it one of the most suitable social sciences for history, as the problems faced by anthropologists and historians are largely the same.

Anthropology addresses historical questions by tracing human development, the distribution of populations across the globe, the emergence of cultures and civilisations, migrations, and social construction. This leads us to the following question: What is the relevance of anthropology to colonial history? And how did French colonialism in Algeria make use of this significance?

## **01/ Sciences related to history:**

### **A. Anthropology:**

This science is considered the most appropriate social science for historians because anthropologists and historians face many common problems. Similar differences of opinion arise between them in the study of these problems. However, anthropologists generally study the culture of primitive man, while historians study civilised man<sup>1</sup>.

This science has given rise to four distinct branches of anthropology:

- Physical anthropology: The study of biological evolution and changes in human races.

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<sup>1</sup>- Abdul Aleem Abdul Rahman Khidr, Muslims and the Writing of History, International Institute of Islamic Thought, Cairo, 1995, p. 42.

- Archaeology: Aims to reveal the nature of human cultures in prehistoric times.
- Linguistic anthropology: Analyses both oral and written cultures.
- Cultural anthropology: Studies contemporary cultures, personalities and human relationships<sup>1</sup>.

Anthropology necessarily deals with historical issues in tracing human development, the spread of humanity across the globe, the emergence of human cultures, and the methodologies of archaeology and physical anthropology, which are essentially historical methods with modifications required for historical study.

### **B. Geography:**

Geography is one of the sciences related to history; there is a close relationship between history and geography, or between time and space. The earth is the stage on which historical events took place, and it significantly influences the direction of mankind. Historical phenomena have a significant impact on man, and therefore on history, depending on the way he interacts with his environment and responds to its conditions<sup>2</sup>.

It is therefore essential for historians to be familiar with the geography of the area they wish to study, as well as the prevailing conditions and phenomena that affect it. The importance of geographical location has led to the emergence of theories that explain historical movement through geography. The Arabs have been interested in geography since ancient times because of its relevance to their lives, as they needed to know about the fixed stars, the paths of the moving planets, climate changes, the sources of winds and their characteristics, clouds and their types in order to understand the rainfall on which they depended for irrigation and pasture<sup>3</sup>.

The movement of writing in geography began at the same time as the writing of history. The first individuals to write Arabic history were also those who wrote Arabic geography, for history and geography were, in the eyes of the Arabs, two intertwined branches of the general tree of knowledge, which they called “literature” in the broadest sense. Arabic geographical literature was diverse,

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<sup>1</sup>- Hugh Atkinson, *The Study of History and Its Relationship to Social Sciences*, translated by Mahmoud Zayed, Dar Al-Ilm for Millions, Beirut, n.d., pp. 25-27.

<sup>2</sup>- Hassan Osman, *Methodology of Historical Research*, Dar Al-Ma'arif, Cairo, 11th edition, 1993, p. 32.

<sup>3</sup>- Harry Elmer Barnes, *A History of Historical Writing*, translated by Muhammad Abdul Rahman Burj, General Organisation for Book, Cairo, 1st ed., 1987, vol. 1, p. 193.

including descriptive geography, geographical interpretation, as well as works specifically on cartography, astronomical or mathematical geography.

### **C. Economics and political economy:**

These are the basic sciences used in the study of history. Economic factors, the distribution of wealth among social classes, the means of production, the mode of production, the methods of distribution of wealth, consumption and other elements are crucial and play a significant role in shaping the type of state, the nature of its systems, the ruling class, its institutions and laws, among other important factors, in order to provide a scientific explanation of history for a given period or region of human history<sup>1</sup>.

### **D. Sociology:**

Sociology is one of the sciences closely related to history, and historians need to engage with it to aid their understanding of events. Like other human sciences, sociology is a broad study of human actions and relationships. It is well known that history is concerned with the study of social change as well as political, economic, religious and military change; in other words, it studies society in the context of time<sup>2</sup>.

One of the topics of interest to both sociologists and historians is the study of “social class” and its place in society. In the sociological view, a class consists of groups of individuals who establish and maintain relationships with each other on the basis of equality, distinguishing themselves from other members of society by a recognised measure of superiority or inferiority within their community. A social class can arise as a result of differences in economic conditions between individuals in terms of their ability to earn and spend<sup>3</sup>.

