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# Constructing mosques : the governance of Islam in France and the Netherlands

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CHAPTER 3

# French colonialism, Islam and mosques

## 3.1. Introduction

At the beginning of the 20th century the French colonial empire included colonies and protectorates in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. French governing strategies towards Islam in these overseas territories, and particularly in Africa, are discussed in relation to the accommodation of Islam in France in the period from 1900 to the 1960s. French colonial religious policies and attitudes towards Islam and Muslim populations in North and West Africa are complex.[78] They were developed over a period of about 130 years, in dissimilar African societies. They were also informed by political developments and changing ideas and ideologies, and they developed in contentious encounters with the colonized.[79] Speaking of French "policies" and "strategies for government" towards Islam is already somewhat misleading, because many measures and arrangements were developed along the way. Any attempt to reconstruct underlying conceptual frameworks that guided colonial regulatory practices therefore suggests more coherence than existed in practice.

The reconstruction of French colonial policies with regard to Islam in this chapter serves three purposes. First, to explore similarities, differences and linkages between French colonial policies towards Islam that were developed in three crucial sites – Algeria, West-Africa and France – in more or less the same historical period (the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century). Second, to discuss public policy responses to mosque creation in France and in Marseilles in the first half of the 20th century and to situate these in their historical, ideological and political context.[80] Third, to begin tracing French governing strategies towards Islam and mosque building and to create the possibility to explore whether and if so how, policies developed in the framework of colonialism have been relevant for those developed in subsequent periods.

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78. A comprehensive discussion of French colonial policies towards Islam would, of course, also have to include a discussion of the situation in the non-African colonies with Muslim populations. Moreover, one could argue that colonial policies in the Comoro Islands, Madagascar and French Equatorial Africa or in those territories that are still under French rule (such as Île de la Réunion and the *collectivité d'outre-mer* La Mayotte) deserve particular attention (cf. Baubérot and Regnault (eds) 2008). Such an overview and discussion is beyond my capacities and also unnecessary for the purposes of this thesis. On the other hand, recent studies that discuss (dis)continuities between French policies towards Islam in the colonial and post-colonial period focus exclusively on French policies in Algeria (see Bowen 2006; Sellam 2006; Geisser and Zemouri 2007). As I argue in this chapter, however, specific aspects of the governance of Islam in West Africa were also important for French policy responses towards Islam in France, both during and after the colonial era. The studies I have found most useful include, for French Algeria: Ageron 1979, 1980 and 2005; Stora 1991; Lorcin 1995; Achi 2004, 2005 and 2006; Prochaska 1990; Silverstein 2004; and Bozzo 2006. For French West Africa: Cruise O'Brien 1967; Harrison 1988; Conklin 1997; Robinson 2000; Amselle 2003; and Triaud 2006. Other important sources include Girardet 1972; Rivet 2002; MacMaster 1997; Weil and Dufoix (eds) 2005; Blanchard et al. (eds) 2005; McDougall 2006; and Luizard (ed.) 2006.

79. On these contentious encounters see for example Colonna 1974; Clancy-Smith 1994; Robinson 2000; Babou 2005; Jonckers 2006; and Daughton 2006.

80. See in this respect also the work of Renard 1999, 2000, 2004 and 2005. Also Arkoun (ed.) 2006.

## 3.2. French colonialism and Islam in Africa

When the French began occupying and ruling over important parts of the African continent, they thought of themselves as the heirs of Rome. French rule could serve to return Africa – in particular the Maghreb – to Latin and Western civilisation. In North Africa the French military campaign started in 1830 as a punitive expedition against the Dey of Algiers.[81] In West Africa military expeditions began later, in the second half of the 19th century, when French authorities sought to protect the interests of French merchants who were involved in the lucrative trade in gold and gum at trading posts on the coastline.

