

Constructing Colonial Binaries:  
French Representations of Religion in Algeria and Morocco

by

Rhee-Soo Lee  
Class of 2011

A thesis submitted to the  
faculty of Wesleyan University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Degree of Bachelor of Arts  
with Departmental Honors in Religion

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	3
Introduction.....	4
Chapter 1: <i>Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité</i> – and <i>laïcité</i> ?: Secularism in France.....	10
Chapter 2: Assimilation and Aesthetics: The French Colonization of Algeria.....	21
Chapter 3: <i>La Mission Civilisatrice</i> : French Scientific Exploration in Morocco.....	39
Chapter 4: Race and Religion: Analyzing Arabs and Berbers in Morocco.....	72
Chapter 5: “ <i>Le Tour du Monde en Un Jour</i> ”: The Colonial Exposition of 1931.....	86
Conclusion.....	102
Bibliography.....	108

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I thank my thesis advisor Professor Peter Gottschalk, whose class first sparked my curiosity in my topic, who agreed to advise my project despite the innumerable other responsibilities he held as chair of the department, teaching a full course load, advising other students, and overseeing a faculty search... Your astute comments and poignant questions about my writing, and your unwavering belief in me and my thesis has been a constant source of encouragement. I immensely enjoyed our weekly thesis meetings, both the thesis and non-thesis related conversations, and this project would not be what it is without your guidance – thank you!

Thank you to the many teachers in my life who have not only challenged me intellectually and personally, but helped me foster a deep love and appreciation for learning. Special thanks to Professor Jeremy Zwelling, who first inspired me to consider the Religion major, Professor Mary-Jane Rubenstein, who has taught some of the toughest and most incredible classes I've taken at Wesleyan, and of course Professor Peter Rutland, who has been a great advisor and a perpetual source of knowledge about everything over the last four years.

I would like to thank Wesleyan University and the Davenport Committee for supporting and funding my summer research. The three weeks I spent in Paris were not only invaluable in terms of the materials I attained, but also an eye-opening, wonderful, and unforgettable experience for me to pursue my own interests.

A huge thanks to my writing mentor Greer Dent, who exceeded all of my expectations of what a “writing mentor” should be. Thank you for reading through all of my drafts, providing such insightful feedback, and catching my grammatical errors. Your comments were incredibly thorough and always a huge help!

To my friends, both here and afar – thanks for providing much-needed distractions at times (Bananagrams, study breaks, dance parties, etc.), letting me go on and on about the ups and downs of thesis-writing, and most importantly, for believing in me throughout this long process. Thank you for your words of encouragement and constant faith in me.

Last but not least, to my mom, who has been my role model, teacher, translator, and so much more. Words could not properly capture how thankful I am for everything you've done for me. I dedicate this project to you (and hopefully more to come!) with love, respect, and gratitude.

## Introduction

---

“There are two sides to every story” is a common idiom with an important lesson that can be applied to everything from children’s arguments to major international conflicts. It is this idea – that the same event can (and should) be studied from two or more angles – that served as the foundation of my thesis. French colonization of North Africa had a considerable impact in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco, but the colonial experience also reflected France’s profound, internal changes. In particular, I was drawn to the role of religion in the colonies. North Africa is predominantly Muslim, while France has a history of secularism and a complicated relationship with Catholicism. How did France reconcile these differences and come to understand and represent indigenous citizens, cultures, and religions?

My interest in studying the French representation of religion originated from my course work in a religion seminar I took in the fall of 2009 titled *Religion, Science, and Empire* with Professor Gottschalk. Throughout the course, I was drawn to studying the relationship between the colonizers and colonized, especially how the two sides navigated and reconciled a wide range of differences. I chose to study French colonization based on my own personal interest in France and my knowledge of French, and picked North Africa because the region exemplified a unique confluence of French and Middle Eastern influences. With the Davenport Grant, I began my thesis research in France during the summer of 2010, and my goal was to

study three forms of representation of the French colonization of Algeria<sup>1</sup> and Morocco: visual, written, and institutional. In Paris, I extensively used materials from *l'Institut du Monde Arabe* (Arab World Institute), particularly *Le Fonds Ninard*, which consisted of a collection of documents that focused on the French protectorate of Morocco. I also traveled to Aix-en-Provence in the south of France to visit the National Colonial Archives (*Centre Archives d'Outre-Mer*). While my original intention was to explore how colonial representations had significant political and cultural ramifications in France, I quickly realized that understanding the “before” was crucial to contextualize the “during” and “after” – that is, studying France’s domestic circumstances before its colonization of North Africa was necessary to comprehend the events and consequences of colonialism. Delving into France’s internal debates prior to the colonization of North Africa was essential to understand colonial representations and colonialism as a whole to locate my project in a much broader framework.

My thesis addresses the fundamental issue of representing colonies as the “other.” It explores how French representations were a reflection of French values, instead of providing objective depictions of the colonized. Current scholarship discusses the impact of French colonialism on native populations in North Africa, but the reverse – what the colonial experience said about the colonizers – is not as frequently studied. In the case of the British colonization of India, Peter van der Veer asserts that the “extent to which British history has been shaped by the imperial

---

<sup>1</sup> Algeria was technically not a French colony; rather, French Algeria was integrated into the French empire as an extension of France. For the purpose of this project, Algeria is studied under the same terms as Morocco, which became a French protectorate in 1912.

conquest of India ... is rarely discussed,”<sup>2</sup> and the same can be said for the French colonization of North Africa. Through my research, I saw how the impetus for French colonial actions – whether it was a policy of assimilation in Algeria or the Berber Decree in Morocco – originated from domestic circumstances. Thus visual, written, and institutional forms of French representation used colonies as the backdrop to represent France to some extent. Different levels of representation functioned as spaces to understand, negotiate, and reconcile French identity by juxtaposing it with North Africa in a binary system. My project focuses on three key colonial binaries: France/North Africa, modernity/tradition, and secularism/religion.

One of the most important elements that distinguished France from Algeria and Morocco was the issue of religion. Though the separation of church and state was codified into French law in 1905, the role of religion in the public sphere remained a major issue throughout French history. The French commitment to *laïcité*, the creation of a secular society, was invariably reflected in their colonial pursuits and colonial representations, and the importance of secularism to French government officials and colonists became evident in French Orientalist art, ethnographies and ethnologies, and expositions. The division between *laïcité* and religion created a lasting binary system in the colonial framework, mapping on to other separations such as France vs. Algeria/Morocco, and modernity vs. tradition. I argue that France’s resolute commitment to secularism was reflected in visual, written, and institutional representations of its colonies, and that the French focus on *laïcité* specifically influenced its perception and rule in Algeria and Morocco.

---

<sup>2</sup> Peter van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* (Princeton, 2001), 159.

There is a wide range of scholarly material that addresses each of these forms of representation. Roger Benjamin has written multiple books regarding French Orientalist art and the interplay between Orientalist artists and representation, while Robert Rydell, Alexander Geppert, Dana Hale, and Patricia Morton have studied colonial expositions as a form of representation. Ahmet Kuru has taken a political science approach in studying secularism, whereas some historians have examined various colonial histories from the French (Charles Sowerwine), Algerian (Benjamin Stora and Paul Silverstein), or Moroccan (C.R. Pennell) point of view. The idea behind my research is to bring these disciplines and authors together for a more comprehensive understanding of laïcité in a colonial context, and also illustrate how a secular French identity was negotiated in and through various modes of representation.

### **Overview of Chapters**

I have structured this project historically and geographically, beginning with the French Revolution in 1789, shifting to the French colonization of Algeria in 1830, transitioning to the establishment of the French Protectorate in Morocco in 1912, and concluding with the 1931 Colonial Exposition in Paris. In order to focus on the issue of laïcité, and more broadly, a secular French identity, the project moves through various forms of representation. Chapter 1 begins by tracing the history of secularism in France from the 1789 Revolution through the Third Republic, situating French secularism in a diverse web of domestic events such as the rise of anti-religious sentiments, the expansion of colonialism, and the waning influence of Catholicism in

France. It defines and elaborates on the term “laïcité,” a fundamental concept which denotes the creation of a secular society. The final part of the chapter discusses the evolution of the French understanding of culture, which becomes rooted in laïcité and calls for the relegation of religion to the private sphere.

Chapter 2 examines the French colonization of Algeria beginning in 1830. Algeria was the first French colony in North Africa, established during a tenuous period in French history. Many of France’s internal debates about the role of religion and laïcité became externalized in Algeria, and a binary that located France and Algeria – as well as laïcité and religion – as supposed opposites was established through this colonial experience. As evinced in the previous chapter, French citizens did not consider themselves devoid of religion, making the laïcité/religion binary more nuanced than a strict division. At the same time, colonists depicted North African societies as the antithesis of secularism. To build on this dichotomy, the chapter turns to French Orientalist art, which used visual representations to observe and convey differences between France and North Africa. The French experience in Algeria and Orientalist art both asserted the secularism and modernity in France, which contrasted with the religion and tradition found in the colonies.

Chapter 3 delves into the French protectorate of Morocco and the rise of scientific studies in North African colonial pursuits in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Through ethnologic and ethnographic work, French scientists and colonists solidified the binary between Moroccan religion and French laïcité. The chapter presents a brief historical overview of scientific studies and the establishment of the French protectorate, then examines primary sources of scientific studies that demonstrate the



prevalence of the religion/laïcité binary. In the ethnographic representation of natives, French scientists depicted religion and science as opposite ideals and built on the existing colonial binary framework. In addition, French colonists conflated laïcité and science in opposition to religion, which strengthened their own self-image as modern and progressive.

Chapter 4 extends the religion/laïcité binary to divide the Moroccan population between Arabs and Berbers. The French penchant for Berbers originated from their colonial experience in Algeria as articulated in the Kabyle Myth, in which French colonists depicted Berbers as secular and Arabs as religious. French colonists espoused similar views in Morocco, and showed a clear preference for Berbers over Arabs in identifying and analyzing characteristics of the two populations. Chapter 4 also considers the political implications of the religion/laïcité binary with the passage of the Berber Decree in 1930, which removed Berbers from Islamic law and legally placed them under French jurisdiction.

The last chapter returns to France to consider the Colonial Exposition of 1931 as the final form of representation explored in this project. Though French government officials attempted to construct an inclusive identity for France and its colonies, the exposition heavily relied on the same colonial binary system that depicted France as modern and secular and colonies as traditional and religious. The goal of the project is to trace the development of French laïcité and illustrate how this not only influenced French representations, but reflected French values.

## **Chapter 1: *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité* – and *laïcité*?: Secularism in France**

---

French colonialism encompassed much more than the occupation of new territory and the expansion of empire. To fully understand the roles and motives of the colonizers, it is critical to contextualize French colonial pursuits by considering domestic events. In many instances, colonialism demonstrated an externalization of internal debates, and the issue of religion provides a clear example of this. As France embarked on a policy of secularization at home in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, French colonizers were immersed in North Africa, where they perceived the separation of religion and the state to be practically nonexistent. To trace the development of secularism, the first chapter focuses on France to establish a firm historical and theoretical basis. Chapter 1 offers an overview of secularism in France, then explores the notion of “*laïcité*,” a key concept that significantly influences French views regarding religion at home and abroad. The chapter concludes by delving into the interplay between culture and colonialism, illustrating how the French conception of culture became rooted in *laïcité* and consequently relegated religion to the private sphere. The history of France from the 1789 Revolution through the Third Republic shows how the emergence of secularism profoundly changed domestic perceptions of religion, which later influenced French colonial policies in Algeria and Morocco.

### **From the Revolution to the Third Republic: An Overview of French Secularism**

France has a long history of secularism, though the separation of church and state was not codified into law until over a century after the 1789 Revolution. Tension

between secularism and religion existed in France since its inception; revolutionary leaders who drafted the 1791 Constitution considered religious liberty to be paramount, so they saw the strong presence of religion, especially Catholicism, as a threat to the ideals of the revolution. As a result, they took measures to explicitly define the French state as an “indivisible, secular, democratic, and social republic” in their constitution.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, public displays of religion, such as religious ceremonies, were banned.<sup>4</sup> Political scientist Ahmet Kuru gives an accurate characterization of France as an “assertive secular” state, defined as a nation that actively works to exclude religion from the public sphere, confining it to the private sphere.<sup>5</sup>

Though the first secular French state in 1795 was considered a predecessor of the French Republic, the signing of the Concordat of 1801 between Napoleon Bonaparte and Pope Pius VII recognized Roman Catholicism as the religion of the majority in France. This agreement, which lasted until 1905, essentially granted primacy to Catholicism in political and social spheres. Catholicism pervaded several parts of public life, and played a prominent role in the French educational system with members of the clergy teaching in religious schools. However, even with government recognition of Catholicism’s dominant religious status, the role of the Catholic church in society continued to shift throughout the next 100 years, depending on the balance of power in France.<sup>6</sup> As tension between the Catholics and the Republicans persisted, 19<sup>th</sup> century France witnessed a gradual development of

---

<sup>3</sup> Ahmet T. Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies toward Religion: The United States, France, and Turkey* (Cambridge, 2009), 12.

<sup>4</sup> Kuru 140.

<sup>5</sup> Kuru 11.

<sup>6</sup> Kuru 141.

“secular morality.” Influenced by the French Enlightenment, secular morality consisted of morals based on human reason instead of religious revelation, which bolstered the power of the Republicans who promoted secularism.<sup>7</sup>

The Third Republic was established on September 4, 1870, following the defeat of Louis-Napoleon in the Franco-Prussian War.<sup>8</sup> This period is seen as a pivotal time in French history in which secular French Republicans intensified their efforts to eliminate religion from the public sphere. Consequently, assertive secularism rose in importance while the strength of Catholicism dwindled.<sup>9</sup> It was during this time that the French coined the term “laïcité,” defined as the creation of a secular society, while the conflict of interest between Republicans and Catholics proliferated. The battle for ideology created a mutually exclusive understanding of French identity, and it pinned Republicanism and the values of the 1789 Revolution against Catholicism and the *Ancien Régime*. Much of the anti-Catholic sentiments following the revolution can be attributed to the fact that Catholicism was sponsored by the *Ancien Régime*. The Third Republic illustrated a shift away from any associations with the monarchy, and the rejection of Catholicism was a clear example of this.<sup>10</sup>

Republicans viewed the church as their enemy and a threat to their democratic state, and they attempted to curtail its impact on French society through a series of reforms during the Third Republic.<sup>11</sup> The secularization of the education system was a significant part of these efforts. The Republican-controlled government was

---

<sup>7</sup> Phyllis Stock-Morton, *Moral Education for a Secular Society* (Albany, 1988), 9.

<sup>8</sup> Charles Sowerwine, *France since 1870: Culture, Politics and Society* (New York, 2001), 13.

<sup>9</sup> Sowerwine 3; Kuru 137.

<sup>10</sup> Kuru 138-143.

<sup>11</sup> Sowerwine 42.

adamant about implementing secular education, something they considered to be a basic element of a free and democratic society.<sup>12</sup> Republicans were appalled by the number of religious orders who were catechizing the young, and they strove to secularize (laicize) schools when they held the majority in both of the legislative chambers in 1879.<sup>13</sup> Jules Ferry, a prominent proponent of secularization and colonial expansion, disbanded and expelled the Jesuits in the 1880s, limited other religious orders, and demanded that all other religious teaching orders apply for legal residence during his time as prime minister.<sup>14</sup> Ferry endorsed the idea of secular morality in primary education, and a law eliminating religious education from state schools was passed in 1886.<sup>15</sup> As a sign of the resistance and rejection of religious influence in other facets of French society, the legislature also re-established divorce in 1884, despite strident opposition from the Catholic church.<sup>16</sup>

The events that took place during the Third Republic reflected a remarkable transformation in the French perception of religion. Even with the establishment of the Concordat at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, historical changes indicated that most of the French no longer saw religion as an appropriate part of the public sphere. It was not enough to simply remove religion from the state; the presence of staunch secularists in the French government and the rise of anti-Catholicism perpetuated the need for a clear demarcation between the public and private spheres, and the elimination of religion from the former. Laws that were passed during the Third

---

<sup>12</sup> Stock-Morton 98.

<sup>13</sup> Stock-Morton 97.

<sup>14</sup> Frederick Brown, *For the Soul of France: Culture Wars in the Age of Dreyfus* (New York, 2010), 55.

<sup>15</sup> Sowerwine 36.

<sup>16</sup> Sowerwine 35-43.

Republic embodied this viewpoint, ensconcing a secular state of mind and privileging laïcité to form a progressive conception of France.

The fate of Catholicism in France did not improve at the turn of the century. Emile Combes, a radical left prime minister, suppressed most religious orders and confiscated their property under the Law of Associations in 1901,<sup>17</sup> and sent Catholic missionaries overseas. Though the role of religion was greatly reduced within France, missionaries were supported abroad because they helped to spread French language, culture, and civilization in the colonies.<sup>18</sup> Roman Catholicism remained the official state religion until 1904, but the separation of church and state was codified into law in 1905 in a decisive victory for Republicans. The law “confined religion to the ‘sacred’ (individual religiosity and collectivity for worship and rituals), while discouraging their ‘profane’ sociopolitical dimensions and impacts on the public sphere.”<sup>19</sup>

The events that took place from the 1789 Revolution to the legalization of secularism in 1905 played a seminal role in the development of French Republicanism. These historical changes, especially the shifts in power between the Catholics and secular Republicans, help to explain how the notion of secularism became fully ingrained in French society. Along with the French values of *liberté*, *égalité*, and *fraternité* (liberty, equality, and fraternity), secularism was elevated to become an implicit part of France’s national motto. To better understand the French conception of secularism, we turn to a discussion of the term “laïcité.”

---

<sup>17</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, “Anticlericalism,” <http://www.britannica.com>.

<sup>18</sup> Joseph F. Byrnes, *Catholic and French Forever: Religious and National Identity in Modern France* (University Park, 2005), 149.

<sup>19</sup> Kuru 149-152.

### **Delving into Laïcité: Understanding French Secularism**

The distinct separation of church and state was rooted in the ideals of the Enlightenment during the 1800s. It promoted mutually exclusive public and private spheres, and thereby eliminated the role of religion from the state and French public life. The lofty principle of secularism was embodied in the newly-coined term “laïcité,” defined as an “exit from religion” and the “public use of individual reason.”<sup>20</sup> Under the ideal vision of laïcité, individuals would be considered equal under the law and participate in politics as citizens, free from ethnic, community, and religious affiliations. As the notion of laïcité developed, the meaning and importance of secularism gradually became more and more entrenched in society. Though laïcité is defined as the separation of religion from the state, the idea itself is not intrinsically anti-religious. Rather, it is a liberal construct that serves to equally protect all individuals from the state and from the presence of religion in the public sphere. The 1905 law which called for the separation of church and state privatized religion to ensure its free exercise in the private sphere, not to eliminate religion altogether from French society.<sup>21</sup>

The French viewed secularism as a sign of progress and a step towards modernity. By identifying laïcité as a French ideal, France moved away from a “community ruled by the church to [a] society ruled by law.”<sup>22</sup> The goal was that politics would replace religion in the public sphere, effectively excluding religion from both public and political life. To promote the idea of equality, French law

---

<sup>20</sup> Riva Kastoryano, “Religion and Incorporation: Islam in France and Germany,” *International Migration Review* 38.3 (2004), 1243.

<sup>21</sup> Stéphanie Giry, “France and Its Muslims,” *Foreign Affairs* 85.5 (2006), 89.

<sup>22</sup> Kastoryano 1243.

prohibited identifying citizens based on race, national origin, or religion for statistical purposes. In fact, the last census that included questions about religious affiliation was in 1872, before French Republicans undertook a wave of secularist reforms in the 1880s. By the turn of the century, the government legally removed the influence of the Catholic church in schools, hospitals, and courthouses, further establishing the primacy of secularism in public life.<sup>23</sup>

Riva Kastoryano, senior research fellow at *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique* (French Center for Scientific Research) maintains that the idea of *laïcité* is ambiguous about the boundary between culture and religion. Culture often encompasses religious identities, while religion can also refer to culturally-specific practices, making the two concepts inextricably linked.<sup>24</sup> Many French citizens in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries did not acknowledge the presence of this ambiguity. French Republicans thought that religion and the state could and should remain separate, and that it was possible to make a distinction between religion and culture. They firmly believed that cultural elements would still be intact even after removing religion from the public sphere. It was not until France commenced its colonial ventures that they saw culture and religion completely entangled in each other, evidenced first in Algeria in 1830, followed by Tunisia in 1881, and later, Morocco in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

---

<sup>23</sup> Giry 89.