Sociologists focus on the basis of class antagonism, the patterns of behaviour that characterise different classes, and the types of tensions that arise between them. All of these questions are undoubtedly of interest to historians and help them to understand the society under study.

It is well known that sociology is the science that formulates laws concerning the relationships between people. Anyone who studies such matters knows that the relationships between history and sociology are often complex and intricate.

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<sup>1</sup>- Ismail Ahmed Muhammad Yaghi, Sources of Modern History and Research Methods, Al-Obeikan, 2nd edition, Riyadh, 1424 AH, pp. 260-261.

<sup>2</sup>- Hugh Atkinson, op. cit., pp. 34-36.

<sup>3</sup>- Ismail Ahmed Muhammad Yaghi, op. cit., p. 266.

**E. Demography:**

Demography is a science to which historians should pay attention because it is a branch of sociology. It studies the size, composition and geographical distribution of populations, as well as the changes that occur in them, whether increases or decreases, due to various factors such as reproduction, mortality, migration and others<sup>1</sup>. There is no doubt that demography in this sense is closely related to history and its scholars; a historical researcher may need to refer to demographic sources and findings to clarify a particular point of research or to explain a historical phenomenon with political, social or economic aspects.

**F. Psychology:**

Psychology, with its various branches, is considered essential to the study of history, as some believe that psychological factors play a role in the interpretation of certain human behaviours. Therefore, historians should equip themselves with the scientific methods provided by psychology to ensure that their interpretations are as close to reality as possible. This approach is important for interpretation because psychology focuses on the study of aspects of human nature<sup>1</sup>.

History is the study of the individuals of a society in an attempt to understand the various motivations behind individual actions in political, economic, social, psychological and other aspects. This understanding enables historians to interpret the motivations that drive individuals, especially great heroes.

**G. Political Science:**

Political science is a discipline that focuses on a selected range of social processes that lead to the establishment of policies and decision-making related to the explanation of the concept of power or authority in the state. It examines the factors that define the relationships between social forces and their connection to the apparatus of government, ultimately shaping public policy. Political science also analyses the political factors that constitute political phenomena, such as the nature and structure of the economy, social class structures, religious beliefs, and political and cultural ideologies<sup>2</sup>.

In addition, the analysis includes other areas relating to individuals or interest groups that influence the struggle for control of, or participation in, governance.

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<sup>1</sup>- Awatifbint Muhammad Nawab, Introduction to the Science of History, n.p., n.d., p. 17.

<sup>2</sup>- Abdul Aleem Abdul Rahman Khidr, Muslims and the Writing of History, International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2nd edition, Cairo, 1995, p. 55.

International relations are also an important focus of political science. Political issues therefore constitute the main axis around which the interests of historians largely revolve<sup>1</sup>.

There are other fields of study that are useful to history scholars, such as various forms of literature and art. Literature serves as a mirror of the times; it expresses human thoughts and feelings, revealing the inner life of individuals. It depicts their dreams and aspirations, and illustrates various aspects of their real lives that may not appear in historical sources, whether it is expressing an economic crisis or the reactions of people in times of war and peace, as well as moments of weakness and strength - everything that falls within the realm of human perception or imagination.

Familiarity with aspects of painting, photography, sculpture and architecture specific to a particular period also helps to understand its history. These arts, like literary works, are seen as mirrors of their times. Taken together, they provide accurate representations of the country's civilisations and reveal much about the subtleties of its people, their real lives, traditions, systems, dreams and aspirations<sup>2</sup>.

## **02/ Anthropology and history:**

Anthropology, in particular, focuses on the study of theories related to the nature of human societies in terms of their organisational and structural laws. It can be considered, on the one hand, as one of the oldest sciences to emerge from the study of history, since it began with the earliest human reflections on these subjects, in an attempt to uncover the foundations on which our contemporary life is built. It seeks to understand this historical development and to identify the trends and directions of future relations<sup>3</sup>.