The economic, administrative and political development of the African colonies by the government of the newly established Third Republic resulted in dissimilar forms of colonial administration and rule. Algeria was aligned administratively with France and in 1881 it became an overseas extension of France. Because of the massive influx of European settlers – French, Italians, Maltese and Spaniards – Algeria developed into a settler colony. By the end of the 19th century the European populations profited from all kinds of economic, political and juridical privileges and even outnumbered the indigenous population in major port cities such as Algiers, Oran, and Bône.[82] In West Africa the territories that had come under French control during the military conquest were united administratively in the Federation of French West Africa (AOF) that was formally established in 1904 and presided over by a government based in Dakar.[83]

In the first half of the 19th century a guiding idea in French colonial government was that the Africans could be assimilated into French culture and that the colonies were social laboratories. Political and economic doctrines and interventions and corresponding public policies were first and foremost elaborated in Algeria.[84] In the course of the 19th century strategies were being reoriented around the idea that the French should respect indigenous institutions and cultures and aim at the improvement of what was already there (Lorcin 1995: 171). Experience showed that attempts to simply replace indigenous culture, institutions and religions by French civilization and law were usually met with resistance and hostility. The new doctrine of association

81. The French eventually managed to occupy and take control of the whole of Algeria by the mid 19th century. Ageron 1980; Stora 1991; and Rivet 2002.

82. In 1879 an administrative reform aimed to decrease the importance of the military administration in favour of civil administration. Three different types of "communes" were created: the "*communes de plein exercise*", the "*communes mixtes*" and the "*communes indigènes*" (Bozzo 2006).

83. French West Africa (*Afrique Occidentale Française*, AOF) grouped together the present-day states of Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal.

84. Spatial interventions, such as the creation of railroads, city and agricultural planning and restrictions on nomadic practices, served simultaneously to stimulate the economic exploitation of the colonies, and to pave the way towards a progressive assimilation of the indigenous population into European habits. French expansion into Algeria was accompanied by the establishment of a Scientific Commission for the Exploration of Algeria which included artists, biologists, archaeologists and ethnographers. Military officers and colonial administrators were influenced by the Saint-Simonian doctrine of the achievement of well-being through economic endeavour under the paternalistic guidance of a natural elite (Lorcin 1995: 50). According to the French, Algeria was a social laboratory for a new society which would be based on merit and scientific development. In 1953 the colonial historian Georges Hardy wrote that Algeria served as a testing ground for political and economic doctrines in the French African colonies (cited in Harrison 1988: 15).

stipulated that the civilizing mission could only be successful if French policies were adapted to local customs and practices. The tendency to differentiate and adapt public policies to the stage of development of the indigenous was further legitimised by racist ideologies of the second half of the 19th century that questioned whether Africans could ever really rise up to the level of French civilization.[85]

### 3.2.1. Governing Islam in Algeria (1830-1900): Cultes reconnus in a colonial context

The Convention of Bourmont had marked the surrender of Algeria's Dey in 1830 and assured that the French would guarantee the right to Islamic practice in Algeria. Nevertheless, in the first years of the French conquests many mosques and Muslim cemeteries were destroyed or damaged. Christian missionaries who had hoped to see French authorities continue destroying mosques or dismantle the Muslim tribunals and impose Christian education, were opposed by colonial administrators who favoured secular education and respect for indigenous customs.[86] The success of colonial rule required – in the words of Marshall Bugeaud – that the Algerian Muslims had the assurance "that we would preserve their laws, their property, their religions, their customs" (Bugeaud cited in Amselle 2003: 61).[87]

The French however, also sought to gain control over Islam. The officers of the *Bureaux Arabes*, regional administrative bureaus which informed and advised the colonial administrators, were given complete authority over all matters touching on Islam (Ageron 1980: 19ff.). The French expropriated most of the land and real estate of the religious foundations (*habous*) that until then had served to finance the costs of religion. They also sought to weaken the Islamic confraternities, the Koran schools and other traditional institutions. By the mid 19th century the Muslims in Algeria had been effectively deprived of most of the means to finance their religious institutions and practices. In 1851 a ministerial decree laid the foundations for a more coherent governance of Islam in Algeria. The colonial administration became the owner of the main mosques that were administrated by so-called "public religious bodies" (*établissements publics*