<sup>24</sup> Kastoryano 1239.



## Culture and Colonialism

The concept of laïcité became an integral part of French culture during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and French culture played a pivotal role in influencing colonial actions. What exactly did the French mean by “culture”? If laïcité is included in the definition of French culture, what about religion? What is the relationship between culture and colonialism? These questions guide the final section of this chapter.

To understand the term “culture,” Edward Said’s definition provides a useful starting point. Said articulated that culture exists in aesthetic forms such as the “arts of description, communication, and representation” ranging from literature, music, and visual arts.<sup>25</sup> He also noted that “culture” embodied a much broader meaning in that it gradually became associated with national values. French culture and French norms thus were construed as synonymous terms, and French culture encompassed national beliefs and principles such as laïcité.

Using this explication, culture functioned as a fundamental source of national identity. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, French Republicans characterized their nation-state and French culture as modern. They associated modernity and progress with laïcité, which led to the inherent exclusion of religion in the way that French “culture” was conceptualized and defined. In addition, science and aesthetic culture arose as products of the Enlightenment and developed in opposition to religion. While French citizens viewed these cultural elements, including science, as an integral part of both the public sphere and their national identity, religion was definitively relegated to the private sphere. In fact, when it came to the issue of religion, the notion of laïcité

---

<sup>25</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York, 1994), xii.

seemed so fully ingrained in the French mindset that most French citizens adamantly rejected religion as a part of their culture or national identity, despite the endemic presence of Catholicism in French history.

Although French secularists attempted to separate religion from culture in the French public sphere, religion still continued to play a prominent domestic and international role in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. French colonists grappled with questions regarding the proper role of religion and *laïcité*, especially given the prominence of religion in some of their colonies. Throughout their colonizing mission in North Africa, French colonizers learned that their strident domestic opposition to religion in the public sphere was essentially absent in other societies. Yet in other ways, the colonizers' difficulties in reconciling religion and *laïcité* mirrored the same internal debates about the place of religion in France. This significantly influenced the way that French colonizers viewed religion abroad, which becomes evident in consequent chapters.

Though religion has legally been excluded from the public sphere and the state since 1905, the role of religion remained (and still remains) relevant in France. Because of this, it is important to explain how "religion" was understood within the French colonial context. The term "religion" has historically been defined from a Western, colonialist, and monotheistic point of view. Until the early 1800s, Europeans identified four religions in its taxonomy: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and the "rest," characterized by pagans, idolaters, heathens, and polytheists.<sup>26</sup> This exclusive, limited understanding of religion by the West meant that colonizers often failed to recognize traditional religions in colonies because their personal conception

---

<sup>26</sup> Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions* (Chicago, 2005), 47.

of religion was incongruous with what they observed. For instance, when European travelers in Africa claimed that Africans “venerate[d] fetishes,” they failed to identify that the fetishes they observed *could* be elements of an indigenous religion.<sup>27</sup> While one cannot assume that such fetishes were necessarily religious, this simply points to the fact that that European travelers could not recognize religions that differed from their own based on their narrow definitions. Moreover, colonizers frequently lacked knowledge about local cultures, languages, and traditions, which explained why they did not identify certain practices, rituals, or beliefs as forms of religion.

Throughout colonial conquests, colonizers gradually began to see that indigenous populations had their own forms of religion, and the category of religion emerged as another method for contextualizing differences between the colonizers and the colonized. As historian Tomoko Masuzawa aptly notes, “religions offered European scholars a powerful, far-reaching, and comprehensive categorical framework by virtue of which they could hope to explain the characteristic features of a given non-European society.”<sup>28</sup> Colonialism reinforced the practice of defining identities in opposition to one another, and in the process, a clear division arose between the “colonizers and colonized, modern and tradition, [and] West and East.”<sup>29</sup> Religion thus worked in conjunction with existing classificatory categories such as race and ethnicity in the construction of the “other” in various colonial pursuits.<sup>30</sup> As the definition of religion expanded to include more practices in its taxonomy, colonizers could not use the absence of religion as a method of differentiating

---

<sup>27</sup> Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, “Religion: A Contested Site in Theology and the Study of Religion,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 93.1 (2000), 17-18.

<sup>28</sup> Masuzawa 18.

<sup>29</sup> Nicholas B. Dirks, *Colonialism and Culture* (Ann Arbor, 1992), 3.

<sup>30</sup> Fiorenza 18.

themselves from another population. Regardless of this fact, religion provided a useful marker for people to define themselves and group others into specific categories based on religious affiliation. In some ways, this resulted in the creation of monolithic conceptions of communities and characterizations of religions based on a specific set of traits and practices.

The emergence of secularism and the development of *laïcité* clearly had profound implications in France, both in domestic and international contexts. To see how *laïcité* influenced the colonial enterprise, we turn to the French colonization of Algeria.

## **Chapter 2: Assimilation and Aesthetics: The French Colonization of Algeria**

---

The colonization of Algeria in 1830 marked the beginning of the French presence in the Maghreb,<sup>31</sup> with French rule later expanding to include Tunisia (1881) and Morocco (1912) in its empire. This chapter begins with the French rule in Algeria and examines the assimilation strategy that colonizers used to incorporate Algeria as a part of France. Despite French integration efforts, the colonial experience established a binary between France and Algeria as opposites in several aspects, especially regarding the issue of religion. While France was fiercely committed to *laïcité*, Algeria remained staunchly religious. This oppositional framework also came to life in the realm of art: during this time, French Orientalist art grew in popularity and conveyed popular images of North Africa to the French public at home. The second half of the chapter looks at visual representation as a medium through which the French depicted and observed differences between France and North Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the Maghreb commonly portrayed as exotic, traditional, and religious. The French colonization of Algeria and French Orientalist art provided the basis for a colonial binary that emphasized the oppositional nature of France and North Africa.

### **Colonization in North Africa: An Overview of France in Algeria**

The colonization of Algeria demonstrated the problems associated with applying French secularism abroad and illustrated the trials and errors of French rule

---

<sup>31</sup> The Maghreb refers to countries in north and northwestern Africa; in this project, the term specifically refers to the countries of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria.

in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This also served as a formative time period in shaping French attitudes towards North Africa and Islam. The history of French influence in North Africa began with the reign of Charles X in 1830.<sup>32</sup> Charles X wanted to re-establish an absolute monarchy in France, and he aspired to achieve a victory abroad to gain credibility and to open up more economic markets. French ships headed towards Algiers to accomplish this goal, and they were successful; less than a month after French arrival, Algiers surrendered, establishing a French Algeria on July 5, 1830. Questions of whether to pursue limited or total occupation arose upon instituting French rule. Algerians strongly opposed total occupation, and some Muslim religious sects were willing to engage in *jihad*, a holy war, against French military forces to maintain Algeria as it was prior to French colonization. When Napoleon III assumed power in France in 1852, he refused the strategy of total occupation of colonies, rejected the destruction of native culture, and chose to foster Arab prosperity. However, after France completed its expansion of Algeria four years later, a devastating defeat in the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 crushed hopes for any semblance of Arab prosperity or rights.<sup>33</sup>

Between 1830 and 1871, military interests dominated French rule in Algeria. Following the French loss in the Franco-Prussian War, the military's departure left Algeria in the hands of the *colons*, colonists of French Algeria who were also referred to as *pieds-noirs*<sup>34</sup> (literally translated as "black feet"). French Algerians believed that

---

<sup>32</sup> Dana S. Hale, *Races on Display: French Representations of Colonized Peoples 1886-1940* (Bloomington, 2008), 10.

<sup>33</sup> Benjamin Stora, *Algeria, 1830-2000* (Ithaca, 2001), 3-5; Paul A. Silverstein, *Algeria in France: Transpolitics, Race, and Nation* (Bloomington, 2004), 42.

<sup>34</sup> The origin of the term *pieds-noirs* is unknown; this project refers to French Algerians as *pieds-noirs* or *colons*, and the terms are used interchangeably.

Algeria should be an extension of France, and the objective of Algerian colonization became assimilating the Algerian colony into existing political and economic institutions in France.<sup>35</sup> The primary goal of the colons was essentially to “ensure the absolute and complete subjugation of the population to the needs and interests of colonization,”<sup>36</sup> contrasting with the more benevolent approach of the military, who was concerned about maintaining security in French Algeria rather than controlling the native population. Unsurprisingly, the power dynamics between *pieds-noirs* and Algerians became severely imbalanced because colons controlled every aspect of life in Algeria with little or no regard to the needs of the native population. While the colons enjoyed full rights, Algerians were colonized subjects and treated as such. French Algerians manipulated the law to best serve their own interests, usually at the expense of the natives. The *Code de l’Indigénat* (Native Code), passed in 1881, basically legalized the repression of the colonized population and sanctioned government discrimination through measures such as extra taxation, required unpaid labor, and suspension of due process. Moreover, legislation regarding land rights frequently took advantage of Algerians. Prior to colonization, Algeria was chiefly an agricultural society with no delineated land rights or sense of private property. Once French colons seized control, they instituted laws regarding the private ownership of land and proceeded to put land on the free market, then purchased it for themselves. Land laws also broke up tribes by enforcing private land ownership.<sup>37</sup>

Algeria became directly integrated into France on an institutional level in 1881, and the field of education provides one example of this integration. Prime

---

<sup>35</sup> Silverstein 42.

<sup>36</sup> Stora 6.

<sup>37</sup> Stora 5-7.

Minister Jules Ferry created schools in Algeria that followed the secular education standards laid out in France. Algerian schools mirrored French schools from the curriculum to the time that classes were held. Transplanting French schools into Algeria failed to consider the needs and interests of the natives. For example, adopting the calendar of the French school system did not take the Algerian agrarian cycle into account, nor did it respect the various Islamic holidays which were celebrated by many in Algeria but not in France.<sup>38</sup> Such cultural insensitivity can be attributed to ignorance and inconsideration, but also exposes the self-seeking nature of the *pieds-noirs* in Algeria.

French colonial history generally reflects a distrust of Islam by the French, a contention that later became institutionalized in both Algeria and Morocco.<sup>39</sup> In Algeria, French colons created a two-tier system to differentiate between Muslims and non-Muslims. Local Algerian Catholics and Jews could attain French citizenship, but Algerian Muslims were denied this option because colons perceived Islam to be an impediment to achieving “Frenchness” and deemed it to be incompatible with French and Christian modernity. As the wave of secularism in France during the mid to late-1800s illustrated, religion could be seen as an obstacle to progress and assimilation, and Islam was singled out in Algeria as being incongruous with French identity. Though the French did not construe Islam as a completely savage religion, they still viewed it as a “backwards and imperfect civilization,” caught in a feudal aristocratic past. The French conflation of a “backwards civilization” and an “aristocratic past” in describing Islam contrasted the religion with the notion of a

---

<sup>38</sup> Silverstein 44.

<sup>39</sup> Though it is quite probable that the same policies of religious discrimination against Islam were found in Tunisia, this project looks primarily at Algeria and Morocco to substantiate these claims.



“New France.” This depiction of Islam evoked negative sentiments reminiscent of the role of religion in the *Ancien Régime*. French Republicans considered the *Ancien Régime*, which actively sponsored and promoted Catholicism, to be the antithesis of the new, democratic, secular understanding of France. The pervasive nature of Islam in Algeria constantly reminded French colonists about the dangers of mixing religion and the state. The religiosity of Arabs was a major barrier for Algeria to become integrated into France, so modernity would have to prevail over the rampant elements of religion in order to bring North Africa into the realm of “civilization” that France embodied.

In an effort to reform the Algerian population, the French denied Algerian Muslims French citizenship unless they renounced their religion. The issue of citizenship clearly illustrated the dichotomy between Algeria and France, tradition and modernity, and Islam and secularism. France was concerned with any legitimization of Islam, especially in regard to French citizenship, because acknowledging Islam as lawful and legitimate threatened the vision of France itself as a progressive, secular republic.<sup>40</sup> French colonists perceived the role of Islam in Algeria to be pervasive and all-encompassing. Algerian Muslims structured their lives around religion, such as praying five times a day, eating certain foods, and making decisions based on the Qur’an. The power that Islam held among Muslims was thus seen as a danger to the emerging ideals of French *laïcité* and the strict separation of church and state that French Republicans advocated.

Interestingly, as French colonists deconstructed and reconstructed national and religious identities in Algeria, Islam became the “only ideological ‘nation’ of

---

<sup>40</sup> Silverstein 47-51.

reference for Muslim Algerians,” and Algerians seized religion as a way to differentiate themselves from their colonizers. In this sense, French insistence on Algerian secularization had the opposite effect because it pushed Algerian Muslims to embrace their religious identity. Religion gave the Algerian population a way to oppose the foreign presence, while simultaneously holding onto one facet of their original identity prior to colonization.<sup>41</sup> Islam remained a paramount force in Algeria, unrivaled by any secular institutions or ideals that the French brought during the colonial enterprise.

The French colonizing mission in Algeria enhanced French interests in the region while giving them their first in-depth exposure to North African culture and Islam. French colonists used various strategies to interact with the local population, and learned mainly through trial and error after undertaking an unsuccessful assimilation policy in Algeria. The colonizing mission of the 1800s also allowed French colonists to entrench a binary between the French and their North African counterparts, in addition to the dichotomy of French *laïcité* against Algerian Islam. While the campaign promoting secularism progressed in France, Prime Minister Jules Ferry endeavored to expand the colonial enterprise. Tunisia, which had previously been a part of the Ottoman Empire, became a French protectorate in 1881,<sup>42</sup> and the focus shifted to Morocco as another location for colonization at the onset of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

---

<sup>41</sup> Stora 11-12.

<sup>42</sup> Sowerwine 38.

## French Orientalist Art

French colonists were not the only ones familiar with the Maghreb in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The rise of French Orientalist art in the 1800s translated into a wealth of paintings and sketches that flooded the cultural scene and formed a popular image of the Orient in France. With the dichotomy of laïcité versus Islam established during the French colonization of Algeria, Orientalist art propagated the binary and visually depicted the opposition in the French public sphere. North Africa was portrayed as traditional and religious, which directly contrasted with French modernity and secularism. Themes of tradition and religion were clearly illustrated in the artwork and experiences of two prominent painters in this period: Eugène Delacroix, who traveled to Morocco in 1832, and Pierre-Auguste Renoir, who lived in Algiers for three months in the early 1880s. Both artists produced paintings that fell into the genre of French Orientalist art.

Geographically, 19<sup>th</sup> century France defined the “Orient” as the Near East and surrounding areas such as North Africa, Western Asia, the Balkans, and Northern India. Both France and Great Britain expressed an increasing level of interest in the Orient in the 1800s, and in France, many looked to the Orient to “repair deficiencies of life in modern France.”<sup>43</sup> Many advocates of colonialism wanted to rectify the flaws found in contemporary French society by embarking on new projects abroad.

Edward Said’s groundbreaking book *Orientalism* defined the term as a “Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient,” and representations of the Orient spanned categories ranging from literature to visual

---

<sup>43</sup> Roger Benjamin, *Orientalist Aesthetics: Art, Colonialism, and French North Africa, 1880-1930* (Berkeley, 2003), 110.

arts.<sup>44</sup> Said's claim that Orientalism was "fundamentally a Western discourse ... establishing [a] stereotyped and mythical East in Western eyes, [and] a false vision that served as a rationale for European rule"<sup>45</sup> appeared to be accurate in the French case. Such Orientalist sentiments pervaded France throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially in the realm of art.

French Orientalist art is an important mode of representation to investigate for three reasons. First, as alluded to earlier, the exoticized images of Algeria and Morocco emphasized the intrinsically traditional nature of North Africa to the French public. These qualities were juxtaposed against French modernity and laïcité, and art was used as a tool to extend the colonial binaries. Second, many of the Orientalist paintings established a correlation linking art and science. Artists presented their work as authoritative pieces on the landscape, people, and customs abroad. Asserting that the paintings were scientifically constructed by using the kind of precision found in scientific studies legitimized the validity of French visual representations for the French public. Finally, if the Maghreb was mired in tradition and stuck in the past as the paintings indicated, it was France's duty to bring them into civilization. Even if artists had no political motives in their descriptions of the Orient, French artwork still served as an inherent justification for colonialism by depicting natives as traditional, religious, and in need of civilization. Regardless of the idea that artists were

---

<sup>44</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978), 3.

<sup>45</sup> Patrick Shaw Cable, "From North Africa to the Black Sea: Nineteenth-Century French Orientalist Drawings," *Cleveland Studies in the History of Art* 7 (2002), 106.

producing accurate representations, Orientalism at its core was a “fantasy-based description ... that served to rationalize and advance Western imperialism.”<sup>46</sup>

Artists frequently possessed preconceived ideas about what the Orient was like even before they ventured abroad, and it was not uncommon for 19<sup>th</sup> century painters to utilize photos of the Orient to create some of their Orientalist paintings. In spite of these facts, the authenticity of Orientalist art was rarely, if ever, questioned, and the French public accepted the artwork as accurate portrayals of the Orient. The remainder of the chapter examines the experiences of Eugène Delacroix and Pierre-Auguste Renoir, two prominent painters who spent time in the Maghreb, incorporated Orientalist themes into their work, and consequently influenced perceptions of the Orient in France.

### **Delacroix in Morocco**

Eugène Delacroix, a celebrated 19<sup>th</sup> century French artist renowned for his romanticist paintings, was asked to serve as an artist and reporter for a diplomatic mission to Morocco in 1832. The mission was led by diplomat Charles Edgar Count de Mornay, who was responsible for meeting Moroccan Sultan Moulay Abd al-Rahman to alleviate tensions that resulted from the French occupation of Algeria.<sup>47</sup> When the mission arrived in Tangier in January 1832, Delacroix, who had painted Oriental subjects before his trip, found that the journey to Morocco was a “rectification of [his] early studio imaginings.”<sup>48</sup> Delacroix’s preconceived ideas

---

<sup>46</sup> Todd B. Porterfield, *The Allure of Empire: Art in the Service of French Imperialism, 1798-1836* (Princeton, 1998), 8.

<sup>47</sup> Cable 107.

<sup>48</sup> Benjamin (2003b) 6.

about the Orient were affirmed in Morocco and consequently depicted in his work, as he incorporated Orientalist themes of traditionalism and religiosity into his paintings.

Mentioning the “natural nobility” he found among modern-day North Africans, Delacroix was inspired and constantly surprised by Morocco, which seemed like another world to him. In a letter home, Delacroix remarked, “In this moment, I am like a man in a dream who sees things he fears he will lose,”<sup>49</sup> as he discovered an ancient world in Morocco which drastically differed from his own life in France. Delacroix felt that being in a new setting freed him from traditional stylistic restraints, and he rapidly produced notes and sketches. Despite the picturesque image of Morocco that Delacroix documented and relayed in his journals and letters, life in Morocco was far from perfect and Delacroix did not enjoy complete freedom. Because Christians were not perceived positively in Morocco (*être mal vu*), the painter was not allowed to venture outside unless he had an escort of soldiers.<sup>50</sup>

Nevertheless, Delacroix was captivated by “*les spectacles humains*” (human spectacles) and observed a number of differences between France and Morocco, which ranged from the disposition of Arab women to the color of clothing. Delacroix was particularly fascinated by Moroccan dress, and he noted in his sketches of Arabs that though their clothing was uniform and quite simple, small adjustments gave it a character of “beauty and nobility.” Delacroix’s writing and artwork emphasized the idea of tradition, ancientness, and history, and these characteristics were ingrained in his mind and subsequently portrayed in his work. Delacroix did not necessarily find the traditional nature of Morocco to be a flaw – in fact, it appeared likely that he

---

<sup>49</sup> Jean Alazard, *L'Orient et la Peinture Française au XIXe Siècle* (Paris, 1930), 39-40.

<sup>50</sup> Arlette Sérullaz and Annick Doutriaux, *Delacroix: Une Fête pour L'œil* (Paris, 1998), 60.

enjoyed the relaxed environment of the Maghreb – but the traits he observed appeared to function as a way to differentiate between France and North Africa.