The approach of applied anthropology, or action anthropology, developed in the United States after the Second World War in response to the need for technologically advanced countries to intervene in the management and development policies of the Third World. This connection linked the field to political planning and exposed it to much criticism as a natural extension of neo-colonialism, a form of public relations that perpetuates dependency and underdevelopment while overlooking the real problems of local communities,

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<sup>1</sup>- Ismail Ahmed Muhammad Yaghi, op. cit., p. 273.

<sup>2</sup>- The samereference, p. 276.

<sup>3</sup>- Awatifbint Muhammad Nawab, op. cit., p. 19.

-serving the interests of a particular class or ruling class, and diminishing the real role of local populations<sup>1</sup>.

Early anthropological applications initially grew within the framework of colonial administration<sup>2</sup>, which significantly damaged the reputation of anthropological training and the practical efforts of the field. Applied anthropology was used early on to identify local leaders and to establish patterns of local governance that reduced tensions between different groups in primitive societies. In Indonesia, for example, tribal law was codified so that laws were adapted to local conditions and varied from village to village.

We need to understand the practical and interrelated relationship between anthropology and history. In fact, there is a close relationship between history and anthropology, which have long been said to have differences between them. However, everything in this world presents a history, whose existence is measured by the factor of time, which is the domain of history and its scientific environment. Therefore, there is a need for a kind of historical investigation to understand the factors and processes of change that anthropologists deal with in their theoretical and practical studies<sup>3</sup>.

Since man is the subject of anthropological research, given its specialisation and scientific focus, this leads us to an important and fundamental conclusion: “We cannot move forward at all without considering the temporal dimension”, that is, the history of human existence. Both disciplines aim to uncover the unexplored events of human life as a vital being, part of which is subjective and part of which is objective. However, they also differ in their approach to existential problems from a specific perspective. Each has developed its own methodological principles. History is primarily concerned with events and their processes, focusing on how historians account for human actions and interactions in their various patterns and bases, as well as their public and private relationships, whether from an individual point of view (an individual being) or from the collective value of society. Meanwhile, anthropology is concerned with the identification of culture, values and biological development through their ancient and contemporary history<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>- Waqidi Muhammad, *Human Sciences and Ideology*, Dar Al-Tali'a, Beirut, 1983, p. 73.

<sup>2</sup>- Georges Gusdorf, *Introduction to the Human Sciences: A Critical Essay on Their Origins and Development*, Ophrys Editions, new edition, Paris, 1974, p. 163.

<sup>3</sup>- Arjmand Koran, *Ottoman Policy Towards the French Occupation of Algeria (1827-1847)*, translated by Abdel Jalil Tamimi, Tunisian Society for Fine Arts, 2nd edition, Tunis, 1947, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup>- Paul Veyne, *How one writes history*, Seuil Editions, Paris, 1971, p. 141.

In order to understand the course of history, we must scientifically understand the object of history, which is mankind. For example, to make a car, it is not enough to have the machines, the tools, the iron and the model; we must first understand the mechanics of how these machines work and how to use them in production and application. Similarly, to understand human history, we must understand how people interact with their existence and how they use this understanding to become makers of history. This example illustrates, in a simplified way, the importance of the link between history and anthropology in the scientific study of the nature of human existence and its development as a central entity in the system of science and knowledge.

The study of man as a cultural, social and historical being cannot be achieved without anthropologists engaging with the analyses of historians, who address a range of issues related to human societies as a whole<sup>1</sup>.

Returning to the study of society (individual and community), it is clear that our study of the human phenomenon as a genuine existential case with its own characteristics shows that this phenomenon is historical in nature. It has existed, developed, interacted and produced its own existence, which is what we know as history.

The human phenomenon is based on three foundations: time, humanity and space. The historical action of man cannot be conceived outside these objective foundations. Time gives a historical quality to human actions, while space serves as the social stage on which events take place and results are manifested. Man is the central element; in this sense he is the maker of history.

We can see the roots of the relationship between history and anthropology in the emergence of one of the most important branches of anthropology: historical anthropology. This branch applies what is known as the comparative method of analysis to historical events and phenomena, examining their links with human beings as their producers. As a result, this scientific branch is now considered one of the most important methodologies in applied anthropology<sup>1</sup>, since it studies social, economic and cultural phenomena in general in order to derive principles or laws that can serve as a basis for our understanding of the present and the future.