85. The so-called "Kabyle Myth", for example, stipulated that it was crucial to distinguish between the Berberophone Kabyle and the Arabs when governing the indigenous population of Algeria. The Kabyle were said to be sedentary mountain dwellers, who were courageous, hard working, egalitarian, honest, and only superficially religious. By contrast, the Arabs were represented as a nomadic people, who were fanatically religious, untrustworthy and lazy and who resisted the civilizing mission because of their religious fervour (Lorcin 1995: 20).

86. Colonial administrators even gave official preference to Islam to express an anti-clerical point of view and as a way to frustrate the priests (*pour embêter les curés*) (Cruise O'Brien 1967: 307). When Charles Lavigerie became Archbishop of Algiers in 1867 and announced his plans to evangelise Algeria – by creating Christian villages and the monasteries of the *Pères Blancs* – colonial administrators feared that these plans might contribute to hostility against French rule. Efforts were made to restrain the proselytising activities of the new archbishop. Nevertheless, the emergence of a large community of European settlers did give a strong impulse to Christian presence and institutions in Algeria, which was illustrated by the building of new churches and the new Cathedrals that were built in Algiers, Oran and in Tlemcen (see Ageron 2005: 302ff.).

87. In domains such as family law and inheritance law Muslim religious law and customary law were to some extent respected. Whether Muslim law or French law applied depended on the legal status of the person in question. In order to be governed by French law North Africans had to renounce statutory rights to Islamic law (Lorcin 1995: 71ff.).

*du culte*). Further copying the Concordatarian model religious personnel of the different religions all became "*agents du culte public*".[88]

In 1850 the French colonial administration also began to set up Franco-Arab universities in Algiers, Constantine and Tlemcen, where both the French language, science and Islamic doctrine and law were taught, free of charge. Only people who had been educated in the Franco-Arab Madrasas could be selected for the different officially recognised Islamic religious functions, such as mufti, imam and muezzin (Bozzo 2006: 208). The colonial administration not only sought to control the nomination of Muslim religious personnel, it also controlled the sermons in the "official mosques". In addition, the French looked for support from selected Sufi orders and confraternities (Ageron 1980: 63). Those who agreed to cooperate were given authority and privileges including, for example, a sponsored pilgrimage to Mecca.

The French also became involved in the upkeep of mosques, though in a very unforthcoming way. Between 1830 and 1860 five new mosques were built in Algerian cities, which was far from being sufficient to compensate for the mosques that had been destroyed during the French conquests. Based on the inventory of the total mosques the French decided to classify only 78 mosques as buildings that deserved to be "preserved" (*à conserver*), whereas 1494 mosques were left to the worshippers to maintain (Ageron 2005: 297). Many of the *colons* believed it was unnecessary to rebuild the mosques that were damaged because, so they argued, the Algerians, and most of all the Kabyles, did not genuinely care about religious practice.

The administration of religion in Algeria was thus organised in a way that resembled the Concordatarian model in France, with its recognised religions (*cultes reconnus*) and with the state paying the costs of building and upkeep of houses of worship, and nominating and remunerating religious personnel. However, in the context of colonial rule the actual functioning of this model differed greatly. First, in colonised Algeria, the political imperative for the state to maintain control over religion was far stronger than in France. In the case of Islam, by far the most important indigenous religion, the will to control and manipulate was most outspoken and urgent, if only because the "spectre of Islam as a belligerent religion was ever present in Algeria" (Lorcin 1995: 53).[89] The Concorditarian format was etched upon colonial strategies designed to suppress and exploit the indigenous population. The unequal treatment of Muslims and Islam became increasingly clear. The support that imams received was extremely low and the funds available for the upkeep of mosques were completely insufficient. The so-called Crémieux laws of 1870 naturalised the Jews in Algeria, and the naturalisation law of 1889 granted automatic French citizenship to all Europeans born in Algeria. By contrast, the Muslims were denied French citizenship unless they renounced statutory rights to Islamic law (which amounted to leaving Islam altogether) (Lorcin 1995: 181). The indigenous Muslim population was subject to the so-called native code (*code de l'indigénat*) since 1874. Muslim Algerians were denied the right to travel without a permit, even outside their communes, and there were strict controls on the sort of clothes Muslims could wear (Rosenberg 2004: 641). The Concorditarian and Gallican traditions of religious politics, that were based on official recognition, selective cooperation and