The months that Delacroix spent in Morocco served as a formative period of inspiration and they resulted in artwork produced in various media from paintings to watercolors.<sup>51</sup> Though Delacroix appreciated the change of scenery in the Maghreb, he found it difficult to find indigenous models to pose for him, because posing for paintings violated Islamic norms and women donned veils in public.<sup>52</sup> Delacroix settled for alternatives models, such as creating sketches, usually of men, to fill his sketchbooks, and finding other groups to paint. Thanks to his interpreter, Delacroix was welcomed into several Jewish homes, and even had the privilege of attending a Jewish wedding, which inspired the painting “Jewish Wedding in Morocco” (“*Noce Juive au Maroc*”) in 1839.<sup>53</sup>

After Tangier, Delacroix’s diplomatic mission traveled to Meknes. Gunfire, drums, and a large crowd excitedly greeted the delegation upon their arrival, which Delacroix described as “stunning.”<sup>54</sup> During his stay in Meknes, Delacroix attended a religious procession organized by the Aissaoui, a religious brotherhood. The Aissaoui assembled once a year in Meknes around the mausoleum of its founder, Sidi Aissa, and at the procession, Delacroix witnessed the participants in a general state of ecstasy or convulsions, and saw them engaged in various religious activities including singing and dancing. What he saw in Meknes was reminiscent of the “wild”

---

<sup>51</sup> Alazard 48-49.

<sup>52</sup> It is unclear whether women wore the hijab or niqab in Algeria, but it appears as though Algerian Muslim women wore some sort of covering when in public that prevented Delacroix from creating sketches of them.

<sup>53</sup> Sérullaz and Doutriaux 56-60.

<sup>54</sup> Sérullaz and Doutriaux 60.

manifestations of religion he witnessed in the streets of Tangier, and Delacroix skillfully translated these images onto the canvas, resulting in the painting “The Fanatics of Tangier” (*Les Convulsionnaires de Tanger*), completed in 1838.<sup>55</sup>

Delacroix spent a few days in Algiers at the end of his trip. Inspired by his experience there, he completed his critically acclaimed painting “The Women of Algiers” (*Les Femmes d’Algiers*) in 1834. Delacroix used the knowledge and experience he had accrued over the last four months of his journey to produce the masterpiece. From his stay in the Maghreb, Delacroix noted what he viewed as the guarded nature of Muslim women, and he expressed frustration in his inability to capture their essence upon returning from Morocco. These sentiments were somewhat alleviated when Delacroix visited an Algerian harem in June 1832. The painter was excited to see women in an open environment, caring for their children, spinning wool, and embroidering fabrics without their usual sense of hesitation and guardedness.<sup>56</sup>

“The Women of Algiers,” depicted three women casually lounging about in a relaxed atmosphere, with a female servant about to leave the room. All of the women donned vibrant colors and luxurious fabrics, and the painting was filled with intricate details such as the women’s jewelry and the patterned carpet and tiles that gave the scene its richness and complexity. Furthermore, the Louvre, in which the painting is now on display, describes Delacroix’s work in a similar manner:

The overall impression of the painting is one of great serenity ...  
Observe the nonchalance of the serving girl and the languid poses of

---

<sup>55</sup> Sérullaz and Doutriaux 61.

<sup>56</sup> Sérullaz and Doutriaux 64.



the beautiful Oriental women. Their hands, legs, and drifting gazes add to the overall impression of torpor.<sup>57</sup>

The openness of the women in the painting greatly contrasted with the typical notion of the inaccessibility of Muslim women, yet critics lauded the painting as an “authentic, true to nature, [and] even scientific” work of art.<sup>58</sup> The painting itself was not an accurate depiction of an actual harem, and it rather reflected predetermined European notions about harem life such as the oversexualization of women and the opulence of the harem. Orientalist art, including this painting, largely depended on presenting a type of “contrived reality to satisfy preconceived expectations,”<sup>59</sup> which Delacroix successfully accomplished. Orientalist art perpetuated the belief that France and the Maghreb stood in opposition to one another, and the image of the harem evoked sentiments that contradicted French values. While Delacroix’s painting showed women in an open environment in which they did not need to be veiled, it was still within the confines of the harem – the private sphere. To the French public, the harem symbolized the isolation of females and the covering of women in public, characteristics which were closely associated with Islam. Attributing the seclusion and concealment of women to Islam emphasized the “backwardness” of religion and the exclusion of women from the public sphere. This stood in stark contrast to French Republicans’ and colonists’ view of secularism, which removed religion from the public sphere and allowed women to express themselves as they wished in public.

---

<sup>57</sup> *The Louvre*, “Women of Algiers in Their Apartment,” <http://www.louvre.fr>.

<sup>58</sup> Porterfield 122.

<sup>59</sup> Porterfield 134.



Eugène Delacroix, “The Women of Algiers” (1931), © Web Gallery of Art

“The Women of Algiers” was the first major work of art inspired by Delacroix’s journey to Africa, and critics noted that Delacroix seemed to accurately portray the “impalpable... the hot atmosphere and the languid torpor of the body.”<sup>60</sup> The painting represented a remarkable blend of artistry and science, “scrupulous in its portrayal of the physiognomies, more, costumes, and living conditions of an exotic people.”<sup>61</sup> The painting’s perceived accuracy in depicting its subjects made it credible, and the methodical and detailed manner in which Delacroix illustrated the physiognomy, behavior, and dress was similar to the precision that scientific observations required, allowing critics to underline the scientific nature of “The Women of Algiers.” Conflating art and science conferred greater authority to the painting for French audiences, and it supported the notion that visual representations were truthful depictions that could be used as the rationale for making decisions.

---

<sup>60</sup> Sérullaz and Doutriaux 65.

<sup>61</sup> Porterfield 122.

Many of Delacroix's observations about the Maghreb were precursors to comments that scientists would make a century later. For instance, Delacroix marveled at Moroccan simplicity, noting

If you know how peacefully men live here under the scimitar of tyrants; above all, how little they are concerned with the vanities that fret our minds! ... everything inclines one to delightful indolence ... We notice a thousand things in which they are lacking, but their ignorance is the foundation of their peace and happiness ... Grace takes revenge on our science.<sup>62</sup>

The painter contrasted Moroccans with the French in several aspects, and Delacroix's comments showed Moroccan "simplicity" to be an asset, not necessarily a shortcoming. While Delacroix implied that simplicity was a positive quality, his juxtaposition of Moroccan ignorance with French science indicated that he saw these two qualities – and by extension, Moroccans and the French – as oppositional in nature. Colonial binaries pervaded the thoughts and works of artists, and the chapter concludes by turning to another French Orientalist artist who exemplified this trend: Pierre-Auguste Renoir.

### **Renoir in Algeria**

Pierre-Auguste Renoir, another prominent 19<sup>th</sup> century artist, was greatly inspired by the work of Delacroix and produced a range of Orientalist paintings in the latter half of the century. Renoir pursued Orientalist paintings partly because of the popularity of the genre in the market. He engaged in "studio Orientalism" – Orientalist-themed paintings created in Paris – from 1870 to 1875, prior to visiting

---

<sup>62</sup> Porterfield 136-137.

Algeria. Renoir traveled to Algeria for the first time in early 1881 and returned in the spring of 1882 for two additional months.<sup>63</sup>

In Algeria, Renoir focused on the manners and customs (*moeurs et coutumes*) of the Maghreb, reflecting the commonplace European curiosity about beliefs and norms found in Islamic culture.<sup>64</sup> In contrast to Delacroix's paintings which were described as "scientific," Renoir stayed away from such "ethnographic art." Rather than trying to provide accurate depictions of natives' physical features, dress, and comportment, Renoir chose to use his own experiences of "human immediacy and openness" as his inspiration.<sup>65</sup> Like other Orientalist painters, Renoir faced the challenge of having models that were reluctant to pose, so he painted many landscape pieces, while also relying on colonial photography to fill in the details of his paintings.<sup>66</sup>

Renoir chose the Grand Mosque, the oldest and largest mosque in Algiers, as the subject of several paintings. The Grand Mosque was one of only twenty religious buildings that French colonists maintained in Algiers; though the French did not try to convert Algerians, colonists destroyed or altered most of the 166 mosques and zaouias (religious lodges) in the city for no clearly stated reason.<sup>67</sup> Interestingly, cathedrals in France, an approximate equivalent to mosques in the Maghreb, were viewed as "*monuments historiques*" – historical monuments which were considered central to French national identity. Even though the French recognized the importance of religious edifices in defining their national identity, French colonists destroyed

---

<sup>63</sup> Benjamin (2003b) 17; Benjamin (2003a) 36.

<sup>64</sup> Benjamin (2003b) 58.

<sup>65</sup> Benjamin (2003a) 55.

<sup>66</sup> Benjamin (2003b) 44.

<sup>67</sup> Benjamin (2003b) 43.

parallel symbols of Algerian identity by converting or eliminating mosques in Algiers. While the French posited that they were tolerant of Islam, colonial actions indicated otherwise. Colonists erased a tangible and integral part of Algerian identity by demolishing mosques and hoped that this would facilitate the incorporation of Algerians and their state into France.

Renoir showed a keen interest in the Grand Mosque, and he completed his painting “Mosque at Algiers” (“*Mosquée à Alger*”) in 1882. “Mosque at Algiers” depicted the mosque of Sidi Abd-er-Rahman, with a few veiled figures sitting outside the mosque. Describing his decision to paint the mosque, Renoir noted that “such a building embodies the ideas of ancientness, sanctity, and Moorish<sup>68</sup> cultural expression.” Renoir saw the mosque as a “symbol of a beleaguered Islam,” and consequently strove to preserve traditional Algerian structures through art in the face of growing French urbanization. Art also provided Renoir a venue to showcase the differences between the Maghreb and France. In a subsequent painting which illustrated a staircase leading up to the Grand Mosque, Renoir portrayed the environment as an open space with a clear view of the sky, contrasting with the narrow, enclosed streets prevalent in French cities. While Renoir depicted these differences between France and Algeria, his paintings were not meant to criticize French colonialism or the various projects colonists enacted in Algiers. Renoir remarked that “in ten years, Algiers will certainly be the most beautiful city in the world.”<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> The Moors refer broadly to a population of Arabs and Berbers originating in North Africa.

<sup>69</sup> Benjamin (2003b) 47-63.

Critics noted that Renoir's paintings showed "no markers of historical change or movement," indicating the timelessness of Orientalist art.<sup>70</sup> Without any changes reflected in Renoir's paintings, his work provided a view into Algiers as an "authentic" culture that was frozen in time through art.<sup>71</sup> Though Delacroix and Renoir did not express any political agenda in their depictions of native cultures, they propagated the same notion of French superiority and France's rightful place to protect other cultures, whether by preserving customs through artwork or political means. French Orientalist art ensconced the colonizer/colonized binary and entrenched the hierarchy of power between France and North Africa, established a link between art and science, and ultimately served as a justification for the necessity of colonialism.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century was a seminal period for French colonizers and the broader public to form ideas about Algeria and North Africa as a whole. With this in mind, we turn to the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the French colonization of Morocco.

---

<sup>70</sup> David Prochaska, "The Other Algeria," (New Haven, 2003), 131.

<sup>71</sup> Benjamin (2003b) 97.

### Chapter 3: *La Mission Civilisatrice*: French Scientific Exploration in Morocco

---

The French colonial presence in North Africa persisted well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and Morocco became an integral part of the French empire when France established the protectorate in 1912. During this time, anthropology-based scientific studies such as ethnography and ethnology gained popularity in France due to the conflation of science, reason, and *laïcité*, all defined in opposition to religion. French Republicans posited that “human beings using Reason could know the world by analyzing the material world rather than by searching the mind of God,”<sup>72</sup> a claim that simultaneously rejected religion while elevating *laïcité* and science. This mindset impacted colonial actions, as scientific studies became central in colonial pursuits.

Chapter 3 begins with a history of French scientific studies to trace its influence and examine the relationship between science, *laïcité*, and colonialism. The chapter then transitions to specifically discuss the French protectorate of Morocco and the role of Hubert Lyautey, the first resident-general in Morocco. Lyautey was firmly dedicated to scientific studies to not only improve colonial relations, but to justify the French presence abroad in what is now termed “*la mission civilisatrice*” – the civilizing mission. To see the significance of science in colonial pursuits, this chapter analyzes two ethnographies to elucidate how scientific studies compared French and Moroccan societies, and in what ways these results exposed underlying French values. Though one of the intentions behind scientific studies was to show the similarities between the colonizers and the colonized, the results emphasized a multitude of differences between the French and Moroccans, especially when it came

---

<sup>72</sup> Charles Sowerwine, *France since 1870: Culture, Politics and Society* (New York, 2001), 41.

to the issue of religion. Every study used religion as the primary trope for understanding any type of difference between France and Morocco, which illustrated the unwavering French commitment to laïcité. French scientists solidified the notion of science as modern and religion as traditional through their studies by conflating laïcité and science, and defining religion as the antithesis.

### **History of French Scientific Studies**

This project analyzes two anthropology-based research methods used in colonial scientific studies: ethnology and ethnography. Ethnology is defined as the “analytical and comparative study of cultures,” and renowned ethnographer Joseph Bourrilly distinguished ethnology as the study of ethnic origins and evolution of social and religious forms.<sup>73</sup> Ethnology can be characterized as a historically-based science that focuses on making comparisons and contrasts. Meanwhile, ethnography is primarily a “descriptive study of a particular human society.”<sup>74</sup> Ethnographies frequently studied societies deemed to be “primitive” and “exotic,” and these types of descriptions helped colonizers understand unknown cultures.<sup>75</sup> Both methods were viewed as scientific approaches to studying human societies, and were frequently utilized throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century in French colonization.

The practice of French ethnology was rooted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. From Napoleon Bonaparte’s exploration in Egypt to Charles X’s colonial ventures in

---

<sup>73</sup> Joseph Bourrilly, *Elements D’ethnographie Marocaine* (Paris, 1932), 1.

<sup>74</sup> “Ethnography,” *New Encyclopedia Britannica* (1985).

<sup>75</sup> Daniel J. Sherman, “‘Peoples Ethnographic’: Objects, Museums, and the Colonial Inheritance of French Ethnography,” *French Historical Studies* 27.3 (2004), 674; Alice L. Conklin, “The New ‘Ethnology’ and ‘La Situation Coloniale’ in Interwar France,” *French Politics, Culture & Society* 20.2 (2002), 31.



Algeria, documenting other cultures was considered a crucial tool in colonialism.<sup>76</sup> The study of the “exotic” dominated French anthropology until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when ethnology shifted from a “museum-based discipline” to a “research-based enterprise.” Instead of solely exhibiting exotic artifacts in museum displays, anthropology-based science changed its focus to include a significant research component. During this time, ethnology arose as a distinct branch of science that divided humankind into races as a classificatory system predicated on genealogy and inherited traits. As opposed to the descriptive nature of ethnography, ethnology addressed features specific to each race and provided comparative, detailed knowledge of language, religion, and the social frameworks of indigenous populations. From the colonizers’ perspective, it was useful to methodically study perceived divergences of inferior or different populations to increase colonial knowledge.<sup>77</sup> Ethnology thus played a major part in the creation of a “larger and universalizing science of society... promising an understanding of fundamental structures of social life.”<sup>78</sup> The “specific colonial configuration of ethnology at its birth [was] that of an inside/outside science,”<sup>79</sup> which established binary arrangements and entrenched the notion of defining French identity in opposition to another.

Colonization in the 20<sup>th</sup> century marked the beginning of the scientific period in French explorations, with the proliferation of scientific research in French colonies and the establishment of scientific institutions.<sup>80</sup> Ethnology was recognized as a

---

<sup>76</sup> Sam Kaplan, “Documenting History, Historicizing Documentation: French Military Officials’ Ethnological Reports on Cilicia,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44 (2002), 349.

<sup>77</sup> Benoit de L’Estoile, “Science de l’homme et ‘Domination Rationnelle’: Savoir Ethnologique et Politique Indigène en Afrique Coloniale Française,” *Revue de Synthèse* 121.3 (2000), 294.

<sup>78</sup> Susan Carol Rogers, “Anthropology in France,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30 (2002), 488.

<sup>79</sup> Conklin 36.

<sup>80</sup> L’Estoile 295.

scientific field of study when the University of Paris opened its *Institut d'Ethnologie* (IE; Institute of Ethnology) in 1925.<sup>81</sup> IE symbolized the emerging trend of using science as a way to benefit both the colonies and France itself in the post-World War I period. In addition, *Musée de l'Homme* (Museum of Man)<sup>82</sup> opened in 1937 with an extensive collection detailing the definition, history, and life of humanity, and included anthropology, pre-history, and ethnology galleries. Government-founded institutions like IE and *Musée de l'Homme* displayed the ethnological knowledge that France obtained to benefit the empire and to gain support for colonization projects from the public.<sup>83</sup>

There were three main motivations in actively incorporating scientific studies in colonial pursuits: to fulfill French “duty,” to improve relations with the colonized, and to bolster French power in the colonies. First, anthropologists and scientists wanted to record and preserve “pure cultures” before it was too late. They feared that indigenous cultures could disappear before their traditions were properly recorded first. European colonizers considered it a part of their duty to uncover “pure cultures untouched by history” and preserve “authentic traditions,” and their sense of responsibility increased as the French colonial empire expanded. Colonies were thus seen as an ideal place to fulfill this duty through scientific research.<sup>84</sup>

French anthropologist Marcel Mauss indicated a similar sense of duty to scientifically study colonies, articulated in his 1913 article “*L’ethnographie en France et à l’étranger*” (“Ethnography in France and Abroad”). Working under the

---

<sup>81</sup> Conklin 41; Sherman 675.

<sup>82</sup> *Musée de l'Homme*, “Description,” <http://www.museums-of-paris.com>.

<sup>83</sup> Conklin 30.

<sup>84</sup> Conklin 29; Sherman 670.

assumption that all native traditions naturally included primitive practices, Mauss defined ethnography as the description of so-called primitive people (*la description des peuples dit primitifs*) and called it an ancient science and a scholarly tradition in France. Mauss launched into a criticism of France's weak role in ethnographic studies, noting that until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, almost all of the ethnographic literature was in English due to Britain's dominance in the field. Pointing to the ethnographic work undertaken in other countries such as the United States, Germany, and the Netherlands, Mauss lamented that throughout the years, even nations with meager colonial possessions engaged in more ethnographic work than France.<sup>85</sup>

Mauss attributed the lack of ethnographic studies in France to both a "decline in spirit of adventure" and a lack of institutions that fostered such work. In fact, he posited that exploration and ethnographic studies were not encouraged until the Third Republic starting in 1870, an indication of France's failure to fulfill its duty for centuries. Since he viewed France as a great scientific and colonial power, Mauss resolutely insisted that France had a twofold duty: to undertake ethnographic exploration in French colonies, and to study "inferior populations" in the rest of the world. This sense of duty ultimately stemmed from Mauss's belief in French superiority and pride. He emphasized that France must do its job, especially if less qualified countries (defined as countries with fewer funds or little colonial interest) were undertaking the same ethnographic work. Mauss posited that "each day that passes without collecting these fragments of humanity is a day lost for the science of societies [and] for the history of man,"<sup>86</sup> and he imparted a sense of urgency for

---

<sup>85</sup> Marcel Mauss, "L'ethnographie en France et à l'étranger," (1913), 4-12.

<sup>86</sup> Mauss 37.

France to pursue ethnography and scientific studies in its colonies. He insisted that ethnographic work, like other forms of observational science (*une science d'observation*) such as zoology and geology, required three levels of work: field work (*travaux sur le terrain*), museums and archives, and teaching. To elaborate, Mauss stated that first, a group of ethnographers must go into the field to collect documents and materials. Once the materials were assembled, they would be stored, displayed, and published in museums and archives. Finally, the materials would translate into teachings (*les enseignements*) that must be within the reach of technicians, apprentices, and even the general public.<sup>87</sup>

Anthropological and scientific knowledge played an essential role in formulating the French civilizing mission (*la mission civilisatrice*) in its colonies. Scientists documented the state of natives before their “entry into history” – an entry which occurred at the time that natives were conquered, and a history that was defined strictly on French terms.<sup>88</sup> Part of the French commitment in their colonial pursuits entailed uplifting colonized populations, and French officials firmly believed that this was part of their duty, as articulated by Mauss. French colonists saw themselves as the carriers of civilization to native lands, and they assumed that everyone wanted to be a part of this elite history. Bringing “civilization” would therefore improve colonial relations. The notion of bringing natives into history also elevated French power in the colonies because it aggrandized their own sense of importance by allowing the French to determine who became included in this elite history.