### **03/ Anthropology in the service of European colonialism in the 19th century**

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<sup>1</sup>- Bouhson Al-Arabi, History and Anthropology: What Relationship? A Study in Colonial Anthropology, Kan Historical Journal, No. 22, December 2013, pp. 152-156.

The emergence of anthropology as a science in the 19th century coincided with the wave of Western colonialism in other countries. This coincidence made anthropology a true ally of colonialism, which sought new territories and additional resources to meet the industrial needs of Europe<sup>1</sup>. The reliance on anthropological techniques and methods was evident in colonial administrations' dependence on describing the composition of colonised peoples, their social systems and cultures.

These processes were often carried out by officers of the colonial armies who were on the frontline and who were able to produce reports on the characteristics of these peoples and the nature of the environments in which they lived. All this served to provide a cultural and intellectual basis for military invasion or to maintain the existence and continuity of the colonial system.

The idea of linking anthropology with colonial orientation has led to an intertwining and overlapping of the interests of anthropological study and colonial objectives. One of the fundamental aspects of anthropological research is the study of the 'other', or what is known as the study of 'alterity'<sup>2</sup>. With the dominance of evolutionary thinking in explaining phenomena during the emergence of anthropology, Europeans came to believe that all human civilisations develop according to fixed and uniform systems and rules that do not change regardless of time and place. This implies that primitive peoples represent the early stages of the development of advanced societies, and so primitive societies in Africa, Australia and America are presented as the cultural origins of advanced European peoples. This provides a kind of scientific justification for Europeans' eagerness to understand the composition and culture of other societies, highlighting a form of compatibility between anthropology and colonialism<sup>3</sup>.

Gerard L. Kark argues that anthropology serves to legitimise colonialism by presenting it as a scientific necessity aimed at eradicating the primitiveness of colonised peoples and integrating them into the path of progress<sup>4</sup>.

It is well known that this policy was theorised by politicians who focused on implementing their extreme ideas on the ground and practised this type of

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<sup>1</sup>- Pierre Bont, Michel Isard, *Dictionary of Ethnology and Anthropology*, translated by Misbah Al-Samad, University Foundation for Studies, Publishing and Distribution, 1st edition, 2006, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>- Bouhson Al-Arabi, op. cit., pp. 152-156.

<sup>3</sup>- Pierre Bont, Michel Isard, op. cit., p. 332.

<sup>4</sup>- Arni Pierre, *Ethnology of Education*, translated by Adnan Al-Amin, Arab Development Institute, Beirut, 1992, p. 41.

domination. We refer in particular to Jules Ferry, the French Minister of Colonies, and the British liberal Joseph Chamberlain, who fiercely advocated the establishment of vast colonial empires in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, based on the belief that the peoples of these regions needed to be tamed<sup>1</sup>.

Historically, it is clear that anthropology developed at the same time as colonial movements spread to the far corners of the world. Colonial imperialism coincided in time with contemporary anthropology, as both emerged in the second half of the 19th century. It is noteworthy that these movements were not aimed at studying these peoples, describing their ways of life or understanding their cultural systems; rather, their primary aim was to enslave them and subject them to the control of the European colonial powers. At the time, anthropology was seen as one of the technical means to help rulers manage indigenous societies with a minimum of friction and tension<sup>2</sup>.

One of the strategies used by the colonisers to understand the culture and behaviour of the colonised peoples was to employ anthropological experts and appoint them as advisers in the government administrations of the colonised countries. This enabled them to gain insight into the social and economic conditions of these peoples, to understand their religious beliefs and spiritual practices, and to show considerable interest in describing and analysing their customs and traditions. Some researchers claim that field anthropology was born in France at the initiative of certain rulers who wanted to understand the way of life of the peoples under their colonial rule<sup>3</sup>.

Anthropology formed a cognitive system that served colonial tendencies and their ideologies. The birth of this science is closely linked to the beginning of European colonial expansion in the early 19th century. It can be said that anthropology provided an important scientific service to colonial administration by placing the peoples to be occupied under administrative control, observing their movements and behaviours, monitoring their lifestyles, behavioural habits, social values and economic systems. Colonial administrations recognised that anthropological research, with its ability to penetrate and accurately analyse societies, could provide the information they sought about the ‘other’<sup>4</sup>.”