88. Algeria was divided into 95 religious districts (Achi 2006: 239). In 1900 there were 149 official imams (Ageron 2005: 892).

89. In the 1830s Abdelkader had already invoked Islam and *Jihad* to mobilise support for the war of resistance against the French.. The control exercised over the other religions was necessary, for example, in order to oblige them to contribute to legitimising colonial rule.

state regulation were mixed with strategies to co-opt indigenous leaders who were supportive of French colonial rule. French strategies thereby led to conflicts between the confraternities, the "official clergy" and the "independent" *ulama* (Bozzo 2006: 206ff.).

### 3.2.2. Governing Islam in West Africa: Islam as a source of cultural progress

In West Africa the appreciation of Islam and indigenous culture was different. French scholars and colonial administrators thought Islam was "the only serious religion in West Africa" and that the Muslims were culturally more advanced than those who practiced animist religions.[90] They used Arab as a lingua franca in West Africa and gave a crucial position to Muslim leaders and Marabouts (living descendants of saintly lineages) as intermediaries in negotiation and administration.[91] Islam was thought to be an intermediary stage in progress and cultural evolution from "pure barbarism" to "the understanding of higher French civilization" (Cruise O'Brien 1967: 305). As early as 1836, a military officer suggested that the French should establish a mosque in Senegal because this would constitute "a first step towards progress in this colony" (cited in Harrison 1988: 7). A mosque in St Louis was built in 1847. Governor Faidherbe of Senegal demonstrated his respect for Islam by employing local Muslim notables and by issuing a decree allowing for the establishment of a Muslim Tribunal in 1857.

### 3.2.3. The early 20th century: La Politique Musulmane and an "Islam fabriquée par nous"

During the First World War the French had been confronted with a German-Ottoman propaganda campaign, which set out to establish an image of imperial Germany as the global champion of Islam that would help drive the infidel French from the Middle East and North Africa (MacMaster 2002: 72).[92] The French sought to protect their interests in the region by mobilizing French prestige in their role as a Muslim power, meaning an imperial power with Muslim subjects.[93] In 1916, during the war, general Hubert Lyautey suggested establishing a pro-French Islamic Caliphate:[94]

> … it is not a question of knowing whether the religious unity of French Islam is good or bad but rather of knowing whether this unity isn't the only guarantee against a greater evil, namely the unity of all Islam, including our own, under the primacy of a foreign or enemy chief (cited in Harrison 1988: 124).

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90. In 1910 a French scholar observed: "… it is universally recognized that the Muslim peoples of these regions are superior to those who had remained fetishist, in social organization, intellectual culture, commerce, industry, well-being, style of life and education" (Quellien cited in Cruise O'Brien 1967: 305).

91. O'Brien 1967: 304; Harrison 1988; Robinson 2000; and Diallo 2002.

92. See also Peters 1979: 90ff.; and Harrison 1988: 49.

93. Robinson (2000: 75) argues that the origin of the idea of France as a Muslim Power goes back to Napoleon's invasion of Egypt. See also Le Pautremat 2003.