---

<sup>87</sup> Mauss 12-13, 25.

<sup>88</sup> L'Estoile 306.

The underlying idea that colonizers had a “duty” to study the populations they were colonizing had considerable implications in shaping the relationship between the French and Moroccans. However, it is crucial to mention that the importance of colonial power can be exaggerated in both scholarship and public discourse. Though often a byproduct of imperialism, subjugating native cultures was not the primary objective of French colonialism, and many French officials were committed to improving colonizer/colonized relations in Morocco and in other colonies,<sup>89</sup> as demonstrated below. While French colonists and scientists utilized ethnographic findings to justify French policies in the protectorate, many were truly interested in learning about other cultures. Studying “primitive” societies was not completely separate from colonial justifications, but it remained a key objective in and of itself. In addition, focusing solely on French colonial power tends to depict Moroccans as passively and uncritically accepting their colonial experience without a voice. On the contrary, Moroccans possessed a great deal of agency during French colonization, and they did not simply submit to French rule. This fact came into fruition most markedly during the Moroccan independence movement in the 1950s, in which Moroccan nationalists showed remarkable organization and mobilization skills to garner public support for their independence from French rule.<sup>90</sup>

The remaining incentives to incorporate scientific studies into colonialism were closely intertwined. French officials and colonizers believed that scientific studies would (1) enhance their relationship with the colonized population, and (2) bolster their own power. French colonists and government officials wanted to

---

<sup>89</sup> Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture* (Cambridge, 1994), 15.

<sup>90</sup> Though the Moroccan nationalist movement is beyond the scope of this thesis, a number of scholars (including C.R. Pennell, John Halstead, and Harriet Mitchell) have published regarding this issue.

improve colonial relations by gaining greater knowledge about the colonized population's culture and lifestyle.<sup>91</sup> Through field work, scientists interacted with native populations and found meaning in their thoughts and behaviors. In turn, this knowledge assisted the French with their rule. The ideal subjects for scientific studies included relatively homogenous groups that were self-sustaining, and French scientists saw North Africa as a prime location to undertake research.<sup>92</sup>

Even though European scientists intended to be impartial observers in conducting their research, they exposed a great deal about their own point of view in their studies. Rather than offering an objective account, the results of such scientific activity led to French justification for their dominance.<sup>93</sup> In 1921, Maurice Delafosse, professor of ethnography and African languages, claimed that intervention through colonization would bring progress and happiness for the colonizers and colonized alike; without this intervention, France would be universally condemned, presumably for not saving natives from their current state.<sup>94</sup> In addition, ethnographers were often depicted as

rescuer[s] of the threatened or dying culture, even if the natives in question do not asked to be rescued, even if they actively resist such attempts to find themselves, as a result of both colonial and ethnographic intervention, consigned to the status of museum pieces.<sup>95</sup>

French willingness to understand and rescue *l'âme indigène* (the soul of the indigene) can be seen as a reaffirmation of the distance between colonizers and the colonized in scientific studies. Scientific pursuits reinforced the notion of "epistemic

---

<sup>91</sup> Conklin 30.

<sup>92</sup> Sherman 658, 676.

<sup>93</sup> Conklin 29.

<sup>94</sup> L'Estoile 308.

<sup>95</sup> Sherman 691.

superiority,”<sup>96</sup> strengthening the vertical hierarchy with the colonizers at the top who studied the practices and traditions of the colonized below them. The sheer act of describing and documenting observations about people put the French in a position of power and conferred them legitimacy, under the assumption that natives could and should be “studied” in a scientific manner. With the established dichotomies of colonizer/colonized and modern/traditional, French ethnographers presumed that native cultures were bound to be primitive and separate from the modern influences that the French would then import to the colonies. The implicit notion driving these practices was firmly rooted in the belief of the inherent inferiority of the colonized population within this colonial framework.

As ethnography and ethnology developed in France, colonizers continued to assert that studying indigenous populations assisted their rule and forged better relations with the colonized. However, scientific studies only strengthened French dominance in Morocco instead of balancing the power dynamics between the French and the Moroccans. Using science to study cultures, French colonists found that ethnographies and ethnologies legitimized their superiority and justified *la mission civilisatrice*.

### **The French Protectorate of Morocco and Hubert Lyautey**

Prior to the official establishment of the French protectorate, the central government of Morocco (*Makhzen*) led by the sultan had lost all authority, financial independence, and functioning institutions. To pay off Moroccan debts, Sultan Yusef

---

<sup>96</sup> Thomas 7.

agreed to cede power to French officials in exchange for money in 1910.<sup>97</sup> France officially established its protectorate in Morocco through the Treaty of Fez in 1912. The treaty outlined the following condition of French colonization: France was given the right to occupy Morocco militarily, initiate reforms, and create the position of the French resident-general to act as the sultan's "foreign minister" and represent French interests in the government. In return, France assured Morocco that the position of the sultan as the spiritual leader of the country would be protected.<sup>98</sup> In theory, the Moroccan sultan maintained control of the state, while the resident-general functioned as a liaison negotiating between French and Moroccan affairs. However, the resident-general held the majority of the power in reality, leaving the sultan as a mere figurehead. The makhzen's powers were reduced so that it only controlled domestic and Islamic matters, while everything else was under French rule.<sup>99</sup> It was under these conditions that the practice of French ethnology and ethnography came into the forefront of scientific studies of native populations, methods frequently used in Morocco during the first two decades of the French protectorate.

Hubert Lyautey became the first resident-general of the French protectorate in Morocco. Prior to this position, Lyautey had traveled to North Africa and was captivated by what he saw, describing his trip to Algeria in the 1880s as a "magical journey ... [it is] impossible to close eyes without seeing the light, the blue sky."<sup>100</sup> As a young lieutenant traveling overseas, Lyautey interacted extensively with native Algerians, particularly the educated youth from professional and commercial classes.

---

<sup>97</sup> C.R. Pennell, *Morocco: From Empire to Independence* (Oxford, 2003), 135-136.

<sup>98</sup> Nevill Barbour, "Nationalism in Morocco," *Middle Eastern Affairs* 4.1 (1953), 361.

<sup>99</sup> Harriett Mitchell, "The Development of Nationalism in French Morocco," *Phylon* 16.4 (1955), 428.

<sup>100</sup> Barnett Singer, "Lyautey: An Interpretation of the Man and French Imperialism," *Journal of Comparative History* 26.1 (1991), 138.



His close relationship with the locals led him to question the French policy of assimilation in Algeria, and Lyautey believed that assimilation disregarded the importance of Algerian cultural, political, and societal structures.<sup>101</sup> Lyautey did not have a positive experience working in Paris, and he expressed an aversion to the centralized government, system, and rules found in France. He articulated a similar sense of discontent when he had to do administrative work in Algiers, and he longed to interact with the local population. True colonial life presented the opposite of the rigid structures in Paris, and similar to travelers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Lyautey sensed that “colonial life... could rejuvenate the French mind and heart.”<sup>102</sup> Lyautey asserted that colonialism could save France from “decomposition and ruin,”<sup>103</sup> and he felt inspired by the French colonists’ ambition, selflessness, and duty to improve French life.

Based on his previous experiences, Lyautey preferred to rule by associating with local elites in Morocco, and he firmly believed that it was possible to achieve French goals with little force. He wanted to minimize cultural and social disruptions in Moroccan society and avoid political opposition to French rule.<sup>104</sup> He respected local traditions, beliefs, and politics, and strove for harmony between the colonizers and the colonized.<sup>105</sup> Unfortunately, initial French unfamiliarity with Moroccan culture led to problems in reforming policies, especially with issues related to land. As Morocco developed into a modern state under French colonization, colonists

---

<sup>101</sup> William A. Hoisington, *Lyautey and the French Conquest of Morocco* (New York, 1995), 3.

<sup>102</sup> Singer 148.

<sup>103</sup> Hoisington 10.

<sup>104</sup> Spencer D. Segalla, “Georges Hardy and Educational Ethnology in French Morocco, 1920-26,” *French Colonial History* 4 (2003), 172.

<sup>105</sup> Singer 136.

viewed economic progress as a paramount priority. France saw agriculture as a sector that could be used to maximize efficiency and production, without considering its previous role as an important venue for developing social relationships.<sup>106</sup> Prior to colonization, Moroccans had collective land ownership that stood in stark contrast to the European norm of individual land ownership. The French had no conception of “shared land,” and policies that instituted individual land ownership imposed French rules without considering the views of the Moroccan population. To avoid similar mishaps in the future, Lyautey considered it a high priority to integrate his rule with the local culture, and he therefore gave full support to scientific research through ethnographies and ethnologies as the key to understanding traditional culture and facilitating better relations.<sup>107</sup> In addition to supporting anthropological research, Lyautey displayed the Moroccan flag on public buildings, played recordings of the national anthem, learned and spoke Arabic, and prohibited Christian proselytizing. Lyautey conflated official practices with his personal views, all to show his commitment to preserving Moroccan customs.<sup>108</sup> Lyautey continuously emphasized that colonial rule should be both a preservation of pre-colonial structures and an infusion of new politics, a stance that helped him win over many local leaders.<sup>109</sup>

To convince the Moroccan population that it was in their best interest to cooperate with French rule, Lyautey and his administration enacted policies that benefitted Moroccans such as building roads and hospitals, lending agricultural

---

<sup>106</sup> Nicholas B. Dirks, *Colonialism and Culture* (Ann Arbor, 1992), 20.

<sup>107</sup> Segalla 172.

<sup>108</sup> Singer 137.

<sup>109</sup> Pennell 147.

assistance, and trading with Moroccan merchants in French-organized markets.<sup>110</sup>

Georges Hardy, head of the education and research division in Morocco, posited that the French propensity to compromise with the Moroccans led to an “exceptionally rapid and solid pacification” of the area.<sup>111</sup> French colonists presented imperialism to Moroccans as a way to improve their lives, and they implemented a benevolent approach to ruling Morocco compared to Algeria, governing by association and demonstrating loyalty, understanding, and respect for native cultures. Scientific studies aimed to take this one step further by enhancing French knowledge of colonized populations, which, in theory, would help them implement policies that helped both parties.

During his time in Morocco, Lyautey considered education to be a major priority, and the protectorate’s discernable efforts to learn about Moroccans surfaced as a part of French educational policy. Georges Hardy led educational services in the inception of the French protectorate, and he used ethnography and ethnology to study the population. Hardy’s primary goal was to bridge the gap between the colonizers and the colonized by attempting to understand the mindset and psychology of Moroccans. The results were used to modify the protectorate school system and shape Moroccan education laws to meet the needs of the population. Coupled with Hardy’s efforts, Lyautey established *Ecole Supérieure de Langue Arabe et de Dialectes Berbères* (School of Arabic Language and Berber Dialect) for French administrators to learn Arabic and Berber dialects in 1912, a research committee in Meknes in 1913, and the Central Committee of Berber Studies in 1915. In January 1920, Lyautey

---

<sup>110</sup> Edmund Burke III, “A Comparative View of French Native Policy in Morocco and Syria, 1912-1925,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 9.2 (1973), 177.

<sup>111</sup> Georges Hardy, *Le Maroc* (Paris, 1930), 64-65.

expanded scientific studies to also include Arabs, and he created the Bureau of Muslim Education in February 1920.<sup>112</sup>

Lyautey consistently demonstrated his commitment to learn about Moroccan society and culture on an institutional level. Particularly noteworthy was the creation of the *Institut des Hautes Etudes Marocaines* (IHEM; Moroccan Institute of Advanced Studies) in 1920, which promoted scientific research about Morocco and centralized findings on geography, ethnology, customary law, linguistics, archaeology, and history. Colonists claimed that all of these institutions intended to apply scientific knowledge to enhance the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized.<sup>113</sup> What did French scientists discover in Morocco? Did they achieve their goal of improving colonial relations? Before examining these questions in the context of specific scientific studies, we first turn to the issue of religion and scientists' perceptions in Morocco.

### **French Perceptions of Religion in Morocco**

French scientists made a number of observations in studying the Moroccan population, as evinced in consequent sections of this thesis, but they noted one recurring theme in particular: the salience of religion in Morocco. French colonists and scientists recognized from the onset that Moroccans valued religion as a fundamental part of public and private life. The primacy of Islam was an inescapable reality in the minds of colonizers, and it was consistently one of the first things that French scientists mentioned in their work.

---

<sup>112</sup> Segalla 172.

<sup>113</sup> Hardy (1930) 7; Segalla 173.

While colonists in Algeria tried to dismiss the importance of Islam in their attempts to assimilate Algerians into France, French colonists and scientists recognized Islam as a legitimate religion and a potent force in Moroccan society. They commented that “this revealed religion is actually a complete civilization – it is interested in all the acts, even the most ordinary ones, of the individual.”<sup>114</sup> Religion continued to be a key theme in understanding Moroccan people and society, and in Georges Hardy and Louis Brunot’s 1925 study of Moroccan schoolchildren in *L’Enfant Marocain*, the most prominent trait they observed among students was a unity of religion. The study remarked that children were “profoundly Muslim before all other traits,”<sup>115</sup> which reaffirmed scientists’ beliefs about the centrality of Islam in Morocco.

Colonizers noted that religious affiliation was the first mode of identification for Moroccans, and that it also served as the basis for societal organization. Scientists noted that Moroccans classified other individuals based on religion, viewing people as Muslims, Jews, or Christians.<sup>116</sup> The vast majority of Moroccans were Muslims, but Moroccans appeared to be open-minded about other religions. Moroccan Muslims characterized Christians as ingenuous and clever, while they identified Jews as possessing a keen commercial ability. This method of classification seemed natural to Moroccans because religions diverged on a number of tangible levels; each religion had its own living quarters, and its followers wore special clothes, spoke distinct languages, and rested on particular days of the week.<sup>117</sup>

---

<sup>114</sup> Louis Brunot, *Au Seuil de la Vie Marocaine* (Casablanca, 1950), 24.

<sup>115</sup> Louis Brunot and Georges Hardy, *L’Enfant Marocain* (Paris, 1925), 7.

<sup>116</sup> Brunot (1950) 7.

<sup>117</sup> Brunot (1950) 13.

Religion clearly functioned as the main marker of identity in Morocco, and to French colonists, Islam pervaded all aspects of public life. Moroccans defined themselves as Muslims before belonging to any country,<sup>118</sup> which stood in direct contrast to the supposed preeminence of national identity in France. French colonists and scientists believed that French citizens saw themselves as “French” first, and that the category of national identity trumped all other tropes of identification. As mentioned earlier, French government officials stopped asking citizens to identify their race, ethnicity, or religion on the national census as a way to privilege French national identity as paramount, so it came as a surprise to French scientists that religion was the overt basis of classification in Morocco.

Though French national identity had a historical connection to Catholicism, colonists were quick to draw a distinction between their former Catholic ties and the Moroccan Islam they observed. While Catholicism was a part of French history, the French viewed their move away from religious affiliation as a sign of progress. French national identity was now intertwined with laïcité and modernity, which opposed the religious identification of Moroccans that scientists witnessed. For the French, rejecting Catholicism was a way to reformulate their new national and secular identity. By casting Morocco as the “anti-France” in this regard, it reinforced the laïcité/religion binary between France and Morocco and also bolstered France’s image as a nation of modernity, science, and secularism. To explore this idea, the next section looks at two specific scientific studies conducted in Morocco: Georges Hardy and Louis Brunot’s *L’Enfant Marocain* (1925) and Hardy’s *L’Âme Marocaine* (1926).

---

<sup>118</sup> Edmond Doutté, *Magie et Religion dans L’Afrique du Nord* (Algiers, 1909), 11-13.

## Analyzing Moroccans

The results of Moroccan scientific studies allowed ethnographers to map the laïcité/religion binary onto the existing binaries of France/Morocco and modernity/tradition. Regardless of the subject of study, research method, or observed feature, each study adopted the same focal point: the religion/laïcité binary. Because French scientists were fixated on the notion of laïcité, their perceptions of Morocco and Moroccans were heavily skewed towards finding a connection to religion in every characteristic they observed. Every trait was thus explained through the lens of religion, and these studies conflated science and laïcité in opposition to religion. This section analyzes two published ethnographies to illustrate this point: Georges Hardy and Louis Brunot's *L'Enfant Marocain* (The Moroccan Child), which focused on schoolchildren, and Hardy's *L'Âme Marocaine* (The Moroccan Soul), which used the soul (*l'âme*) as the point of entry in dissecting the differences between the French and Moroccan population.

Both Hardy and Brunot worked in the French protectorate in different capacities. Brunot led the Bureau of Muslim Education from 1920 to 1939, and also published detailed accounts that analyzed Moroccan Arabic dialects as a language scholar. Hardy served as the director of public instruction in French Morocco (*directeur de l'instruction publique du Maroc Français*), and was responsible for creating a pedagogy that was specifically designed for Moroccan Muslims.<sup>119</sup> Hardy and Brunot collaborated to write *L'Enfant Marocain* in 1925, an ethnography that studied Moroccan schoolchildren. Hardy and Brunot observed that there was little difference between the psychology of children and adults in Morocco, and they

---

<sup>119</sup> Segalla 171.

attempted to show that the traits identified in the study were representative of the broader adult population. The results were meant to serve as a pedagogical tool for policymakers to cater to the specific needs of Moroccan schoolchildren in an effort to enhance colonial relations, as per Lyautey's request.

Hardy published *L'Âme Marocaine* in 1926, a seminal ethnography that aimed to create an "official image of the Moroccan psyche."<sup>120</sup> The term *âme* translates best into English as "soul," but it carries a number of connotations in French. The soul can be interpreted in a philosophical or religious sense, but Hardy used the term to describe the innate nature of a person. Hardy's approach assumed that it was possible to understand Moroccans by dissecting their actions, thoughts, and beliefs to gain a fuller picture of the Moroccan soul. Utilizing the soul as the point of entry allowed Hardy to illustrate the intrinsic qualities and religious nature of *l'âme marocaine* while drawing comparisons between the "French" and "Moroccan" mindset.

Hardy ascertained that the distinctive nature of the Moroccan soul differentiated it from black, Asian, and European souls.<sup>121</sup> Hardy also noted that the Moroccan soul seemed more diverse than European souls, claiming that this quality made the Moroccan soul harder to define. The assortment of religious, cultural, and social classifications prevalent in Morocco differed drastically from those found in France, and this forced Hardy to study and interpret Morocco on its own terms. While some French writers disregarded the diversity in Morocco and exhibited all the indigenous characters in their "exotic books" as identical, Hardy chose to describe the vast cultural, social, and ethnic differences in the population. Observing a variety of

---

<sup>120</sup> Segalla 176.

<sup>121</sup> Georges Hardy, "*L'Âme Marocaine d'après la Littérature Française*" (Paris, 1926), 12.



races including Arabs from the Arab invasion, indigenous Berbers, Moors expelled from Spain, and Jews, among others, “imperfectly melted” (*si imparfaitement fondus*) into the Maghreb, Hardy wondered how to present a singular Moroccan soul.<sup>122</sup> While he grappled with this question, Hardy never doubted that “a collective Moroccan psychology existed and was knowable.”<sup>123</sup> This ardent belief in a “collective soul” led Hardy to draw conclusions based on his own insights and observations rather than through what other European scholars called an objective analysis. Both Hardy and Brunot assumed that the Moroccan psyche could be understood by using their intuition, and other scientists regularly relied on their own instincts to detect typical traits found among Arabs and Berbers, rather than employing an evidence-based approach.<sup>124</sup> It is unclear why scientists depended so heavily on their own perceptions, but many ethnographers and ethnologists shared Hardy and Brunot’s sentiment that the Moroccan soul was intuitively knowable. This is especially puzzling, given the fact that Brunot utilized empirical methods to understand and analyze Arabic dialects in his previous research. Brunot felt that a different mode of understanding had to be employed to fully grasp the Moroccan psyche:

the language that we use ... is extremely ill-suited to express a foreign mentality, and our reasoning is inapt to explain ways of judging and beliefs which are not our own. Only a sympathetic sensitivity toward the indigenes can resonate in harmony with the Moroccan soul and feel what it is; in effect, *you sense the soul of a people more than you understand it*; cold analysis, however subtle, leads to monstrous absurdities or to colossal psychological errors (italics added).<sup>125</sup>

---

<sup>122</sup> Hardy (1926) 18.