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<sup>1</sup>- Bouhson Al-Arabi, op. cit., pp. 152-156.

<sup>2</sup>- Gérard Leclerc, *Anthropology and Colonialism*, translated by George Katoura, University Foundation for Studies and Publishing, 2nd edition, Beirut, 1990, p. 36.

<sup>3</sup>- Llobera, j.r, *An Invitation to Anthropology: The Structure, Evolution and Cultural Identity of Human Societies*, New York, 2003, p98.

<sup>4</sup>- Ralph Linton, *Anthropology and the Crisis of the Modern World*, translated by Abdul Malik Al-Nashif, Modern Library, Lebanon, 1967, p. 55.

Thus, anthropologists began to study colonised peoples in order to understand their nature and characteristics, and to use the results of these studies to tighten colonial control over them, identifying weaknesses in society and formulating appropriate policies to address them or adjust certain conditions to make them suitable. This approach aimed to maintain and continue colonisation and control under the pretext that it was part of the civilizing mission that the white man was destined to bring to the “savage” peoples behind the walls of human civilisation, an idea supported by the French, English and German missionaries<sup>1</sup>.

As is well known, the 19th century was the quintessential century of colonialism, which targeted primitive societies in order to establish control over them and exploit them politically, economically and religiously. As a result, anthropological studies with both theoretical and practical objectives flourished, making these small communities the focus of their research<sup>2</sup>.

Imperialism found in anthropology a useful tool to serve its expansionist aims. It enlisted available scientific expertise and field researchers to prepare studies on colonised peoples. The field reports produced by anthropologists served as explorations into the depths of these peoples’ cultures and their different ways of life. As a result, anthropology deviated from its intellectual path and became an instrument in the hands of colonial institutions, enabling them to understand the “other”, who often appeared strange and sometimes primitive or savage<sup>3</sup>.

#### **04/ Colonial anthropology in Algeria:**

Anthropology in Algeria during the colonial period was closely linked to the colonial orientation through the anthropological studies carried out by various administrators, military officers, religious figures and anthropologists motivated by the colonial administration. Their aim was to gain a deeper understanding of the cultural and social peculiarities of Algerian society, to shed light on its customs, traditions and norms, which helped to reinforce colonial rule throughout this period.

For the French colonialists, Algeria was a strange and unknown world. Consequently, they used all their human, military and religious resources to subjugate the local population and exploit the country’s wealth<sup>4</sup>. This process of subjugation required an understanding of the enemy - its weaknesses, customs,

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<sup>1</sup>- The same reference, p. 70.

<sup>2</sup>- Pierre Bont, Michel Isard, op. cit., p. 65.

<sup>3</sup>- Engelke, M., How to Think Like an Anthropologist, Princeton University, New Jersey, 2018, p. 66.

<sup>4</sup>- Gérard Leclerc, op. cit., p. 44.

traditions, norms, cultural and religious values. In this context, René Maunier stated: “We have both theoretical and practical interests in understanding the life of the peoples we protect and govern, and we must never cease to fulfil our duties towards them, since organising studies serves material and practical purposes, considering them as a source of influence and governance”<sup>1</sup>.

During the colonial period, Algerian society was extensively described and studied. The nature of the Algerian people, their behaviour, language, religion, way of life, ethnic composition and the status of women were all subjects of description and theorisation. These processes of description and theorisation were more closely linked to colonial interests than to the objectivity required by science. The French colonialists did not want to discover the characteristics of the Algerians for their own sake, but rather to exercise control, establish dominance and ensure the continuation of the colonial system<sup>2</sup>.

In the midst of these descriptive processes, Algerian society and individuals were labelled as savage, with the idea that Algerians belonged to a barbaric race characterised by primitiveness, which necessitated their development through the imposition of the coloniser’s culture. This led to a focus on religion, which was presented as a fundamental factor in the backwardness of society. In addition, the colonial administration sought to understand the role of local and religious associations in organising community affairs, and subsequently transformed this role to serve its colonial interests.