94. One of the reforms by Kemal Atatürk was the abolishment of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924.

Another motive to reconsider governing strategies towards Islam in North Africa was the growth of resistance to colonial rule. French authorities were highly concerned about the growing nationalism in Egypt, Tunisia (a French protectorate since 1881), Algeria and Morocco (a protectorate since 1912), and they worried about what might come out of the mixing of Islamic reformist and nationalist ideas. France tried to show that it was concerned about the well being of the indigenous peoples and that France was a "friend of Islam" (*La France, amie de l'islam*). It also sought to develop a more consistent approach towards Islam in the form of a cohering French Muslim policy (*Politique Musulmane*). Again, Algeria would serve as a social laboratory to create, in the words of Le Châtelier, an "Islam that is unique in the world, fabricated by us in Algeria".[95]

Changing governing strategies were also being informed by wider developments in Europe. Around the First World War and in the 1920s France had to lean both demographically and economically upon its overseas colonies. Under the new Minister of the Colonies, Albert Sarraut, the guiding principle for French colonial policy became the development of the economic profitability of the colonies (the *mise en valeur*), through economic reform, the improvement of transportation systems and education.[96] On the other hand colonial authority also became more repressive, because the French sought to combat the nationalist movements and root out anti-colonial resistance.

The French also wanted to show that they were at least as able to develop a cohering and effective Muslim policy as other imperial powers, such as Britain and the Netherlands.[97] Such a policy would be based on scholarship and respect for the indigenous and would result in the ability to govern the colonies effectively and profitably. Governing strategies should be based on the doctrine of association, which implied collaboration with the indigenous populations. In 1911 the *Commission Interministérielle des Affaires Musulmanes* (CIAM) had been created to develop proposals for such measures and to inform the different administrators, diplomats and officers. The commission took an interest in policies on Islam in the colonies, in French foreign policy in the Muslim world, and in the accommodation of Muslims who were living in France because of the war effort. The CIAM, that existed from 1914 to 1937, developed into a key mechanism of institutional diffusion bridging these different policy fields.[98]

### 3.2.4. Algeria: official Islam and priority of colonial imperatives over secularism

In Algeria the French continued their strategy of creating and supporting an official Islam. For colonial religious policies a new problem presented itself with the issuing of the Law on the

95. ["l'islam unique au monde, fabriqué par nous en Algérie"] (cited in Ageron 2005: 897, the translation is mine, M.M.).

96. The creation of numerous administrative and scholarly institutions in France in the 1920s expressed an urgent desire to apply better techniques and to obtain the knowledge required to show more method in the colonial administration (Harrison 1988: 142-196). The Institute of Ethnology at the Sorbonne was created in 1927 and the *Centre des Hautes Études d'administration musulmane* in 1927 (Harrison 1988: 139; Conklin 1997: 39).

97. See Robinson 2000 : 75. The French translated the work of Snouck Hurgronje on Dutch Muslim policy in Indonesia, which was published with an introduction by Alfred le Châtelier in 1911 (see Robinson 2000: 75, footnote 2).

98. See Le Pautremat 2003.

Separation of Churches and the State in 1905. Because Algeria was an integral part of France, and given that secularism and the separation of church and state were among those high values of modernity championed by the French civilizing mission, it seemed reasonable to expect that the new secularist legislation would now also be implemented in Algeria.[99] In 1907, however, a special decree was issued which laid down a modified application of the principle of separation of state and religion in Algeria. On the basis of this decree the French colonial authorities continued to remunerate the 400 official imams or "*agents du culte musulman*" in Algeria and sponsor the mosques and Madrasas (Achi 2006).

Abolishing public subsidies for Islam and mosques would put the regime based on strategic co-optation at risk. French authorities wanted to maintain the remuneration of the Catholic clergy in Algeria, because clerics who were loyal to France could contribute to the religious legitimisation of the colonial order. Finally, when the administration continued to finance religion there were also more opportunities for direct control and surveillance of Islam. Between 1900 and 1915 the colonial government implemented a so-called policy on the construction of mosques. In this period 15 new mosques were built with help of the state in the whole of Algeria. The total number mosques that were maintained by the state was 174 in 1902 (Ageron 2005: 893).[100]

Thus, in flagrant contradiction of the principle of strict separation celebrated in the 1905 law, in Algeria the involvement of the French administration with Islam became ever more intense. Since the 1920s the official imams were selected on the basis of an exam and a dossier, which should serve to determine whether the candidate had sufficient degree of "loyalty towards France" and whether he had some influence upon his fellow believers. In the 1930s the protests of reformist Muslim scholars against these interventions of the French colonial state in the religious sphere increased. They started to create "free" mosques and schools that were not financed by the French colonial administration. They advocated not only a return to Islam but also to the Arab language and culture.

