

## **Keynote III**

**Fella Moussaoui-EL KECHAI**

### **French Colonial policy and Algerian Elites: Between Confrontation and Reactions (1830-1962).**

My speech will be focused on the following issues that are part of a historical approach: What were the specifics of the French cultural and educational policy in Algeria during the colonial period (1830-1962)? What were the socio-economic objectives of the Colonial France? Destruction of the Algerian personality? Denial of cultural and civilizational values? Denial of Islam, Arabism and the Amazigh? What were the reactions of the Algerian elite facing this devastating colonial approach of the components of the Algerian personality (Language, Religion, Habits and Customs)?

To answer these problems; it is essential to point out that my methodology is part of a historical approach to cultural and educational themes that structure in the following areas:

- \* It is essential to emphasize the emergence of cultural and educational Algerian elite who carried a message handled by people who are strongly committed to a process of reaction against colonialism in its entire dimensions message, since the early decades of colonization of Algeria (1830-1880).

- \* So will trigger multiple revolts brought by leaders who will drain tribes and social formations of urban and rural Algeria (El Hadj Ahmed Bey Revolts, Emir Abdelkader El Djazairi, Sheikh Bouamama, Zaatcha, Ouled Sid Chikh, Fadhma N'Soumer etc.)

- \* The Algerian insurgency against French colonial rule were the spontaneous expression of colonial refusal; they explained to French general that Algeria is deeply attached to their language, religion and civilizational values, and Algerian personality with its cultural diversity cannot be replaced by French language and religion.

- \* The French colonial authorities brutally repressed all insurrections of the nineteenth century, and that, by practicing a real genocide against people attached to its land and civilizational and educational values.

- \* The colonial system put in place: Destruction of mosques that will be replaced by churches and synagogues. Closure of schools and ban on teaching Arabic. Denial of Algerian customs and traditions. Demolition of palaces and religious buildings. Policy of scorched earth. Destruction of entire villages (WARNIER Act)

(SENATUS CONSULT of April 22, 1863). Dahra enfumades. Assimilationist policy. Abject torture Institution by General de Gaulle as "School of High Art Torture" Philippeville (Skikda). Francisation Policy of Algeria (1870-1896) by renaming streets, cities by names of French governors, generals and French torturers. Dispossession of the Algerian people of all nationals and legitimates rights.

### ***Reactions of Algerian Elite:***

Examples of responses were numerous; I will highlight the educational and reformist role played by three Algerian personalities, who defended the components civilizational, cultural and educational of Algerian people:

1 / The Intellectual Bencheneb Mohammed was a fervent defender of Arab language and popular culture, he focused his linguistic research to the Turkish and Persian language through Ottoman legacy in Algeria cf. Bencheneb, Turks and Persians words preserved in speaking Algerian Thus, Dr. Mohammed Bencheneb was an eminent linguist he mastered perfectly Arabic, Turkish, Persian, French, Latin, German, and he had some ideas about spoken languages in El Djazair such the Hebrew, Spanish and Italian. The specificity of this study appears in academic linguistic research which he did to know the etymological origins of Algerian speaking and its linguistics impregnation. He professes at Algiers University in 1908. He maintains his doctoral thesis Es Letters at the University of Damascus. In 1924 he was named Professor Es Letters at Algiers Faculty. He was a great translator with a scientific critical thinking; he participated in many Orientalists Congress (Oxford 1928 ...) Academic research of Bencheneb push him to be interested in Algerians proverbs in which he explained sociologically and anthropologically see Proverbs Bencheneb . Bencheneb was the vector of Algerian cultural and linguistic components, under colonial regime that disparaged educational and civilizational Algerian specificities. He published books about children education cf. Dr Ali Tablit and Tayeb Ould LAROUCI, Mohammed Bencheneb, his writings and his work, Algiers, 2010. Bencheneb remain in Algeria and Algerians the intellectual model who challenged the French cultural policy to destroy the Algerian civilizational specificity. In 2014, High Schools, Universities Cultural Centers commemorate the iconic figure and gave them name of Mohammed Bencheneb to honor the memory of the illustrious scholar, linguist, educator and academic, see Rabah BENAOUA, Dr Mohammed Bencheneb revisited. In Le Quotidien d'Oran of December 14, 2011.

2 / The second Algerian personality whose specificity must be mentioned is Dr. Mohammed Saghir BENLARBEY, who was the first doctor in the Algerian French Colonial era, he defended the rights of Algerian people in medicine doctoral thesis at the University of Sorbonne in Paris July 16, 1884, he wore his

traditional Algerian clothe to affirm the French jury and audience membership of his Algerian specific identity culture. He maintains his thesis in colonizer's language, a language he mastered perfectly. It should be pointed out however, that Dr. BENLARBEY was a famous physician, with an outstanding humanist, he was a fierce oppositionist of French colonialism who destroyed the mosques of El Djazair to replace them with hotels, and he was a fervent defender of Arabism and Islam. The fight led by Dr. BENLARBEY has produced a strong reaction from colonial authorities, see BAKU Kader Mohammed Saghir BENLERBEY, the scientist and devoted patriot. In *Le Soir d'Algeria*, Saturday, May 3, 2014.

3 / The third figure who challenged the French colonial was Abdelhamid Ibn Badis . He was firmly against French policy of Algerian acculturation; he founded Algerian Association of Ulema that supported by the political structure to preserve Arabic language, Islam and the components of cultural and civilizational Algerian personality. Thus, Ibn Badis and Ulema, EL SHEIKH BASHIR IBRAHIMI, EL SHEIKH Okbi etc. were the defenders of Algerian religious culture, linguistic and educational aspects by establishing schools (Madrasas) in Algeria to teach Arabic, mathematics, history, etc. The lesson concerned girls and boys without any distinction. The Ulema Association settled a fundamental objective: purifying Islam from quackery and return to Islam of our ancestors; fraternal Islam, human and tolerant. See Djamel KHERCHI *Settlement and Assimilation policy in Algeria 1830-1962*, Algiers Casbah Editions, 2004.

Reactions of Colonial French Authorities towards Reformist Movement (Islahiste) Ben Badis:

Exile and imprisonment of leaders; Closing schools, Prohibition of teaching Arabic language, Censorship of newspapers etc.

It is imperative to clarify that despite all the intimidation and coercive measures applied by colonial warrior, the Ulema continued their fight; the current generation of Algerians must preserve our language, religion, identity and educational foundations.

In my modest address, I will try to provide answers about the role played by these specific elites that attracted our attention among many who also scored the Algerian resistance movement against French colonial oppression.

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French conquest" 1515-1881; Establishment of Wakf in Algeria: Realities and Challenges: 17th to 19th S.. Her most recent book is *Health and Population in Algeria: the Ottoman period to the beginning of the French conquest. (1515-1871)*. She is also member of the Scientific Laboratory "Unity Maghreb through History" Research Council in 2005 to date, Head of a National Research Programme NRP "Socio-Economic Conditions of Algeria 1939 - 1945» 2011, and Team Leader Research CNEPRU "Approach to Modern History of El Djazair through the National Archives (XVI th - XIX th S.)" 2012.