<sup>123</sup> Segalla 177.

<sup>124</sup> Segalla 176.

<sup>125</sup> Segalla 176.

As the primary sources analyzed below indicate, ethnographic and ethnologic work in Morocco used these intuitive observations as a pivotal part of the scientific approach, and scientists relied on their instincts to draw conclusions about the nature of Moroccan people, culture, and religion.

### Historical Context

Before fully delving into the Moroccan soul, Hardy presented a brief overview of Moroccan history in *L'Âme Marocaine*. Providing historical information enabled readers to situate Moroccan society and its population within a broader context, and this established a framework that helped scientists and readers to better understand and explain present-day Morocco.

Early French scientists and colonizers did not find a heterogeneous population that spoke different languages and were separated by ethnic characteristics, material habits, and moral preferences in Morocco, unlike other regions in Africa. Primitive Moroccans (*Marocains primitifs*) led sedentary, semi-nomadic, or nomadic lives, but in all cases, they could be characterized by the crude and fierce conquest of two goals: material gain and independence. Hardy conjectured that this dual tendency continued for centuries as the foundation of the “temperament of the race.” Despite the multitude of struggles that Moroccans faced, Hardy posited that few populations in the world in similar predicaments remained as committed to their customs and traditional institutions as the Moroccans.<sup>126</sup>

According to Hardy, the Arab invasions in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries resulted in the occupation of Morocco, but indigenous Muslims turned against Arabs and

---

<sup>126</sup> Hardy (1926) 15.

accused them of having impure faith and morals. Muslims revolted to achieve independence, and Hardy posited that this event left a new mark – the dominance of Islam – that commanded Moroccan history from that point forward. While Moroccans fervently rejected Arab domination, they closely guarded Islam, the religion that Arabs brought to Morocco. Hardy wrote that not all Moroccans were Muslim, but he recognized that new converts blended their faith with elements foreign to so-called “pure Islamic tenets.” Islam enhanced the Moroccan passion for independence, and also promoted territorial expansion. Moroccans began to embark on daring territorial conquests, and to succeed in their battles, Moroccans conceded a part of their independence and individualistic predilections to achieve a sense of unity which was rooted in Islam.<sup>127</sup>

Though Islam was a shared feature among Moroccans, Moroccan unity was still fragile despite these appearances of solidarity. Such “unifications” were temporary and often ended in a violent return to Moroccan individualism. While a semblance of unity invariably surfaced in a timely fashion to save Morocco from major threats to its existence, Hardy noted that the precarious balance between collectivism and individualism consistently jeopardized Morocco. From this historical overview, Hardy established the close, yet somewhat tenuous, ties that Moroccans had with religion in shaping their country and the population, and he later expanded on the centrality of religion in Morocco.

---

<sup>127</sup> Hardy (1926) 16-17.

### Basic Framework

After Hardy outlined the historical context in *L'Âme Marocaine*, he identified distinct features present in the Moroccan soul. Similarly, *L'Enfant Marocain* primarily described various characteristics found among Moroccan schoolchildren. Both studies juxtaposed the Moroccan and French population, and used various traits to compare the two groups. The identified characteristics can be divided into two categories. Some of the traits were visible and obviously discernable, such as the supposed Moroccan work ethic, lack of moderation, and vanity. Other characteristics were more nuanced and intangible, such as Moroccan intellect and mental capacity.

One of the key elements found in French colonial ethnographic work was the presence of contradictions. Many of the observations conflicted with earlier statements made in these studies, yet scientists made no effort to explain the discrepancy between seemingly opposing traits. What this indicated was that French scientists' attempts to paint a uniform picture of Moroccans proved to be ineffective, given the number of extreme and frequent contradictions present in the ethnographies.

Scientific studies remarked on a number of characteristics found in indigenous Moroccans, and these traits were frequently linked to Moroccan Islam. Scientific studies took a four-step approach to establish the importance of religion in Morocco, with Moroccan peculiarities and characteristics explained through the prominence of religion in the state.

First, the author(s) identified a specific trait. For instance, Hardy identified serenity as a part of the Moroccan soul in *L'Âme Marocaine*, and he claimed that Moroccans “possessed [this] treasure which had become quite inaccessible to

European souls.” After naming the trait, the author(s) elaborated on the meaning of the trait. In this case, serenity meant that Moroccans loved life for what it was and appreciated the immediate reality, combining “bodily satisfaction with minimum intellectual needs.”<sup>128</sup> The identified trait was then contrasted with the French equivalent, if it existed. Hardy named serenity as a trait that was supposedly “inaccessible” to Europeans, and implied that serenity was a lofty ideal that Europeans could not meet because they were unable to suspend their intellectualism in favor of pure physical pleasures like the Moroccans. In this move, the value that Hardy placed on serenity as a positive trait changed into a negative by portraying serenity and intellectualism as opposites. Finally, the original trait was reinterpreted using the French *laïcité*/Moroccan religion framework. This underscored the fundamental divergence between the French and Moroccans; in essence, religion lay at the root of the Moroccan psyche. In this case, Moroccans were serene because they were convinced that it was best to rely on Allah to care for their souls, and it was their religious conviction that ultimately provided Moroccans with the sense of serenity that Europeans lacked.<sup>129</sup>

The comparisons between the Moroccans and the French usually cast Moroccans in a negative light, though not always in an explicitly disparaging manner. Though Hardy originally portrayed serenity as a coveted trait, his explications proved that serenity heavily relied on religion, which devalued the characteristic. Moreover, serenity came at the cost of intellectualism and *laïcité*. The depiction of Moroccans in

---

<sup>128</sup> Hardy (1926) 39.

<sup>129</sup> Hardy (1926) 39.

stark contrast to the French in terms of this religion/laïcité binary is further elucidated by delving further into tangible and intangible Moroccan characteristics.

### Explanation of Tangible Traits

As mentioned earlier, the traits that Brunot, Hardy, and other scientists identified can be divided into two categories: visible traits and intangible traits. French scientists often linked traits together to form a cohesive picture of the Moroccan psyche but in the process, conflicting, contradictory depictions of Moroccans emerged. However, scientists disregarded such incongruities and glossed over them in order to present a singular “Moroccan soul.”

To begin with, *L'Enfant Marocain* remarked on the general simplicity of Morocco. For instance, the climate remained constant with no extremes, the vegetation was not varied, and the physical landscape left a monotonous impression. This contrasted with the multi-faceted and complex image of Europe.<sup>130</sup> The portrayal of Moroccan simplicity as a negative quality is particularly interesting because even today, France strives for assimilation and homogeneity in its population and values. However, in this ethnography, uniformity was considered a sign of inferior development. The underlying assumption in these claims was that French colonization was necessary to diversify Morocco into a modern state.

Brunot and Hardy conjectured that comparable to the simplicity of the landscape, the Moroccan population was equally basic and plain. Moroccans' favorite hobbies were peaceful and monotonous, such as playing cards, listening to music, drinking tea, and napping under trees. Even Moroccan parties carried a certain

---

<sup>130</sup> Brunot and Hardy 8.

character of seriousness, never degenerating into an orgy. Their serious disposition did not necessarily translate into sadness, and Hardy asserted that Moroccans hardly ever seemed to be in despair. Moroccans were also portrayed as quite sensual, aware of “the pleasures of a good bath, the comfort of cushions and sofas, the sight of an orange orchard, and flavored tea.”<sup>131</sup> While Moroccans liked romance, their ability to love rarely exceeded physical pleasures.<sup>132</sup> Moroccan sensuality was eventually linked back to the relaxed, simple nature of the population, and Hardy inferred a positive correlation between simplicity and sensuality.

In addition to claims about Moroccan simplicity, Hardy ascertained that the linchpin of the Moroccan soul was a propensity for individualism. He dated the trait back to the Arab invaders who settled in Morocco, and claimed that the saying “two Moroccans can agree, but never three” aptly encapsulated his beliefs. He wrote that though words such as “solidarity” and “cooperation” could be translated into Arabic, the concepts that the words conveyed were “completely inaccessible” to the Moroccan mind. Moroccan society was composed of individual molecules that lacked cohesion, comparable to sand.<sup>133</sup>

French scientists linked this ineradicable individualism to the strict social and religious norms in Moroccan society. Contradicting Hardy’s claim, ethnographer Edmond Doutté noted that the Moroccan individual was so undifferentiated from the community that he was unable to think or act differently from his fellow peers.<sup>134</sup> Doutté attributed this trait to religion, and indicated how Islam was a force that

---

<sup>131</sup> Hardy (1926) 22.

<sup>132</sup> Hardy (1926) 22, 38-39.

<sup>133</sup> Hardy (1926) 25.

<sup>134</sup> Doutté 6-7.

induced religious and cultural uniformity. Doutté's observations implicated that the idea of diversity was associated with more advanced, secular societies, thereby consigning Moroccans to a basic, primitive group because of their religion.

Individualism also helped to explain excessive Moroccan tendencies. The abundance of individuality caused Moroccans to be unable to obey collective rules, yet Hardy noted that the excess of individualistic tendencies formed a sheep-like population that was easily swayed one way or another. Ironically, Moroccan individualism provoked them to search for the strong authority of a chief, religion, or social group (*facilité de soumission*).<sup>135</sup> Hardy and other scientists portrayed Moroccans as too independent, but they also asserted that Moroccans depended on a leader for guidance. Such claims of Moroccan individualism clashed with Hardy and Brunot's earlier observation of the uniformity and simplicity found in Moroccan society.

Other contradictions surfaced within various scientific studies of Morocco, and these inconsistencies persisted for two main reasons. First, because the studies were not rooted in empirical, quantifiable science and relied heavily on individual instincts, a uniform interpretation of the Moroccan psyche was less likely to emerge. More importantly, while scientific studies aimed to improve relations with Moroccans, they were ultimately designed to strengthen French rule and justify the colonial presence. In the example of Moroccan individuality, scientists highlighted the necessity of leaders in Morocco to guide the population and later used this interpretation to validate their rule, contending that *la mission civilisatrice* was for Morocco's benefit. French colonists thus homogenized and manipulated perceived

---

<sup>135</sup> Hardy (1930) 67; Hardy (1926) 26.



Moroccan characteristics to best fit their needs throughout their colonial experience. If a certain Moroccan trait could be shaped to portray Moroccans in a negative light and rationalize the need for French colonial action, it would be done.

While scientific studies, including Hardy's work, did not make explicit proclamations about the superiority of laïcité or French values, these works highlighted the basic difference between the French and Moroccans when it came to the issue of religion. The written material, which intended to shed light on Moroccans and their culture, often ceded, albeit indirectly, a great deal of credence to secularism and the benefits of the absence of religion in the public sphere. This served to re-emphasize the laïcité/religion binary as the overarching difference and the primary way that French scientists, colonists, and citizens came to understand and conceptualize Morocco.

### Intangible Traits

The distinction between laïcité and religion mapped onto the French/Moroccan binary analyzing intangible characteristics. In *L'Enfant Marocain*, Brunot and Hardy recognized a wide range of discernable and subtle traits found in Moroccan students, and these characteristics were also linked back to religion. For example, the ethnography noted that Moroccan children had an impeccable memory, especially auditory memory, and this characteristic was tied to the heritage of memorization enforced by learning the Qur'an. Their memory seemed to be verbal and mechanic, while their visual memory was altogether "defective."<sup>136</sup>

---

<sup>136</sup> Brunot and Hardy 8.

*L'Âme Marocaine* also identified memory as a dominant feature of Moroccan intelligence, but drew a different conclusion than *L'Enfant Marocain*. Disagreeing with the claim that the strength of Moroccan memory stemmed from studying the Qur'an, Hardy noted that the proportion of natives that studied the holy book was minimal, meaning that strength of Moroccan memory could not be explained by nor attributed to the holy book. Rather, he posited that if the Moroccans learned the Qur'an by heart, it meant that they naturally had a good memory, reversing the causal relationship. He provided other examples that illustrated the remarkable nature of Moroccan memory, such as Moroccan jurists and ulema who could recite facts impromptu, and the story of a Moroccan who crossed a region of the country and flawlessly remembered the topography of the area.<sup>137</sup> Children could recite fables or stories with proper intonation without a single error, though they did not understand a word. Though this diminished the power of Moroccan reasoning, it did not necessarily imply that Moroccans were incapable of abstract thought or speculation. Hardy claimed that Moroccans were just as capable as the French, but such tasks simply did not interest them.<sup>138</sup> Both ethnographies have Hardy as an author, yet the reasons as to why he changed his views regarding Moroccan memory remain ambiguous. One potential explanation is that he had more time to observe Moroccans following the publication of *L'Enfant Marocain*, which allowed him to offer a different explication behind Moroccan intelligence.

Regardless of their true intellectual capacity, Moroccans' intelligence came under attack multiple times in *L'Enfant Marocain*. The study critiqued the fact that

---

<sup>137</sup> Hardy (1926) 30.

<sup>138</sup> Hardy (1926) 32.

Moroccans could never spontaneously express their thoughts in French and instead acquired their ideas in Arabic or Berber before translating them into French.<sup>139</sup> It is unclear why this was interpreted as such a negative trait, but it potentially showed a lack of linguistic ability to clearly articulate thoughts in French. The language observation could have been construed in a positive way, since it demonstrated that young Moroccans were bilingual and had the mental capacity to translate thoughts from one language to another. Instead, French scientists concluded that talking too literally indicated the inferiority of their intelligence.

The Moroccan child supposedly possessed a number of additional intellectual flaws: slowness in selection and synthesis of activities, faults in logic, no sense of critique, and confusion of general and specific ideas as a few examples. Moroccan children seemed to be devoid of curiosity, happy to be onlookers but generally indifferent. While Moroccan intelligence was receptive, taking in information from the outside and retaining it, it could not combine or create knowledge. Moroccans lacked critical thinking skills, and unlike Europeans, they remained content with classifying a new object or idea into memory instead of asking questions. Their intelligence was static, and considered to be opposite of the French.<sup>140</sup> Hardy and Brunot provided an anecdote about an electric lamp in a Moroccan classroom, and they observed that the children seemed uninterested in what the lamp was or what it did. They further cited that French students would have expressed more interest and curiosity if they had been in a classroom with an unknown object.<sup>141</sup>

---

<sup>139</sup> Brunot and Hardy 10.

<sup>140</sup> Hardy (1926) 34.

<sup>141</sup> Brunot and Hardy 8-9.

Ethnographies characterized Moroccans as lacking a critical sense, not searching for explanations or doubting things. If something inexplicable happened, they interpreted it as an omen or punishment sent by God. Similarly, if things happened in an unusual manner, it was because God willed it that way. Moroccans effortlessly explained everything through the lens of religion with a sense of constant religious determinism.<sup>142</sup> With a frozen mind (*arrêt de l'esprit*), Moroccans could not understand the relationship between various phenomena and their causes the way the French could. Instead of searching for answers, Moroccans relied on supernatural explications to understand every event. Scientists attributed the absence of critical analysis skills to Moroccan religious beliefs, and Hardy explained that these Moroccan flaws were a result of Islam. Since the French were not hindered by the prevalence of religion in their society, they viewed themselves as more capable and suited to rule in Morocco.

French scientists remarked that religion absorbed the individual and all personal choices, whether related to clothing, food, lodging, or customs. With everything pre-determined, there was no room for imagination or creativity. In fact, *L'Enfant Marocain* suggested that religion considered innovation to be a heresy, and that Moroccans applied the role of reason so rigorously to a code that the Moroccan spirit was deprived of liberty altogether.<sup>143</sup> The study highlighted the strict and rigid nature of religion on numerous occasions, depicting religion as a repressive, negative force. However, this disregarded how Moroccans themselves actually viewed religion and their religious practices, illustrating how scientific studies exposed French

---

<sup>142</sup> Hardy (1926) 33.

<sup>143</sup> Brunot and Hardy 8-9.

preconceived notions about religion rather than offering an objective analysis of Moroccan opinions.

### Justification of Colonization

In addition to a string of intellectual shortcomings, scientific studies also discussed visible and concrete Moroccan flaws that legitimized and bolstered the need for French colonialism. Moroccans were portrayed as fundamentally inconsistent, which explained the failings of the country such as its perpetual crumbling and general unsustainability. For example, an author who wanted to start a novel began writing enthusiastically but then became tired, shortening subsequent chapters and hastily finishing at the end. Similarly, students in school wanted to learn and understand everything in the beginning but slowly lost interest, eventually disappearing from class. In addition to their inconsistency and lack of resolve, Moroccans had a tendency to exaggerate, which displayed how a lack of moderation manifested itself in another personality trait. Additionally, once a feeling appeared in the native's soul (*l'âme indigène*), it invaded the whole self and destroyed any other sentiments.<sup>144</sup> Hardy discerned that the inconsistencies and proclivity for extremes were the demise of Morocco. Though *L'Âme Marocaine* did not unequivocally note that Moroccans needed the French, Moroccan instability was used to justify the French presence and imposition of French rules.

French ethnographers maintained that religion, fear of scandals, police regulations, and other moral pressures that society exerted on Moroccans impeded natives from the downhill slope of vice. Many Moroccan behaviors, such as their

---

<sup>144</sup> Hardy (1926) 41-43.

charitable nature, could be explained by the need to maintain social propriety.<sup>145</sup> If Moroccans indulged in their passions without fear or public disapproval, Hardy claimed that they would rapidly fall into a “dangerous moral decay.”<sup>146</sup> In comparison, Hardy wrote that the French found it easiest to have no passions that could not be admitted in public, and that the French strictly conformed to the moral code that was universally adopted by its citizens. This was clearly not the case for Moroccans, whose “will is weak and instincts are strong.”<sup>147</sup> In other words, Moroccans would indulge if they could, but current religious and social norms prevented them from doing so. This constructed a powerful argument about the necessity of French influence; the French were able to keep their feelings under control and needed to bring their sense of balance, level-headedness, and control to Morocco. The notion of “strict conformity” was part of the reason why *laïcité* was necessary, by creating a homogenous society in which religion, nor any other factor, would serve as the basis of differentiation in the population. Promoting and propagating conformity and homogeneity enabled the French to elevate their national identity as the most important mode of identification, a sentiment that was altogether lacking in Moroccan society in their opinion.

All the traits that were identified, ranging from sensuality to individualism, ultimately converged to be explained through the lens of religion. Moroccan religious instinct was judged to be powerful and predetermined, and for Moroccan Muslims, every act was an act of faith.<sup>148</sup> French scientific studies in Morocco possessed a self-

---

<sup>145</sup> Hardy (1926) 23-28.

<sup>146</sup> Hardy (1926) 27.

<sup>147</sup> Hardy (1926) 27.

<sup>148</sup> Hardy (1926) 53-54.

perpetuating nature that bolstered French power, while concurrently corroborating Moroccan shortcomings. Through ethnology and ethnography, French colonists mapped the laïcité/religion binary onto the dichotomous colonial framework, and confirmed that France was a scientific, secular, modern state. On the written level, French representation of Moroccan society, particularly its emphasis of religion, reflected the French preference for secularism while denigrating the value that Moroccans placed on Islam. Islam pervaded Morocco as the state's official religion, though various regions of Morocco were Islamized to different degrees.<sup>149</sup> French colonists used the diverging levels of religiosity among Moroccans to draw distinctions between the Arabs and Berbers, and downplayed Berber religiosity for their personal gain.

---

<sup>149</sup> Hardy (1926) 54.

## Chapter 4: Race and Religion: Analyzing Arabs and Berbers in Morocco

---

Moroccans, ethnically divided between Arabs and Berbers, shared one important aspect of their identity: a collective religious identity as Muslims. Though the vast majority of Moroccans were Muslim, the internal divisions within Moroccan society prevented the rise of a powerful religious force to oppose French rule until the 1950s. Aside from different tribal alliances dating back to the pre-colonial era, the supposed racial separation between Arabs and Berbers in Morocco provided French colonists with the best opening to exploit alleged dissimilarities for their own strategic gain.<sup>150</sup> French scientists utilized their findings to expand the Arab/Berber dichotomy within Morocco, using religion as the marker of differentiation between the two populations.