### 3.2.5. West Africa: A French Islam or shielding African Islam?

In West Africa the French finally opted for a governing strategy grounded in the idea that African Islam needed to be shielded from Arab influences. By the late 19th century, colonial administrators had become increasingly worried about the spreading of Islam in West Africa, in particular because of the growing influence of nationalist movements.[101] The colonial administrators worried that pan-Islamism might reach West Africa through the Arab language press, through the

99. Article 43 of that law had stipulated that the precise conditions under which the law would be applied in Algeria and in the colonies would be subject to specific administrative regulations. In this section I draw extensively on Achi 2005 and 2006. See also Sbaï 2006; and Bozzo 2006.

100. In 1910 a French commission classified two mosques in Algiers as historical monuments, thus obstructing plans for their demolishment (Ageron 2005 : 897ff.). Between 1898 and 1905 a mosque was also built in Saint-Denis de la Réunion. This mosque was financed by *commerçants* from Gujarat who settled on the Island in the mid 19th century. Because Île de la Réunion is today still a part of France this mosque counts "officially" as the oldest mosque in France. See "La première mosquée de France est réunionnaise" in *Témoignages* September 13 2007.

101. See Le Pautremat 2003: 75ff.

organization of a Sufi order, or through travelling priests. Moreover, the preferential treatment for Muslims by colonial administrators seemed to have led many West Africans "to adopt Islam in order to win the favour of the French" (Cruise O'Brien 1967: 304).

One possible way of addressing these challenges was to copy the Algerian model in West Africa and thus to create and support an official Islam under French tutelage. The French Islam scholar, Xavier Coppolani, thought that France should first establish confidence between religious leaders and French administrators and then proceed "with great delicacy, the work of improving Islam and moving it in the direction of our civilization" (cited in Robinson 1999: 117).[102] In the early 20th century Madrasas were established in West Africa staffed with teachers that were recruited in Algeria. These Franco-Islamic schools could contribute to the "laication of Muslim education", which meant "that the obscurantist marabouts would be replaced by a new generation of open-minded, free thinking Muslim teachers" (Harrison 1988: 64). The idea that "Franco-*Islamic* schools" should contribute to "*secularisation* of Muslim education" was itself illustrative of the contradictions in colonial policy. There was paternalism and the will to civilize, vying with the proclaimed principles of religious neutrality and secularism.[103]

At the beginning of the 20th century the French had become convinced that Black or African Islam (*l'islam noir*) differed fundamentally from North African and Arab Islam. This view had found further legitimacy because the work of French ethnographers induced a reappraisal of animist religions. William Ponty, the governor general of West Africa, introduced the so-called *politique des races* in 1908, which aimed to "preserve ethnic particularism by ensuring that each ethnic group had chiefs appointed from its own people: the territorial principle of administration was to be replaced by a racial principle (…) it would safeguard non-Muslim peoples from being ruled by French-appointed Muslim chiefs from other groups" (Cruise O'Brien 1967: 314). Ponty also restricted the use of Arabic in juridical and administrative matters, arguing that French was a far easier language for Africans to learn. In 1912, he also issued a directive on the "surveillance of Islam" (Triaud 2006: 275). The French would try and resist pan-Islamism, by shielding African Islam from further Arab influences and by supporting the particularities of local religious customs. Islam scholar Joseph Clozel advised colonial administrators in West Africa to use local customary law in preference to Muslim law:

> in this mosaic of peoples and brotherhoods no attempt at unification … should be risked. Such an action would amount to organising ourselves the Muslim dream and creating the lever which has always eluded the leaders of Holy War, to succeed in a general uprising of West African Islam (cited in Harrison 1988: 125).