There was also an emphasis on women as a fundamental pillar of Algerian society, with descriptions of their status portraying them as inferior to men and subject to ridicule. According to many French researchers, the mentality of the Algerians was seen as an obstacle to their taming and compliance. Consequently, efforts were made to eradicate this perceived savagery through education based on the French model<sup>3</sup>.

On this basis, Algerian society was divided into binaries to create distinctions and incite animosity between different groups, such as the Arab-Berber dichotomy. This Arab-Berber duality became the main tool used by colonial

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<sup>1</sup>- Engelke, M., op. cit., p. 71.

<sup>2</sup>- Philippe Lucas and Jean-Claude Vatin, *Algeria of the Anthropologists: Critique of Colonial Sociology*, translated by Muhammad Yahyatin et al., Publications for the Fortieth Anniversary of Independence, Algeria, 2002, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup>- Mohamed Najib Boutaleb, *The Image of the Arab: As Seen and As Perceived*, Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 1st edition, Beirut, 1990, p. 438.

theorists through the creation of the so-called 'tribal myth'. According to Philippe Lucas and Jean-Claude Vatin in their book \*Algeria of the Anthropologists\*, this myth is an irrational invention based on the distortions of pseudo-scientists aimed at political and economic containment.

By theorising the origins of the Berbers and distinguishing them from the Arabs, while emphasising differences in temperament and physical features, colonial theorists initially sought to enlist the tribes by glorifying this ethnic group. However, the situation changed once the settlers settled in Algeria, as there was no longer any interest in tribalism. Consequently, efforts shifted to inciting the tribes against the Arabs in order to promote division and thus preserve the interests of the settlers and the colonial system.

One of the statements that the proponents of colonial anthropology tried to impose, as noted by Lucas and Vatin, was: "...the Berber hates the Arab and the Arab hates the Berber. This intense hostility can only be explained by a traditional sentiment passed down through generations - a hatred between the race of the invaders (the Arabs) and the race of the oppressed (the Berbers)<sup>1</sup>.

Specialists in the field note that the practice of anthropology in Algeria during the colonial period evolved from military campaigns aimed at discovering the regions of the country and understanding the nature of its population and its characteristics, to a phase of understanding the structure of society and its religious and educational institutions. At this point, discussions could focus on the educational system and the religious associations active in society. Finally, there was a phase of reliance on specialised anthropologists and academics, such as Germaine Tillion, Jacques Berque and Pierre Bourdieu, among others.

During the same colonial period, trends emerged that established a form of anthropology in opposition to colonial anthropology. This was evident in Algeria with Franz Fanon, who called for a focus on national culture, disregarded by many French anthropologists, and stressed the need to link it to armed struggle. According to him, national culture fuels the struggle to eradicate colonialism, and this struggle in turn nourishes and strengthens Algerian national culture.

This situation was similar in many Third World countries, especially after the colonial phase, where anthropological practice increasingly emphasised culture

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<sup>1</sup>- Maatouq Jamal, The Reality and Prospects of Sociology in the Maghreb, Doctoral Thesis, Faculty of Sociology, University of Algiers, 2010/2011, p. 80.

in relation to liberation and independence movements. This shift was aimed at restoring respect for national cultures and their elements, in addition to addressing contemporary human issues, development and other related matters. This underlines the need to separate anthropology from the colonial connotations that have been associated with it since its inception.

There were also trends towards the practice of local anthropology, which meant that local anthropologists from their own countries were given the task of researching these communities, in contrast to the previous presence of Western anthropologists in these regions. This raised questions about the ability of local researchers to overcome biases due to their organic connection to the community, as opposed to the objectivity that often characterised Western researchers.

However, the comparison between the two cases is not entirely valid when one considers the objectives of anthropological practice among researchers belonging to the colonial system<sup>1</sup>, who aimed to present their research findings to a system focused on dominance and control. Local researchers, on the other hand, are driven by a liberationist perspective and a growing awareness of the need to dismantle the vestiges of colonialism through various mechanisms and means of development.

Anthropological studies in Algeria during the colonial period can be divided into military anthropological studies and academic studies. Military studies are those carried out by officers and military personnel who held important and high-ranking positions in the Algerian military administration. These studies were carried out between 1830 and 1870, as they clearly reflect the military presence in the area in which they were carried out and articulate the nature of the objectives and ideas that these endeavours aimed to achieve.