This chapter begins by tracing the origin of Arab/Berber differentiation to the French colonization of Algeria, in which colonists asserted their preferential treatment toward Berbers in what is now called the “Kabyle Myth.” With the historical precedent of the Algerian Kabyle Myth in mind, the chapter then investigates scientific studies of the Berber population in Morocco. The studies fulfilled two purposes: to differentiate between Arabs and Berbers using the religion/laïcité binary, and to highlight similarities between the Berbers and the French. The French penchant for Berbers, coupled with the issues arising in the French protectorate of Morocco, culminated in the passage of the *Berbère Dahir* (Berber Decree) in 1930, which removed Berbers from Moroccan law and legally placed them under French jurisdiction. This provided an opportunity for French

---

<sup>150</sup> Walter B. Cline, “Nationalism in Morocco,” *Middle East Journal* 1.1 (1947), 18.



colonists to turn Berbers into their allies in Morocco, and it simultaneously alienated Arabs by designating them as the religious antithesis of French laïcité. The characterization and subsequent treatment of the Berber population demonstrated how French secularism was strategically used to separate Berbers from Arabs and to align Berbers with French values.

### **The Algerian Kabyle Myth**

The rise of physical anthropology in the 19<sup>th</sup> century led to the growth of the academic study of documenting physiological differences and studying “inferior” populations. In the early 1800s, many French bourgeois regarded French peasants as “essentially a different race,”<sup>151</sup> and this mindset facilitated the emergence of race as a new way to understand the behavior and intellectual aptitude of various groups. The category of race became a marker to determine the potential for “civilization,” especially in French colonies.<sup>152</sup>

Using a methodology rooted in recognizing racial differences, French scholars and military personnel first articulated the distinct identity of Berbers during the French colonization of Algeria. The French-constructed identity of Berbers, a population indigenous to North Africa, reflected a growing racialized consciousness in 19<sup>th</sup> century European discourse. The emphasis on race also led to a heightened sense of perceiving racial differences that existed within colonies, and the category of race became a useful colonial tool to impose binaries on the colonized population.

---

<sup>151</sup> Daniel J. Sherman, “‘Peoples Ethnographic’: Objects, Museums, and the Colonial Inheritance of French Ethnography,” *French Historical Studies* 27.3 (2004), 685.

<sup>152</sup> Dana S. Hale, *Races on Display: French Representations of Colonized Peoples 1886-1940* (Bloomington, 2008), 12-13.

Within the dichotomous colonial framework, French officials created a “privileged image of the Berbers as culturally and genetically proximate”<sup>153</sup> to Europeans, which allowed French colonists to later manipulate supposed differences between Arabs and Berbers for their own gain.

In Algeria, *pieds-noirs*<sup>154</sup> saw many similarities between themselves and Kabyles, a sub-group of the larger Berber population that resided in northern Algeria.<sup>155</sup> The term “Kabyle” was used by locals to refer to the Algerian mountain-dwelling population, but French colonists reappropriated the word “Kabyle” to signify a Berber-speaker who “‘escaped’ the imprint of Arabic culture and the full impact of Islam.”<sup>156</sup> Colonists showed a penchant for Berbers by identifying and analyzing various Kabyle characteristics in a favorable light, which laid the groundwork for the Kabyle Myth. The phrase “Kabyle Myth” was not used by the *pieds-noirs* themselves, but coined by historian Charles-Robert Ageron, who first studied French attitudes toward Algerian Kabyles and Arabs in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>157</sup> According to historian Patricia Lorcin, the myth articulated that

Kabyles were superior to Arabs ... The French used sociological differences and religious disparities between the two groups to create an image of the Kabyle which was good and one of the Arab which was bad and, from this, extrapolate[d] that the former was more suited to assimilation.<sup>158</sup>

---

<sup>153</sup> Paul A. Silverstein, *Algeria in France: Transpolitics, Race, and Nation* (Bloomington, 2004), 39.

<sup>154</sup> Term used to describe French citizens in French Algeria.

<sup>155</sup> According to Lorcin’s *Imperial Identities*, there were a number of different Berber populations living in Algeria, including the Chaouia, Kabyles, Mozabites, and the Tuareg. Kabyles constituted the largest group of Berbers, and the terms “Kabyle” and “Berber” were often used interchangeably in colonial Algeria (5).

<sup>156</sup> Patricia M.E. Lorcin, *Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, Prejudice and Race in Colonial Algeria* (London, 1995), 5.

<sup>157</sup> Lorcin 11.

<sup>158</sup> Lorcin 2.

Though Algeria was primarily composed of Arabs and Berbers, other racial groups such as Turks, Andalusians, blacks, and Jews also resided in Algeria. However, French colonists chose to ignore such racial diversity and instead concentrated on a racial dichotomy that pitted Arabs against Berbers. Colonists also mapped a geographic division onto the two groups by classifying Arabs as nomadic plains-dwellers and Berbers as sedentary mountain-dwellers.<sup>159</sup> Kabyles were described as leading sedentary lives in the mountains where families owned individual tracts of land, which closely resembled the European system of private land ownership. French colonists contrasted the behavior of Kabyles with Algerian Arabs, who led nomadic lifestyles. The French saw nomadism as an indication of instability and disorganization, and consequently portrayed Arabs as the polar opposite of Kabyles, and later, the French by extension.<sup>160</sup>

*Pieds-noirs* found additional reasons to disapprove of Algerian Arabs, which consequently improved the standing of Kabyles. For instance, Arabs were deemed to be immoral due to their practice of polygamy and unproductive because of their failure to farm. French colonists developed a series of dichotomies within the Algerian population, with divisions including sedentary versus nomadic, and Berbers versus Arabs. Later, this binary extended to the realm of religion, mapping laïcité versus religion. The harshest criticisms Algerian Arabs faced were related to their religious beliefs; French colonists characterized them as irrational based on their obdurate belief in Islam, and claimed that Arabs had a hostile temperament, which

---

<sup>159</sup> Lorcin 2.

<sup>160</sup> Silverstein 48-49.

they attributed to religious fanaticism.<sup>161</sup> The issue of religion provided an opportunity for French colonists to convey a positive image of Kabyles and entrench the separation between Kabyles and Arabs. Even though many Berbers were Muslims, the French viewed Berber religiosity as moderate, not fanatical. Kabyles were perceived to be less religious and less faithful, shown through their mere acceptance (rather than “fanatic embrace”) of the Qur’an. For instance, Kabyles did not partake in daily prayers, nor did they fast during Ramadan.<sup>162</sup> The conclusions that colonists drew about Kabyle religiosity were largely based on visible manifestations of religion, an issue which was intimately linked to France’s history of secularism and its opposition of religion in the public sphere. French colonists saw daily prayers and fasting during Ramadan as encroachments on the idea of French secularism, and the fact that Kabyles did not readily partake in such practices in the same way as Arabs made them more acceptable and compatible with the French paradigm.

From their domestic and colonial experience in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, French colonists already held strong views against religion, and particularly opposed Islam. The creation of the Kabyle Myth thus strengthened the religion/laïcité binary and emphasized the secular nature of France compared to the religiosity of Algerian Arabs. Negative stereotypes and disparaging comments about Muslims proliferated in Algeria to further bolster these viewpoints. André Servier, a French historian who lived in Algeria during the colonial era, observed that “the Muslim is ... a paralytic. His brain, subjugated ... to the stark discipline of Islam, is closed to everything not

---

<sup>161</sup> Benjamin 22; Silverstein 40.

<sup>162</sup> Silverstein 47-53.

predicted, pronounced, specified by religious law.”<sup>163</sup> Though French colonists highlighted additional differences between Arabs and Berbers in Algeria, Islam remained the primary trope used to explain fundamental variations between the two populations. Colonists relied on religion not only because it was an integral part of life for Maghreb residents, but because French secularists saw religion as anathema to the French paradigm. The importance that North Africans and the French purportedly placed on religion, though in opposite ways, made it a key category and trope to use in understanding colonial populations.

The Algerian Kabyle Myth articulated a racial separation between Arabs and Berbers, and allowed French colonists to portray Kabyles as the French of North Africa.<sup>164</sup> Berbers were the indigenous Algerians who resisted conquest by Arabs and lived in villages and farms, unlike Arab nomads who were disorganized and immoral. French scientists and colonists in Morocco espoused similar opinions, and propagated these alleged differences between Arabs and Berbers to fortify their rule.

### **Berbers in Morocco**

Through previous ethnographic and ethnologic work, French scientists were fully convinced of the power of Islam in Morocco. Realizing the potential threat that religious unity had against the French empire, French colonists strategically exploited differences between Arabs and Berbers, using ethnology as a tool. Ethnologies of Moroccan Berbers employed similar methods as earlier scientific studies of Arabs; scientists observed various personality traits, which were then explained through a

---

<sup>163</sup> Silverstein 51.

<sup>164</sup> Roger Benjamin, *Orientalist Aesthetics: Art, Colonialism, and French North Africa, 1880-1930* (Berkeley, 2003), 22.

religion-focused lens. The biggest difference in Berber studies was that scientists made a concerted effort to portray Berbers as compatible with French laïcité.

French depictions of Berbers drastically differed from previous portrayals of the Arab-centered Moroccan population. Abès's *Monograph of a Berber Tribe* (*Monographie d'une Tribu Berbère*), published in 1917, studied the social life of a Berber population. Abès noted that Moroccan Berbers resided in the mountains from the Rif to the Anti-Atlas and mostly lived outside cities in rural areas. Many ethnologies noted that Berbers loved their land (*amour du pays*) and that Moroccan Berbers preferred the rural lifestyle, living as skilled farmers, shepherds, and fishers.<sup>165</sup>

Seen first as “noble savages,” Berbers were originally described as too independent to form a state. However, French scientists reconfigured many Berber traits to turn them into positive characteristics in later studies. For instance, French scientists explained that Berber independence stemmed from a core sense of bravery and diligence, and they were depicted as an ambitious race that fervently resisted foreign rule. Berbers were fiercely proud of their origins, morals, and way of life,<sup>166</sup> which helped to explain and justify their overt independence.

The establishment of an Arab/Berber dichotomy drew a clear distinction between several opposing traits, such as a preference for collective action versus individual decisions, laziness versus pragmatism, and dishonesty versus trustworthiness.<sup>167</sup> The most significant way that scientists differentiated between Moroccan Arabs and Berbers was regarding their relationship to religion. Abès noted

---

<sup>165</sup> P. Ange Koller, *Essai sur L'Esprit du Berbère Marocain* (Fribourg, 1946), 36.

<sup>166</sup> Louis Brunot, *Au Seuil de la Vie Marocaine* (Casablanca, 1950), 9.

<sup>167</sup> Segalla 184-186.

in his monograph that Berbers were generally incapable of feeling hatred and violence, two traits which “animated true Muslims” and sometimes drove them to “eliminate apostates in the name of Allah.”<sup>168</sup> By drawing a distinction between “true Muslims” and Berbers, Abès removed Berbers from the same category as Arabs and conveyed that Berbers were not religious fanatics. Elaborating on this claim, Abès remarked that the various Berber groups he studied (including Zayan, Aith Mgild, Igrouan, and Aith Nahir) showed a weak attachment to Islam. It was rare to see Berbers praying, and though Berbers still believed in Islamic tenets, they did so without fervor, and engaged in religious practices without enthusiasm or willingness. Essentially, Berbers were “superficially Islamic”<sup>169</sup> and were not “paralyzed” by Islamic fatalism.<sup>170</sup> While Arabs were known to be religious fanatics, Berber fanaticism was inherently not religious; Berber fanaticism consisted of a devotion to liberty, steadfast resolve to defend their mountains, and fierce resistance against foreigners who meddled in their social life. Berber fanaticism thus translated into a non-religious, *laic*, and noble sentiment which emphasized their love of independence.<sup>171</sup>

French ethnologists also commented on visible manifestations of religion that distinguished Arabs from Berbers. Berber mosques usually consisted of an isolated, modest tent located in the center of the village or tribal area, unlike Arab mosques that were adorned with marvelous carpets and minarets. Furthermore, Qur’anic schools seemed to be rather rare among Berbers, and natives were indifferent to the

---

<sup>168</sup> M. Abès, “Monographie d’une Tribu Berbère,” *Les Archives Berbères* (1917), 364.

<sup>169</sup> Spencer D. Segalla, “Georges Hardy and Educational Ethnology in French Morocco, 1920-26,” *French Colonial History* 4 (2003), 183.

<sup>170</sup> Abès 359; Koller 384.

<sup>171</sup> Koller 405.

study of written Arabic and knowledge of the Qur'an. Even Berber fathers who were Muslims preferred that their children guard the herd rather than attend school.<sup>172</sup> Though elite Muslims went to the University of Quraouine (Fez) and other madrasas,<sup>173</sup> religious education was not a high priority for Berbers. The lack of Berber commitment to religious institutions and religious education translated into a lack of religiosity to the French observers. These remarks allowed French colonists to extricate Berbers from the general Moroccan population, and they argued that Berber indifference to religion provided evidence that Berbers believed in the significance of laïcité, at least more than Arabs. Though Islam had been present in Morocco for the last twelve centuries, it could not completely tame the Berber spirit,<sup>174</sup> a claim that elevated Berbers above Arabs in the French colonial hierarchy and aligned them with the values of 20<sup>th</sup> century France.

Like French studies of Moroccan Arabs, Berber ethnologies were imbued with contradictions. Despite the fact that Berbers seemed to be non-religious, certain studies highlighted the sacred rites of Berber as counter-examples to the purported Berber "laïcité." One ethnologist observed that Berbers ate three chickens when a son was born, then killed a sheep on the seventh day as part of a religious rite. The study further posited that Berber Muslims believed in the infallibility of the Qur'an, and that such an absolute dogma gave Berbers their conviction that everyone else was wrong.<sup>175</sup> This account offered an important counter-example to the proclaimed non-religiosity of Berbers that French colonists suggested. French scientists made broad

---

<sup>172</sup> Abès 360-61.

<sup>173</sup> Koller 275.

<sup>174</sup> Koller 405

<sup>175</sup> Koller 275.



claims that Moroccan Arabs were “religious fanatics,” while Berbers were indifferent about their religion, thereby aligning Berbers with French *laïcité*. This example demonstrates how scientists relied on the religion/*laïcité* binary to draw a clear distinction between Arabs and Berbers, even if it meant overlooking religious practices within Berber communities.

Moreover, the same negative traits that scientists identified in Arabs were interpreted favorably among Berbers. French scientists attributed the instability of Berber society to individualism,<sup>176</sup> a key trait also identified in Moroccan Arabs. When ethnographers used individuality to describe Arabs, it was largely in a pejorative sense. Arab individuality was seen as a critical flaw, yet French scientists appreciated and even admired Berber individualism, calling them warriors (*guerriers*) by nature and necessity.<sup>177</sup> The fact that one trait could indicate such opposite qualities called into question the legitimacy of the results, yet these paradoxical interpretations were not questioned.

The ethnologies of Berbers stood in direct contrast to those of Arabs in other ways. Berbers failed to be subjugated and managed to maintain their positive attributes, whereas Moroccan Arabs easily succumbed to foreign pressures and could not properly govern themselves without assistance. Most importantly, the Arab/Berber binary portrayed Arabs as excessively religious, and Berbers as more secular. With these characterizations, French scientists portrayed Berbers as better aligned with French values and morals by deemphasizing their religiosity. French colonists did not see Berbers as their equals by any means, and they described the

---

<sup>176</sup> Koller 25.

<sup>177</sup> Brunot 9.

Berber culture, spirit, and soul as “primitive.”<sup>178</sup> Nonetheless, Berbers were still considered to be closer to French civilization than Moroccan Arabs. This belief justified bringing Berbers into French legal jurisdiction through the Berber Decree, and consequently entrenched the racial separation between Arabs and Berbers in Morocco.

### **The Berber Decree**

Colonial rule often divided its policies between assimilation and segregation in its treatment of natives.<sup>179</sup> The practice of assimilation attempted to absorb indigenous populations into colonizers’ institutions and culture, whereas segregation mandated a distinct division between the colonizers and the colonized. With positive characteristics attributed to Moroccan Berbers in scientific studies, French colonists attempted to dispel the notion of a uniform Moroccan identity and used assimilation and segregation strategies when they placed Berbers under French rule with the passage of the Berber Decree (*Berbère Dahir*) in 1930.<sup>180</sup>

Prior to the passage of the decree, the French protectorate of Morocco faced a number of problems that affected the colonizers’ relationship with native Moroccans by hurting their standard of living. A poor harvest in 1929, protests about access to water, and a lack of employment opportunities created a tense atmosphere in the protectorate.<sup>181</sup> Fearing a potential Moroccan uprising, French authorities passed the Berber Decree, which singled out Moroccan Berbers and placed them under French

---

<sup>178</sup> Koller 379.

<sup>179</sup> Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture* (Cambridge, 1994), 2.

<sup>180</sup> Segalla 183.

<sup>181</sup> C.R. Pennell, *Morocco: From Empire to Independence* (Oxford, 2003), 151.

civil law instead of Sharia, the Islamic law. As the results of various ethnologies indicated, Berbers were considered to be more similar to the French, from their practice of private land ownership to their supposed secular beliefs. The policy was designed to bridge the gap between Berbers and the French by assimilating Berbers into the French system in Morocco, starting in the legal sphere. The decree was part of the French effort to control Berbers as a way to counteract the potential strength of Arabs should they mobilize, and to maintain a firm foothold in Morocco with Berber support.<sup>182</sup> Differentiating between Arabs and Berbers thus became “a fundamental principle of protectorate ethnography and political strategy.”<sup>183</sup>

In the educational sphere, the Berber Decree isolated Berbers from Arabs in schools, and proposed to educate Berbers under the French curriculum.<sup>184</sup> The French believed that giving Berbers the opportunity to learn in the superior education system would be to their advantage. French schools embodied the separation of religion and education, and completely omitted religious education from the curriculum. Despite the supposed benefits of the French curriculum, education was not considered a path toward critical thought, but rather provided a means for economic gain. The French sought to suppress the political desires of Moroccans (Arabs and Berbers alike) and offered a vocational education that taught practical skills.<sup>185</sup> French policies such as the Berber Decree continued a negative, self-perpetuating cycle that placed Moroccan Arabs at a distinct disadvantage by excluding them from the French educational system. French ethnology and political policies went hand-in-hand in denying their

---

<sup>182</sup> Nevill Barbour, “Nationalism in Morocco,” *Middle Eastern Affairs* 4.1 (1953), 362; Segalla 186.

<sup>183</sup> Segalla 183.

<sup>184</sup> John P. Halstead, “A Comparative Historical Study of Colonial Nationalism in Egypt and Morocco,” *African Historical Studies* 2.1 (1969), 93.

<sup>185</sup> Segalla 180-181.

potential. The lack of Moroccan involvement in politics or policy-making reinforced the notion of the inherent limits of the intellectual capacity of Moroccans, while justifying French rule, and the Berber Decree helped to propagate these sentiments.

The Berber Decree also removed the sultan's control over the entire country in both political and religious facets, and restricted his influence to solely the Arab population.<sup>186</sup> The sultan was one of the few symbols that Arabs and Berbers shared, and limiting the sultan's power to a subset of society had serious consequences. The decree served as a catalyst for Moroccan mobilization due to its widespread implications, ranging from the suggestion that Berbers were not truly Muslims and therefore could be exempt from sharia, to the assertion that the sultan was not the spiritual leader of the entire nation if sharia was confined to Moroccan Arabs.<sup>187</sup> When passed, the Berber Decree gave rise to an extensive opposition campaign in mosques, with Arab and Berber Muslims drawing upon their common identity as followers of Islam and claiming that the decree was an inherent threat to their religion. Though the campaign began peacefully, the situation quickly escalated when French government officials arrested nationalist leaders.<sup>188</sup> Assimilating Berbers into French culture and segregating them from the Arab population had a number of consequences that gradually led to the surge of Moroccan nationalists who demanded independence, and the collapse of the Arab/Berber dichotomy among the French colonists.

While the French protectorate of Morocco experienced difficulties in its rule, French officials embarked on an ambitious task to garner support for colonialism at

---

<sup>186</sup> Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed* (New Haven, 1968), 78.

<sup>187</sup> Geertz 79.

<sup>188</sup> Pennell 151.

home. The final chapter examines this effort and the French representation of colonies in the Colonial Exposition of 1931 in Paris.