In 1923, captain André Mission, chief adviser to the Governor General of West Africa on Islamic affairs, warned against the attempts of "Muslims to create a world-wide Islamic milieu and to form states within states" (cited in Harrison 1988: 158). The Minister of Colonies observed,

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102. In 1902, Emile Combes, the strongly Republican and anticlerical French minister, suggested making Islam into an official established religion in the African colonies. He proposed: "placing the spiritual and temporal heads of the religious brotherhoods under our direction" and to "establish a sort of regular clergy at the head of which we would place the *Chioukh-El-Islam*, supreme heads of the Muslim religion, who would be intermediaries with an interest in aiding our work of surveillance and moral reform" (cited in Cruise O'Brien 1967: 308).

103. I thank Frances Gouda for bringing this to my attention.

however, that it would be difficult to shield African Islam from foreign influences, because of the growing importance of communications, increasing frequency of travel and the development of education which were all abolishing the frontiers (Harrison 1988: 162).

Against the background of these considerations the French developed a number of strategies to maintain the specific features of African Islam and to encourage the development of a liberal Islam in West Africa. The French wanted to support what Ponty, the governor general of the OAF, had called in 1909, a "modern Islam" which "does not permit tyranny and which abolishes captivity" (in Harrison 1988: 77). According to the reified representation the French had of *l'islam noir*, Islam in Africa was "still half confused with fetishism", and it should "not evolve in the sense of Turko-Egyptian nationalism nor in the traditions of Muslim states, but in the sense of French ideas" (Arnaud cited in Harrison 1988: 97). Additionally, the French should support the particularities of African Islam by conducting a sensitive policy which was adjusted to local religious traditions. Finally, since the 1920s the French sought to establish strong alliances with selected leaders of the Muslim communities (Conklin 1997: 174ff.; Robinson 2000).

In 1904 the colonial administration subsidised the building of two mosques in Ivory Coast (Triaud 2006: 274). Between 1907-1909 the Great Mosque of Djenné in Mali was rebuilt under the aegis of French administrators. The design was based on a reconstruction by Félix Dubois from the ruins of the original mosque, and was also inspired by the newly created French military *Résidence* at Ségou.[104] The French resident administrator in Mopti, M.Cochetaux, was inspired by the mosque in Djenné and supported the building of a Great Mosque in 1935. De Coppet, who became governor general of the AOF in 1936, encouraged his administration to show greater respect towards Islam, and in 1937 he sponsored the construction of a new principal mosque in Dakar (Harrison 1988: 188). De Coppet also supported the building of a new mosque in the town of Kaolack in 1938. When this initiative led to protests from the inspector of Public Works (who pointed out that a similar request for the creation of a church had been turned down), De Coppet insisted that French support for the building of a mosque was more appropriate: "One cannot liken the construction of a mosque, which meets the needs of the majority of the population of a Muslim town like Kaolack, with a church destined to be frequented mainly by Europeans and a small number of newly converted natives" (cited in Harrison 1988: 188).

### 3.2.6. Governance of Islam in Africa in the closing decades of colonial rule

During the Second World War, young men from the West African colonies, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria and Indochina fought in the French armies and thousands lost their lives on the African and European battlefields. At the Brazzaville conference in 1944, De Gaulle promised that the colonies would obtain a greater measure of autonomy, that the *indigénat* would be fully abolished, and that more funds for social and economic development would be made available. The

104. Prussin (1987: 184) writes on this mosque : "Built under the aegis of French administration, with French funds and according to the advice of French military engineers, not only was the choice of site a reflection of colonial politics but its very organization reflects French influence. Most importantly, the mosque at Djenné became the symbol of French colonialism and a prototype for a 'neo-Sudanese style'". I thank Eric Roose for bringing this publication to my attention.