As far as academic anthropological studies are concerned, they underwent a significant development from 1870 onwards, coinciding with the emergence of university research on the sedentary populations of Algeria. The authors of these studies belonged to the academic community and were able to produce various studies and theses that focused mainly on the ideological, cognitive and scientific framework of the colonial administration. Although this was academic

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<sup>1</sup>- Bouhson Al-Arabi, op. cit., pp. 152-156.

and university research, it consistently served the needs, projects and objectives of colonialism<sup>1</sup>. Here is an example of military studies.

### **05/ The Kafiniak Journey<sup>2</sup>: An anthropological study of the Algerian Sahara:**

One of the most remarkable military studies carried out by military officers, reflecting their ideological and cognitive interests, is the study of the Algerian Sahara. This region is considered to be one of the most important highlights in the history of the French occupation of Algeria and sub-Saharan Africa. After tightening its grip on Algeria in 1830, France concentrated on occupying its southern territories, which served as rear bases for Algerian popular revolts. France was able to penetrate deep into the Algerian Sahara by intensifying its missions and exploratory expeditions, carrying out detailed and specialised field studies with the help of various researchers, adventurers, religious figures and writers, in addition to military officers. This enabled the French authorities to discover the intricacies of the Sahara, documenting every detail - natural, economic or human - in order to control and exploit its resources. This is what we learn from the Kafiniak journey<sup>3</sup>.

This journey was mainly written in a descriptive style, which was considered the most appropriate for this type of writing, along with a narrative approach, which the author used to tell stories and tales about the region and its inhabitants. It provides the reader with a wealth of historical, social, archaeological and cultural information about the Algerian Sahara. From a scientific and objective point of view, it is also an anthropological, ethnographic and topographical study of the Algerian Sahara, which enabled the French to understand the make-up of Algerian society.

During his journey, Kafiniak recorded many observations about the desert cities, the tribes that inhabited them and the existing trade routes. His explorations produced significant results on a social, political, economic, scientific and military level, the most notable of which are as follows:

- The Algerian Sahara held an important place among travellers, explorers and French officers like Kafiniak, who played a prominent role in presenting the region through what he observed, interacted with or heard. He summarised his

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<sup>1</sup>- Philippe Lucas and Jean-Claude Vatin, op. cit., p. 236.

<sup>2</sup>- Abdul BaqiGhafour, The reality of anthropology in Algeria after independence, Mediterranean Thought Journal, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2021, pp. 45-62.

<sup>3</sup>- Abdul QadirLaqjaa, Sociology and Society in Algeria, Dar Al-Qasba Publishing, Algeria, 2004, p. 104.

findings by studying and describing various natural, economic and social aspects<sup>1</sup>.

Kafiniak provided documented historical information with maps and drawings, despite the challenges and dangers he faced during his travels, in particular the harsh nature of the region and the resistance of its heroic inhabitants. As the first Frenchman to reach the Algerian Sahara, he made a significant contribution to its introduction by providing a rich and varied set of writings that highlighted the community, its landmarks and its cultural and human heritage<sup>2</sup>.

- The journey was mainly written in a descriptive style, considered the most appropriate for this type of writing, and a narrative approach, with the author telling various stories and tales about the region and its inhabitants. It offers the reader a wealth of historical, social, archaeological and cultural information about the Algerian Sahara.

- From a scientific and objective point of view, the voyage also serves as an anthropological, ethnographic and topographical study of the Algerian Sahara, through which the French gained insights into the composition of Algerian society.

- The voyage demonstrated the French interest in documenting the history of Algeria in general and the monographic regional history of this area in particular. This reflected their determination to integrate this country and its history into the narrative of Western civilisation. They glorified everything Roman, sought it out and insisted on documenting it, while obscuring and concealing everything belonging to Eastern or local civilisations. One of the observations of the author of the expedition was that the region had been under Roman control for a long time, but he could not determine the exact time frame, believing that it was a city and a military outpost<sup>3</sup>.