## Chapter 5: “Le Tour du Monde en Un Jour”: The Colonial Exposition of 1931

---

The final chapter explores the institutional level of representation through expositions, namely studying the French government-sponsored International Colonial Exposition (*Exposition Coloniale Internationale*) of 1931 in Paris. Expositions provided a unique opportunity for the public to learn about national accomplishments, and the organizers of the 1931 Colonial Exposition intended for the public to take away a specific message – the manifold benefits of colonialism – after visiting the exposition. Unlike other forms of representation that sought to differentiate France from its colonies in a binary framework, French government officials strove to project an inclusive image of France that incorporated colonies as natural extensions of *la plus grande France* – “Greater France.” How successful was the Colonial Exposition in achieving this goal?

To answer this question, the chapter examines the history of expositions around the world and in France before looking specifically at the 1931 Colonial Exposition. Though French government officials attempted to create an inclusive, unified image of France and its colonies, the Colonial Exposition relied on a system of binaries in its colonial representations, similar to the dichotomous portrayals in Orientalist artwork, ethnographies, and ethnologies. The binaries emphasized French modernity and colonial traditionalism, and helped to rearticulate a French national identity based on superiority and a moral obligation to colonize less advanced populations.

### “Le Tour du Monde en Un Jour”

Expositions and world fairs, which generally consisted of a collection of items on public display, were common in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries throughout Europe, North America, and Australia. The process of “staging” an exposition involved the conscious, purposeful formulation of a “spectacle” for an audience, and London’s Great Exhibition in 1851 marked the first true international fair.<sup>189</sup> The London exhibition, titled “The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations,” specifically focused on showcasing British industrial progress. After two years of planning, the exhibition opened in May 1851. During its five-month run, it garnered a great deal of attention and acclaim for the range of British accomplishments that were displayed, and its success signaled the beginning of the exposition movement as other countries planned and displayed their own triumphs.<sup>190</sup>

France enjoyed a long history of organizing expositions prior to the 1931 Colonial Exposition. The first French exposition, titled *Exposition Publique des Produits de l’Industrie Française* (Public Exposition of Products of French Industry), took place in 1798 and was similar to London’s Great Exhibition in displaying French expertise in industrial production.<sup>191</sup> While it preceded the London fair, it was not considered an international event. After the Netherlands held the first international exhibition that focused on colonialism in 1883, other European countries, including France, began to organize regular colonial expositions.<sup>192</sup> In France, earlier fairs had a

---

<sup>189</sup> John R. Gold and Margaret M. Gold, *Cities of Culture: Staging International Festivals and the Urban Agenda, 1851-2000* (Aldershot, 2005), 6; Robert Wilson, *Great Exhibitions: The World Fairs 1851-1937* (Melbourne, 2007), 12.

<sup>190</sup> Dana S. Hale, *Races on Display: French Representations of Colonized Peoples 1886-1940* (Bloomington, 2008), 13; Gold and Gold 67.

<sup>191</sup> Gold and Gold 54.

<sup>192</sup> Robert W. Rydell, *World of Fairs: The Century-of-Progress Expositions* (Chicago, 1993), 61.

limited colonial focus, and colonial pavilions did not play a prominent role until the onset of the Third Republic in 1870. The proliferation of French colonization during this time consequently spurred the expansion of the colonial focus in exhibitions. While earlier expositions contained informative historical and commercial exhibits, the 1889 *Exposition Universelle* (Universal Exposition) exemplified the shift to more “spectacles” and “attractions” on display. Organizers presented colonial territories with unique architecture and artistic displays. Additionally, indigenous people were incorporated into the exhibits, and “natives” sold exotic souvenirs and local food inside individual colonial pavilions.<sup>193</sup> By 1900, representing colonies became an integral part of French expositions.

The idea of the 1931 Colonial Exposition emerged from the popularity of colonial displays at the 1900 Paris *Exposition Universelle*. In addition, with the rise of French tourism in the Maghreb in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Colonial Exposition provided an alternative method for French citizens to vicariously experience colonial life without venturing abroad.<sup>194</sup> Hubert Lyautey, the first resident-general in the French protectorate of Morocco, led the organization of the 1931 exposition. Lyautey believed that the exposition provided an educational opportunity for the French public to learn about the colonies, which would assist in creating a shared identity between French citizens and the colonial population. Along with other organizers, Lyautey wanted the Colonial Exposition to be more authentic, lacking the “carnival ambiance”

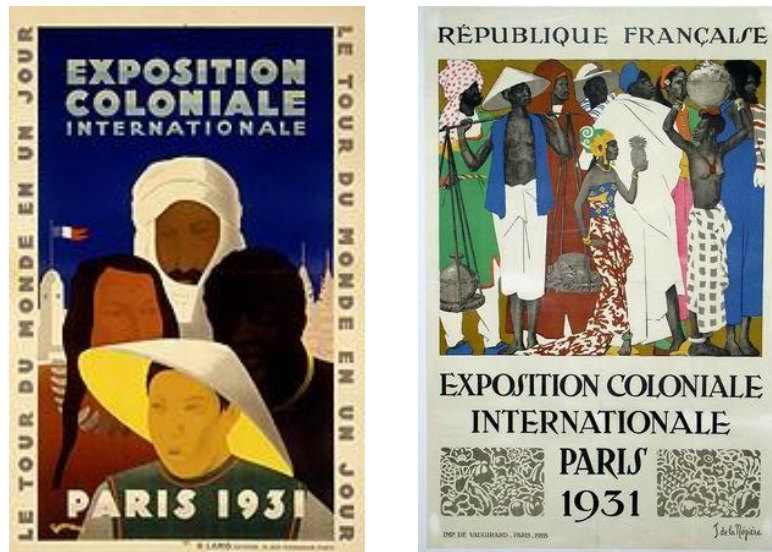
---

<sup>193</sup> Hale 14-17.

<sup>194</sup> Patricia A. Morton, *Hybrid Modernities: Architecture and Representation at the 1931 Colonial Exposition, Paris* (Cambridge, 2000), 71; Kenneth J. Perkins, “The Compagnie Générale Transatlantique and the Development of Saharan Tourism in North Africa,” *The Business of Tourism: Place, Faith, History* (Philadelphia, 2006), 51.



that characterized earlier expositions.<sup>195</sup> Though such “spectacles” attracted many people to the expositions, Lyautey designed the 1931 exposition to “reflect the beneficial progress of *la mission civilisatrice* by means of scientific, authentic exhibitions, rather than vulgar, exotic entertainments.”<sup>196</sup>



Various Posters from the Colonial Exposition of 1931

© Etudes Coloniales, poster on the left located in Archives d’Outre Mer, Aix-en-Provence

The *Exposition Coloniale Internationale* in Paris was open from May 6 to November 15, 1931.<sup>197</sup> Advertised as “*Le Tour du Monde en Un Jour*” (“The Tour of the World in One Day”), the exposition displayed people, goods, raw materials, and art to showcase the diverse cultures and resources of the French colonial empire. It also lauded the success of French colonialism and emphasized its future potential. The exposition covered over 200 acres at Bois de Vincennes, an area located in the eastern part of Paris, and sold over 30 million tickets over the exposition’s six months.

<sup>195</sup> Herman Lebovics, *True France: The Wars over Cultural Identity, 1900-1945* (Ithaca, 1992), 53; Morton 71.

<sup>196</sup> Morton 74.

<sup>197</sup> Morton 3.

The Colonial Exposition was considered both a popular and financial success, and organizers raised a profit of 33 million francs by the end.<sup>198</sup>

The Colonial Exposition consisted of various sections including individual colonial pavilions, a zoo, and different French buildings that presented educational information. For instance, the *Musée de Colonies* was created to celebrate French colonial history, and it was the only building that remained open following the end of the exposition. The *Cité des Informations* was designed to educate the public as a source of information about colonized countries and offered “possibilities for investment, emigration, and importation in their colonies.”<sup>199</sup> Colonial pavilions lined the *Avenue des Colonies Française*, arranged in no particular geographic order and juxtaposing diverse French colonies from Somalia to French India.<sup>200</sup> To impart a sense of authenticity to visitors, indigenous people inhabited the pavilions; the Moroccan exhibit featured boutiques (*souks*) with natives selling “indigenous art” such as carpets, pottery, and copper.<sup>201</sup> Visitors could partake in a variety of activities while at the Colonial Exposition, such as

see hundreds of exhibits in the Algerian pavilion; clamber up the steps of a representation of Madagascar’s royal palace; compare colonial economies in the modern Cité de L’Information building; drink exotic beverages in cafes while looking at “natives” everywhere on display; examine wild animals and birds in the ten-acre zoo; gawk at gigantic mud huts finished in bright stucco; and bask in the glow of French imperial accomplishments.”<sup>202</sup>

Three factors differentiated the Colonial Exposition as a unique form of representation from visual and written forms: scale, purpose, and authenticity. First,

---

<sup>198</sup> Morton 313.

<sup>199</sup> Morton 24.

<sup>200</sup> Morton 22-26.

<sup>201</sup> Morton 48.

<sup>202</sup> Rydell 69-70.

the exposition was on a much larger scale than previous forms of colonial representation. Though the government had commissioned artwork and ethnographies for similar purposes in the past, the Colonial Exposition was specifically designed to appeal to the masses and disseminate information about the benefits of colonialism on a significantly larger scale. Second, the exposition had a clear purpose, and organizers used the Colonial Exposition as a pedagogical tool with economic and patriotic goals in mind. Lyautey frequently remarked that France's economic development was inextricably tied to the success of the colonies, and through the exposition, he hoped to generate French financial interest and investment in the colonies. Lyautey also wanted to remedy French apathy to the colonial enterprise by informing citizens about colonial successes and the necessity of *la mission civilisatrice*. He believed that the exposition would instill a sense of national pride in French political and economic accomplishments abroad and underscore French superiority. This would translate into a French moral imperative to spread civilization throughout the world and as a result, Lyautey expected that French national pride would turn into public support for colonialism.

Public support for colonialism was not only necessary to drive financial investment in the colonies, it was a key component for the current French government to win elections and stay in power. Moreover, Lyautey believed that public support played a key role in fostering an inclusive identity between France and its colonies overseas. He envisioned a mutually beneficial relationship between France and its colonies; French citizens not only reaped economic benefits from colonization, but they also felt a sense of pride by propagating French values to less civilized

populations. In turn, colonies would modernize and become more “civilized” under the French influence. Organizers thus depicted the colonies as a part of *la plus grande France*. To create this inclusive identity, French organizers strove to educate French citizens about greater France, and included a number of displays and exhibitions such as the *Musée de Colonies* and the *Cité des Informations*, which included accounts of France’s *mission civilisatrice*, and “colonial information boutiques.”<sup>203</sup> Pavilions were also meant to be sources of information, especially with the presence of indigenous populations.

Finally, the Colonial Exposition was a unique method of representation because it was meant to be the most “authentic.” Organizers defined authenticity as the factual recreation of reality, and they strove to craft a “true” sense of the colonies through realistic architecture and the use of natives to make the exposition both accurate and credible. In contrast to visual and written representations of the Orient, the exposition offered the public an opportunity to observe miniature versions of colonial life for themselves and draw their own conclusions to avoid preconceived notions of exoticism, traditionalism, and religiosity of the Orient. Authenticity was also closely tied to the goals of the exposition. If the organizers provided the public with a glimpse into colonial life through a recreation that included representative items, food, and people, it could influence economic investment and foster patriotism.

Despite the strident emphasis on the “real,” the Colonial Exposition depended heavily on elements of exoticism and Orientalism. In creating a unified vision of France and French identity, the exhibits “wrapp[ed] native cultures within French

---

<sup>203</sup> Morton 22-24.

culture”<sup>204</sup> and selectively chose to represent what French organizers considered as important and genuine to colonial life. Moreover, the government offered subsidies to the press for writing favorable articles and reviews of the Colonial Exposition, which attempted to quell possible criticism.<sup>205</sup> The validity of the Colonial Exposition was thus paradoxical in its very construction; having French organizers decide what was “real” and representative of the colonies imbued the exposition with a preconceived bias and did not recognize the views of the natives. The exposition turned out to be a French representation of colonies, not the natives’ self-representation of their homes.

To provide a different point of view, a group of anti-imperialists organized a small counter-exposition to challenge the French image of colonial triumph in the *Exposition Anti-Impérialiste*. The exposition contained satirical cartoons, drawings, statistics, and images related to “conquests, exploitation and ‘development’ of the colonies by imperialism,” and also described cruelties of colonial wars in detail such as forced labor and the manipulation and exploitation of natives.<sup>206</sup> Anti-colonialists also created an anti-exposition pamphlet, one which was titled *Le Véritable Guide de l’Exposition Coloniale: L’Œuvre civilisatrice de la France magnifiée en quelques pages* (*The Real Guide to the Colonial Exposition: The Civilizing Work of France Celebrated in a Few Pages*). The pamphlet provided a number of sections on French colonization and the subsequent repression of natives in colonies ranging from Guyana and Madagascar to North Africa and Indochina. The guide described specific cases of native exploitation, such as forcing natives to sell their land in North Africa

---

<sup>204</sup> Lebovics 57.

<sup>205</sup> Morton 97.

<sup>206</sup> Rydell 70; Morton 103.

and poorly paying indigenous workers in Indochina.<sup>207</sup> Though anti-imperialists made a valiant effort to offer another account of colonialism, they adopted the same strategy of representation as the Colonial Exposition, and did not take native opinions and voices into account in creating the counter-exposition. Despite the vociferous efforts of anti-colonialists, the Colonial Exposition eclipsed criticism and propagated its message of unity and inclusivity.



A page from “*La Vérité aux Colonies*” (The Truth about Colonies). The page on the left translates as “Against imperialist power! Against the Colonial Exposition at Vincennes! For the independence of colonies!” The pictures depict the negative consequences of colonialism. © Etudes Coloniales

Interestingly, the goals of the Colonial Exposition were similar to the motivations for undertaking scientific research in the colonies. As evinced in Chapter 3, scientific studies were incorporated in colonial pursuits to fulfill a sense of French “duty” to less advanced societies, to improve relations with the colonized population, and to bolster French power. The exposition was closely tied to French authority and responsibility to the public to inform them about benefits of colonialism. The

<sup>207</sup> Morton 126.

underlying goal in both scientific research and exposition work was to justify colonialism and to show its necessity, which illustrates how various modes of representation intended to accomplish the same purpose. Moreover, science and the exposition did not exist in completely separate domains. The next section explores how science was used in the Colonial Exposition to reinforce its legitimacy.

### **The Colonial Exposition as a Scientific Endeavor**

Lyautey envisioned the Colonial Exposition as the embodiment of scientific progress, and he used anthropology-based scientific methods such as ethnography and ethnology to gather materials for the exposition. Lyautey strove to make the Colonial Exposition as accurate as possible, though much of the proclaimed “authenticity” was lost in the way the information was collected and presented. French organizers chose what they thought best represented the colonies, yet they tended to select “exotic” things that served as “‘witnesses’ to an earlier stage of human culture.”<sup>208</sup> In particular, the presence of natives was meant to substantiate claims of authenticity that would extend to the rest of the exposition. The “sheer physical presence of [native] bodies was the only element that defied reproduction; if they were real, the rest must be as well.”<sup>209</sup> French officials brought over 3,000 natives from their homes to put in the colonial pavilions at the exposition. While this intended to give the public a sample of colonial life, having natives on display reinforced previous Oriental stereotypes, despite French intentions. Natives in the Colonial Exposition wore traditional costumes and sold “archaic crafts,” despite the fact that many

---

<sup>208</sup> Morton 94.

<sup>209</sup> Alexander C.T. Geppert, *Fleeting Cities: Imperial Expositions in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (London, 2010), 193.

colonies had already modernized following French colonization.<sup>210</sup> By portraying natives as “stuck in time,” the French asserted their own modernity, juxtaposed against indigenous traditionalism and also justified the need for French colonialism. Without the French influence, natives would presumably be unable to modernize and perpetually remain in the past.

Putting natives “on display” negated the authenticity that French organizers strove for because it reduced natives to mere “objects” to be viewed. The Colonial Exposition “set up the world as a picture” and, in the process, natives were “ordered up before an audience as an object on display, to be viewed, experienced, and investigated.”<sup>211</sup> The organization of the exposition, especially the incorporation of human exhibitions, was a clear illustration of French colonial power.<sup>212</sup> The act of objectification indicated a power dynamic which enabled the more powerful French to turn natives into objects on display. The natives lost their voice in the process and the display did not reflect how natives would represent themselves. Putting natives and colonies on display allowed France to determine how others – both the French public and indigenous populations – viewed colonies, which was on French terms. For instance, though France established Guyana as a penal colony, the Guyanan pavilion lacked slaves and prisoners, instead portraying Guyana as a tropical paradise with verandas, hammocks, and beautiful natives in the pavilion.<sup>213</sup> Meanwhile, Algeria, which architecturally looked similar to France after a century under French rule, seemed to reflect a native past and relied on Moorish and Turkish styles in its

---

<sup>210</sup> Morton 91, 113.

<sup>211</sup> Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Cambridge, 1988), 6.

<sup>212</sup> Morton 117.

<sup>213</sup> Morton 30.



design. The Algerian pavilion had more “local color” with a minaret and cupola, reminiscent of Algeria’s former, traditional façade.<sup>214</sup> The traditional aspects of indigenous life were emphasized in other pavilions as well. The Togo and Cameroon pavilions recreated native huts that were enlarged to “monumental proportions” for the Colonial Exposition, which emphasized the basic, primitive living standards of the natives.<sup>215</sup> Meanwhile, the French West Africa pavilions contained “fetishist” villages, in which visitors observed 200 natives going about their daily routines, while natives also danced for the audience.<sup>216</sup> These examples demonstrate how the French elevated their own power through representation, which came at the cost of failing to achieve authenticity.

From a position of power, French officials decided what mattered, what should be shown, and what counted as authentic, which maintained their position at the top of the power hierarchy. French officials and colonizers often used language related to kinship to refer to their relationship with the colonies, which corroborated the uneven power dynamics and asserted the image of France as the “moral authority” and provider of “modern civilization” to less advanced populations.<sup>217</sup> Natives were used as an example of colonial traditionalism and created a primitive image that contrasted with French modernity.

Furthermore, the exposition solely focused on the positive aspects of colonialism without discussing any of the negative consequences of French rule in the colonies. Despite what the Colonial Exposition presented to the public, colonies were

---

<sup>214</sup> Morton 48.

<sup>215</sup> Morton 209.

<sup>216</sup> Lebovics 78.

<sup>217</sup> Hale 174.

far from content with the French in 1931, especially in the Maghreb. In Morocco, the 1930 passage of the Berber Decree, which removed Berbers from Islamic law and legally placed them under French jurisdiction, left Arabs and Berbers frustrated with what they considered to be an excessive imposition of French values. In Algeria, French officials celebrated the centennial “liberation” of French conquest in 1930 to the dismay of native Algerians.<sup>218</sup> Similarly, French colonists planned a semi-centennial celebration of Tunisian liberation in 1931. The Tunisian celebrations stressed that Tunisia was the former center of Christianity in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, which irritated a Muslim-dominated Tunisian population. A combination of colonial French policies, tourism in the Maghreb, and the Colonial Exposition enabled French officials and entrepreneurs to put North African “empires on display” at the expense of natives while extolling French accomplishments.<sup>219</sup>

As French officials reinterpreted and reinvented colonies through the medium of the exposition, the authentic nature of the exposition was lost altogether. Despite the scientific methods incorporated into the design of the exposition, the “fossilization of indigenous civilizations into ‘unchanging’ and ‘timeless’ cultures”<sup>220</sup> rooted colonies in a primitive past and allowed organizers to utilize the same binaries of French modernity/colonial tradition entrenched in the colonial framework. Though the Colonial Exposition aimed to erase differences and present a unified vision of a “Greater France,” the exposition relied on a binary framework in French colonial representations.

---

<sup>218</sup> Morton 92.

<sup>219</sup> Perkins 50.

<sup>220</sup> Morton 93.

### **The Persistence of Binaries in the Colonial Exposition**

While organizers intended to show North Africa and other colonies as an integral part of France, the colonies were exhibited as “exotic entertainment” for the public and perpetuated stereotypes of the indigenous population as uncivilized and traditional.<sup>221</sup> The exposition essentially illustrated the Orient as “the negative of the European” – the Orient was “backward, irrational, and disordered, and therefore in need of European order and authority.”<sup>222</sup> To make this distinction, French organizers instituted a clear division between France and the colonies, and ignored examples of “cross-breeding” and any form of mixing between the colonizers and colonized population’s culture or customs.<sup>223</sup> This facilitated the presence of a binary framework in the Colonial Exposition between France and its colonies.

Despite its original intentions, the Colonial Exposition projected an image of the colonies as primitive, contrasting it with French modernity. Colonial binaries in the exposition strengthened a sense of French national identity and imparted French values to the public. Stressing the oppositional nature of France and its colonies aggrandized French superiority in an effort to foster pride in being French citizens. With the majority of the French population uninterested in colonial pursuits, organizers hoped that raising awareness would result in a renewal of pride in French identity that would lead to supporting the colonial effort. The French government that commissioned the exposition expected that raising the level of public support would allow them to continue the colonizing mission and win elections to stay in power.

---

<sup>221</sup> Hale 140.

<sup>222</sup> Mitchell 166.

<sup>223</sup> Morton 88.

Examining French colonial binaries raises the question of religion and *laïcité*, which has played a central role in the French understanding and analysis of colonized populations. It appears as though the religion/*laïcité* binary was not as prominent in the Colonial Exposition as in other forms of representation. While no conclusive evidence explains the discrepancy, there is a potential explanation. As stated previously, French government officials made a concerted effort to present colonies as a part of “Greater France” throughout the exposition. Given France’s history with secularism and domestic debates over the role of religion in the public sphere, it would have been challenging, if not impossible, to create a semblance of unity around the issue of religion since French colonies did not embody the same commitment to *laïcité*. By downplaying the religion/*laïcité* binary, it was easier to construct a shared French identity in the empire. A muted role of the religion/*laïcité* binary also implicitly reinforced French national identity by removing the question of religion altogether. Though the Algerian pavilion had a minaret, none of the North African exhibits had overt signs of its strong religious background in the Colonial Exhibition. Instead, the Algeria, Tunisian, and Moroccan pavilions focused on elements that were accessible to everyone, such as selling crafts and food, and participating in activities that were not explicitly related to their religious traditions.

The goal of the Colonial Exposition was to “infus[e] the French public with a colonial consciousness”<sup>224</sup> that would benefit the empire and garner support for French colonialism. Though Lyautey and other organizers intended to generate a unified image of France and its colonies, the Colonial Exposition paralleled other forms of representation in underlining the differences between France and the Orient

---

<sup>224</sup> Geppert 195.

through a series of binaries. The construction and prevalence of these binaries was not only representative of the French quest for power, but also signaled French efforts to strengthen a sense of French national identity in opposition to the colonies. Lyautey and fellow organizers ascribed a sense of superiority and a moral obligation to help colonies as a part of French identity, despite the impossibility of *la mission civilisatrice*. While French officials wanted to show that colonies needed France's influence to become civilized, colonialism became unnecessary if natives were considered "civilized," making a true *mission civilisatrice* impossible.<sup>225</sup> Like many other parts of the French colonial experience, the Colonial Exposition was a representation of French values, rather than a French representation of its colonial subjects.

---

<sup>225</sup> Morton 7.

## Conclusion

---

France's commitment to secularism was reflected in visual, written, and institutional forms of colonial representation, as was the value that the French placed on *laïcité* in Algeria and Morocco. The French used art, science, and expositions to understand the unknown aspects of the colonies they inhabited, and their interpretations were formed through the lens of religion, which was largely due to French domestic circumstances. Because the debate over *laïcité* had been so prominent in France throughout its history, the question of religion consequently pervaded French efforts to understand their colonies. One of the primary objectives of this project was to illustrate this point, and also demonstrate how colonial representations helped the French negotiate their own shifting identity.

In order to assert the superiority of secularism, French colonists relied on a system of binaries to distinguish themselves from their colonized populations. Throughout my thesis, I have analyzed three key binaries that the French established in the colonization of North Africa: France/North Africa, modernity/tradition, and *laïcité*/religion. These binaries did not exist independently, but rather worked in conjunction with existing dichotomies to solidify French rule in the colonies and to construct a new meaning of what it meant to be French.

First, France depicted itself as the opposite of its North African colonies. The France/Algeria, and later, France/Morocco dichotomies articulated a hierarchy of power and a level of civilization that placed France in a superior position to the

colonies. This initial dichotomy served as the basis for *la mission civilisatrice* – the mandate to civilize less advanced colonies and propagate French culture.

Second, colonists juxtaposed French modernity against Algerian and Moroccan traditionalism. This was done in a variety of ways, starting with traditional representations of North Africa in 19<sup>th</sup> century French Orientalist art, then enhanced with French scientific studies that underscored the “stuck in time,” primitive, and religious nature of indigenous Moroccans. The dichotomy between modernity and tradition fully came to fruition at the Colonial Exposition of 1931 in Paris, in which French visitors witnessed natives engaged in “traditional” activities such as making archaic crafts and participating in indigenous dances and performances.

Finally, French colonists conflated modernity with *laïcité*, and they used religion as the dominant marker to define and differentiate themselves in opposition to the colonized population. The rise of anthropological sciences such as ethnography and ethnology allowed the French to combine binaries and depict themselves as scientific, modern, and secular, contrasting with Moroccans who were traditional and religious. French colonists saw and depicted themselves as more advanced because they relied on modern science and reason, not religious tenets. To strengthen their position in support of *laïcité*, French colonists even divided the Moroccan population to align Berbers with French secular values with the passage of the Berber Decree in 1930. French colonial binaries were intimately interconnected and worked together to bolster a specific, secular vision of French identity, which was then negotiated in and through visual, written, and institutional forms of representation.

Another goal of this project is to challenge some of the post-colonial literature that adopts a strictly critical and narrow view concerning French colonial motives, and links representations exclusively to the French quest for power. Colonialism is always related to power, but there are other noteworthy aspects that shed light on colonial actions. While I believe that questioning and critically analyzing French motives during colonialism is necessary, it is equally important to look at the broader picture and consider domestic situations that influence and impact international actions. My thesis has shown that internal debates in France about the role of religion and laïcité significantly shaped actions abroad in colonial pursuits. My work attempts to pull from different sources in various disciplines to paint a more comprehensive picture behind the impetus driving French colonial representations and actions.

### **Laïcité in Modern France**

The notion of laïcité remains quite relevant in modern-day France, especially given the large immigrant Muslim population that has challenged the conception and definition of French identity. To further complicate matters, most of the Muslim immigrants in France are from the Maghreb, originating from former French colonies in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco.<sup>226</sup> While French Muslims and immigrants grapple with questions of identity in a nation that emphasizes the importance of “Frenchness” and laïcité, current French politics and discourse focus on implementing policies that champion French secular values. French Muslims must choose whether they are committed to Islam or the French Republic, not both, and the debate over the veil has come to symbolize these concepts which define the two in mutually exclusive terms.

---

<sup>226</sup> Joan Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil* (Princeton, 2007), 43.



Just as French colonists conflated Arabs and Islam to reaffirm their position of power in North Africa, a similar binary between French citizens and Arab Muslims exists in present-day France. While French Muslims challenge this dichotomy, many French citizens, including President Nicolas Sarkozy, have fervently subscribed to the unwavering understanding of a French identity rooted in *laïcité*. President Sarkozy has used the immigration issue to harden his stance towards foreigners and garner more public support, not only emphasizing the shared French values of liberty, equality, and fraternity in his rhetoric, but by purposefully elevating secularism as a French norm.<sup>227</sup>

Though only 14% of Muslim women in France wear the hijab,<sup>228</sup> the issue of the “veil” has catapulted to the forefront of the debate over French identity. The French government seems to support President Sarkozy’s stance which privileges *laïcité*, and a headscarf ban passed in July 2010 in the National Assembly with a vote of 335-1, in favor of banning anything that covers the face in public, illustrates this point.<sup>229</sup> Other examples of French identity based on *laïcité* are widespread. Faiza Silmi, a Muslim woman, was denied French citizenship because of her burqa. In denying her citizenship, the ruling stated that Ms. Silmi’s “radical” Islam, judged by her burqa, was not compatible with French values. In citizenship cases, assimilation is one of the criteria considered before granting citizenship, but it is measured by French-speaking ability, not by outer appearance. Ms. Silmi’s fluency in French indicates that the French understanding of assimilation has expanded from linguistic

---

<sup>227</sup> Steven Erlanger, “France Debates Its Identity, But Some Ask Why,” *The New York Times* 29 Nov. 2009.

<sup>228</sup> Scott 3.

<sup>229</sup> Steven Erlanger, “Parliament Moves France Closer To a Ban on Facial Veils,” *The New York Times* 13 July 2010.

fluency to the enforcement of uniformity and increasing emphasis on physical and cultural assimilation into the secular French paradigm.<sup>230</sup>

In many ways, the French debate over the headscarf is reminiscent of themes found in colonial representations. Both rely on a system of binaries to distinguish and ascertain French identity, and both focus on religion as the point of differentiation. The main divergence in the headscarf debate is that the binary system is internalized to divide the French population. While colonial binaries were designed to strengthen a cohesive French identity, the debate over the veil has indefinitely excluded the French Muslim population from the secular vision of French identity.

### **Future Research**

There are a number of additional ways to explore the question of laïcité and the relationship between France and North Africa that would be both fruitful and enlightening. This project concludes with the 1931 Colonial Exposition, but several important events occur in the immediate decades after this period, including World War II and the rise of nationalist movements in North Africa. If the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries provide any indication, the internal changes in France during these pivotal times would be reflected in colonial representations as well. Do the post-1931 representations also reflect the French commitment to laïcité? Do they build on already-existing binaries, or do they adopt a new system altogether? How did French identity shift with these major events? These could be some of the questions to launch into an analysis of more recent French colonial representations.

---

<sup>230</sup> Katrin Bennhold, "A Veil Closes France's Door To Citizenship," *The New York Times* 19 July 2008.

Another fascinating topic that would complement this project is Moroccan representations of France during the colonial period. Just as French identity was shifting after interacting with the colonized, Moroccans were profoundly influenced by these colonial relations. Clifford Geertz posits that Moroccan Islamic identity was strengthened after French colonization, and that Islam became a viable way to differentiate themselves from French colonists.<sup>231</sup> It would be interesting to see if and how this translated into representations, and how they changed over time from the inception of the French protectorate to the years leading up to Moroccan independence.

Though the law that separates church and state in France passed over a century ago, French citizens continue to wrestle with the role of religion in their society. While France may no longer have contemporary colonial representations as spaces to negotiate complex questions of identity and values, France's commitment to secularism remains steadfast, with internal discussions, policies, and binaries that locate *laïcité* as the core of French identity.

---

<sup>231</sup> Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed* (New Haven, 1968), 65.

### Bibliography

- Abès, M. "Monographie d'une Tribu Berbère." *Les Archives Berbères* (1917). Print.
- Alazard, Jean. *L'Orient et la Peinture Française au XIXe Siècle*. Paris: Librairie Plon, 1930. Print.
- "Anticlericalism." Encyclopædia Britannica Online. N.p., n.d. Web. 5 Apr. 2011. <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/27867/anticlericalism>>.
- Barbour, Nevill. "Nationalism in Morocco." *Middle Eastern Affairs* 4.1 (1953): 359-369. Print.
- Bennhold, Katrin. "A Veil Closes France's Door To Citizenship." *The New York Times* 19 July 2008. Web. 29 Mar 2011.
- Benjamin, Roger. *Orientalist Aesthetics: Art, Colonialism, and French North Africa, 1880-1930*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003a. Print.
- . *Renoir and Algeria*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003b. Print.
- Bourrilly, Joseph. *Éléments D'ethnographie Marocaine*. Paris: Librairie Coloniale et Orientaliste Larose, 1932. Print.
- Brown, Frederick. *For the Soul of France: Culture Wars in the Age of Dreyfus*. 1st ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010. Print.
- Brunot, Louis. *Au Seuil de la Vie Marocaine*. Casablanca: Librairie Farairre, 1950. Print.
- Brunot, Louis, and Georges Hardy. *L'Enfant Marocain*. Paris: Librairie Emile Larose, 1925. Print.
- Burke, Edmund III. "A Comparative View of French Native Policy in Morocco and Syria, 1912-1925." *Middle Eastern Studies* 9.2 (1973): 175-186. JSTOR. Web. 20 Nov. 2009.
- Byrnes, Joseph F. *Catholic and French Forever: Religious and National Identity in Modern France*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005. Print.
- Cable, Patrick Shaw. "From North Africa to the Black Sea: Nineteenth-Century French Orientalist Drawings." *Cleveland Studies in the History of Art* 7 (2002): 104-125. JSTOR. Web. 24 Nov. 2010.
- Cline, Walter B. "Nationalism in Morocco." *Middle East Journal* 1.1 (1947): 18-28. JSTOR. Web. 4 Nov. 2009.

- Conklin, Alice L. "The New 'Ethnology' and 'La Situation Coloniale' in Interwar France." *French Politics, Culture & Society* 20.2 (2002): 29-47. IngentaConnect Publication. Web. 20 Nov. 2009.
- "Description." Musée de l'Homme. N.p., n.d. Web. 29 Mar. 2011. <[http://www.museums-of-paris.com/musee\\_fr.php?code=342](http://www.museums-of-paris.com/musee_fr.php?code=342)>.
- Dirks, Nicholas B. "Introduction." *Colonialism and Culture*. Ed. Nicholas B. Dirks. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992. Print.
- Doutté, Edmond. *Magie et Religion dans L'Afrique du Nord*. Algiers : Librairie Adolphe Jourdan, 1909. Print.
- Erlanger, Steven. "France Debates Its Identity, But Some Ask Why." *The New York Times* 29 Nov 2009. Web. 29 Mar 2011.
- . "Parliament Moves France Closer To a Ban on Facial Veils." *The New York Times* 13 July 2010. Web. 29 Mar 2011.
- "Ethnography." *New Encyclopedia Britannica*. 1985. Print.
- "L'Exposition Coloniale de 1931." Etudes-Coloniales. N.p., n.d. Web. 29 Mar. 2011. <<http://etudescoloniales.canalblog.com/archives/2006/08/25/2840733.html>>.
- Fiorenza, Francis Schüssler. "Religion: A Contested Site in Theology and the Study of Religion." *The Harvard Theological Review* 93.1 (2000): 7-34. JSTOR. Web. 1 May 2010.
- Geertz, Clifford. *Islam Observed*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968.
- Geppert, Alexander C.T. *Fleeting Cities: Imperial Expositions in Fin-de-Siecle Europe*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. Print.
- Giry, Stéphanie. "France and Its Muslims." *Foreign Affairs* 85.5 (2006): 87-104. JSTOR. Web. 1 May 2010.
- Gold, John R., and Margaret M. Gold. *Cities of Culture: Staging International Festivals and the Urban Agenda, 1851-2000*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2005. Print.
- Hale, Dana S. *Races on Display: French Representations of Colonized Peoples 1886-1940*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008. Print.
- Halstead, John P. "A Comparative Historical Study of Colonial Nationalism in Egypt and Morocco." *African Historical Studies* 2.1 (1969): 85-100. JSTOR. Web. 5

Nov. 2009.

Hardy, Georges. *L'Âme Marocaine d'après la Littérature Française*. Paris: Librairie Emile Larose, 1926. Print.

Hardy, Georges. *Le Maroc*. Paris: Librairie Renouard, 1930. Print.

Hoisington, William A. *Lyautey and the French Conquest of Morocco*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995. Print.

Kaplan, Sam. "Documenting History, Historicizing Documentation: French Military Officials' Ethnological Reports on Cilicia." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44.02 (2002): 344-369. JSTOR. Web. 1 May 2010.

Kastoryano, Riva. "Religion and Incorporation: Islam in France and Germany." *International Migration Review* 38.3 (2004): 1234-1255. JSTOR. Web. 1 May 2010.

Koller, P. Ange. *Essai sur L'Esprit du Berbère Marocain*. Fribourg: Imprimerie St. Paul, 1946. Print.

Kuru, Ahmet T. *Secularism and State Policies Toward Religion: The United States, France, and Turkey*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Print.

L'Estoile, Benoit de. "Science de l'homme et 'Domination Rationnelle' : Savoir Ethnologique et Politique Indigène en Afrique Coloniale Française." *Revue de Synthèse* 121.3 (2000) : 291-324. JSTOR. Web. 1 May 2010.

Lebovics, Herman. *True France: The Wars over Cultural Identity, 1900-1945*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992. Print.

Lorcin, Patricia M. E. *Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, Prejudice and Race in Colonial Algeria*. London: I.B. Tauris, 1995. Print.

Masuzawa, Tomoko. *The Invention of World Religions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005. Print.

Mauss, Marcel. "L'ethnographie en France et à l'étranger." *Revue de Paris* 20 (1913): n. pag. Web. 20 July 2010. <[http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/mauss\\_marcel/oeuvres\\_3/oeuvres\\_3\\_10/ethnographie\\_en\\_france.html](http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/mauss_marcel/oeuvres_3/oeuvres_3_10/ethnographie_en_france.html)>.

Mitchell, Harriett. "The Development of Nationalism in French Morocco." *Phylon* 16.4 (1955): 427-434. JSTOR. Web. 20 Nov. 2009.

Mitchell, Timothy. *Colonising Egypt*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988. Print.

- Morton, Patricia A. *Hybrid Modernities: Architecture and Representation at the 1931 Colonial Exposition, Paris*. Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2000. Print.
- Pennell, C. R. *Morocco: From Empire to Independence*. Oxford: Oneworld, 2003. Print.
- Perkins, Kenneth J. "The Compagnie Générale Transatlantique and the Development of Saharan Tourism in North Africa." *The Business of Tourism: Place, Faith, History*. Ed. Philip Scranton and Janet Davidson. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006. Print.
- Porterfield, Todd B. *The Allure of Empire: Art in the Service of French Imperialism, 1798-1836*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998. Print.
- Prochaska, David. "The Other Algeria." *Renoir and Algeria*. By Roger Benjamin. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003. Print.
- Rogers, Susan Carol. "Anthropology in France." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30 (2001): 481-504. JSTOR. Web. 1 May 2010.
- Rydell, Robert W. *World of Fairs: The Century-of-Progress Expositions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993. Print.
- Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. 1st ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1994. Print.
- . *Orientalism*. 25th ed. New York: Vintage Books, 2003. Print.
- Scott, Joan Wallach. *The Politics of the Veil*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007. Print.
- Segalla, Spencer D. "Georges Hardy and Educational Ethnology in French Morocco, 1920-26." *French Colonial History* 4 (2003): 171-190. Project MUSE. Web. 20 Nov. 2009.
- Sérullaz, Arlette, and Annick Doutriaux. *Delacroix: Une Fête pour L'œil*. Paris : Gallimard, 1998. Print.
- Sherman, Daniel J. "'Peoples Ethnographic': Objects, Museums, and the Colonial Inheritance of French Ethnography." *French Historical Studies* 27.3 (2004): 669-703. Print.
- Silverstein, Paul A. *Algeria in France: Transpolitics, Race, and Nation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004. Print.

- Singer, Barnett. "Lyautey: An Interpretation of the Man and French Imperialism." *Journal of Contemporary History* 26.1 (1991): 131-157. Print.
- Sowerwine, Charles. *France since 1870: Culture, Politics and Society*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. Print.
- Stock-Morton, Phyllis. *Moral Education for a Secular Society: The Development of Morale Laïque in Nineteenth Century France*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988. Print.
- Stora, Benjamin. *Algeria, 1830-2000: A Short History*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001. Print.
- Thomas, Nicholas. *Colonialism's Culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994. Print.
- Van der Veer, Peter. *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001. Print.
- Wilson, Robert. *Great Exhibitions: The World Fairs 1851-1937*. Melbourne: Council of Trustees of the National Gallery of Victoria, 2007. Print.
- "Women of Algiers." Web Gallery of Art. N.p., n.d. Web. 29 Mar. 2011.  
<<http://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?/html/d/delacroi/3/307delac.html>>.
- "Women of Algiers in Their Apartment." The Louvre. N.p., n.d. Web. 29 Mar. 2011.  
<<http://www.louvre.fr>>.