The journey provided an important perspective on the archaeological sites of the region, showing that historians of the period were often military men. They did not hesitate to restore the importance of the Roman ruins, not for the purpose of

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<sup>1</sup>- Louis Eugène Kafiniak was born in Paris on 15 October 1802. His father, "Baptiste Kafiniak", was a former governor-general of Algeria. A student at the School of Arts and Sciences in France, he distinguished himself from a young age by his brilliance and genius. He obtained the rank of lieutenant in October 1827 and eventually rose to the rank of general. In 1848, he became governor-general of Algeria and, in the same year, prime minister, although he lost the presidential election. He died in France on 28 October 1857. See: Narcisse Faucon, *Livre d'Or De L'Algerie, Algerian and Colonial Publishers, Paris, 1889*, p. 156.

<sup>2</sup>- Félix Jacquot, *Expedition of General Cavaignac in the Algerian Sahara in April and May 1847*, Gide Baudry, Paris, 1849.

<sup>3</sup>- *Ibid*, pp. 20-50.

documenting and protecting them, but to link the history of Algeria, especially the areas of Roman settlement, to Western civilisation. Kafiniak offered a detailed description of archaeological landmarks before they were destroyed by settlers, as he was the first foreigner to reach the region during this period.

- He provided invaluable services to the French armies moving into the heart of the Sahara by sharing his knowledge of the region's topography, climate, tribal composition and political, demographic, social and economic characteristics. His descriptions emphasised the depth of the Sahara and its strategic importance for French expansionist policy in the region.

- He gained insights into the social structure of the Saharan inhabitants, their systems of government, interpersonal relations and the main ethnic groups present in the region<sup>1</sup>.

Kafiniak's account of this journey of discovery allows us to sketch a simple picture of the social reality of the Algerian Sahara. According to Kafiniak's accounts, this region was semi-populated, with tribal gatherings where most of the inhabitants lived in tents, while a few lived in houses and desert palaces. Some tribes built their tents in circles, with eight or ten tents in each circle. The journey also revealed that the area was home to Arab tribes and Berber Tuareg, the largest Arab tribe being the OuledSidi Sheikh<sup>2</sup>.

- Kafiniak was interested in studying the economic resources available in the Algerian Sahara, examining the natural geographical features, water sources and agricultural wealth, all with a view to exploiting and profiting from these resources during and after the expansion. As a result, a number of studies and researches were carried out<sup>3</sup>.

- He initiated market research to achieve French colonial commercial objectives in the desert regions, and produced accurate studies of the commercial markets there.

- Kafiniak's travels revealed the types of activities carried out by the inhabitants of the Algerian Sahara. He pointed out that urban dwellers were involved in agriculture, although they were not in the best of conditions and were described as poor. He expressed surprise that, although they owned land, they did not use

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<sup>1</sup>- Ibid, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup>- Félix Jacquot, op. cit, p. 45.

<sup>3</sup>- Ibid, pp. 259-266.

it effectively. Meanwhile, the nomadic population engaged in pastoralism and trade through caravans with neighbouring regions, particularly Western Sudan.

- Kafiniak's journey highlights the rich and authentic history of the Algerian Sahara, which has a significant past but remains an unexplored area that requires further research to uncover its depths.

### **Conclusion:**

History is a branch of the social sciences, closely related to other auxiliary sciences that historians strive to master in order to complete the historical picture as much as possible. Historical writing has evolved; it is no longer limited to simply telling stories or describing events that the world has witnessed. It has become essential for researchers to examine the immediate causes of events and the broader factors that have influenced their formation over a long period of time. Historical events do not happen suddenly; they are in fact the result of a long series of events. While their immediate causes may appear to be the only reasons for these events, historians must seek out the myriad hidden causes that are distant in time from the events themselves. This is where the importance of the auxiliary sciences in the study of history comes into play.

During the colonial period, imperialism used the services of anthropologists to justify employing them to study the colonies. Even the few studies that existed before the French occupation were verified in the field by France. Anthropology was accused of being a science at the service of colonialism, simply because some believed that the monographic and ethnological studies carried out by the West on the peoples it colonised revealed the peculiarities of these societies. Some attribute the role of anthropology in this endeavour to the absence of historical writings and studies on these societies, as in the case of Algerian society.

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