idea that the colonial empire could be maintained by granting concessions to the colonized and by accommodating certain demands for reform, would turn out to be a miscalculation. In West Africa the readiness of the British to adapt policies to nationalist pressures had consequences for the neighbouring French colonies (Hargreaves 1988: 138). Protest and revolts against French rule – inspired by ideological forces such as the *négritude* movement and nationalism – occurred in Senegal, Ivory Coast and Cameroon in the 1940s. Confronted with the struggles for independence France would eventually conduct two wars in an attempt to maintain its colonial possessions, in Indochina (1945-1954) and in Algeria (1954-1962). In comparison to the savage warfare of the *guerre d'Algérie*, the West African colonies gained independence relatively peacefully in a series of votes in the late 1950s and in 1960.

After the Second World War a new law was issued in Algeria in 1947 which was to give more guarantees for the independence of Islam vis-à-vis the state. A special commission on the regulation of Islam in Algeria was also established. This commission suggested creating a single council representing Algerian Islam and to let this council be in charge of the places of worship and the management and financing of Muslim religious practice. However, this idea of an official Muslim council was now rejected both by the *ulama* and the French Council of State as an infraction upon the principle of the separation of state and religion (Achi 2004 and 2006). Interestingly, the French Council of State and the leaders of the oppositional Muslim reformist movements in Algeria now both objected to the kind of state control over Islam which had always been fundamental to French colonial rule.[105]

Fearing that the complete separation might possibly jeopardize French colonial rule in Algeria, the Algerian subdivision of the French Ministry of Interior issued a text in 1950 which discussed the implications of the principle of separation of state and church for the North African colony. This text suggested that the principle of laicism could not be fully applied to Islam in Algeria. The reason for this was that there were "some resistances" amongst the native populations, who "remain faithful to the concept of a theocratic State, which controls both earthly and spiritual matters, which is the traditional conception in Islamic countries".[106] The French could now argue that the Muslim believers still needed to go through a process of learning in order to understand what laicism was all about, and therefore it was far better to maintain the status quo. One can also argue that the *ulama* understood perfectly well what state neutrality and non-interference implied and drew upon French Republican discourse to demand equal treatment of Islam. The French colonial administration, however, continued to financially support and foster a co-opted, loyal Islam in Algeria until the country became independent in 1962.

In West-Africa the abolition of the *indigénat* in 1946 gave citizenship to the indigenous population. In West Africa religious politics in the decade following World War II were by and large a continuation of the previous period. The financial support and co-optation of certain confraternities, notably in Senegal, had been developed into an alliance preventing other religious or political forces from becoming influential (Triaud 2006: 276ff.).

105. See also Ageron 1979: 579ff.

106. ["certaines résistances rencontrées auprès des autochtones, demeurés fidèles à la conception, traditionnelle en pays d'Islam, de l'État théocratique, réunissant entre ses mains les pouvoir temporel et spirituel"] (in Achi 2004 : 16).

### 3.2.7. Concluding observations on French colonial governance of Islam in Africa

In governing Islam in the colonies the French were constantly making emphatic distinctions between different forms of Islam, usually dichotomised as "good" and "bad" Islam. The French thought positively about an Islam that was "only a religious belief" and preferred this interpretation over an Islam which included all aspects of social, cultural and political life and that aspired at becoming "a state in the state" (Harrison 1988: 67, 97, 158). The fact that some of the indigenous did not perform prayer, stopped wearing beards, dressed in European clothing or smoked tobacco was seen as a sign of progress and modernisation (Ageron 2005: 905).

The dichotomous mapping of forms of Islam functioned as an interpretative grid underlying multiple governing strategies. This included a strategy of supporting "good Islam" via co-optation and selective collaboration and, most outspokenly in the case of Algeria, via the institutionalisation of an official Islam. The French also tried to govern the colonies by co-opting Muslim religious leaders who supported French rule and who seemed willing to support the Islam that was promoted by the colonial administration. There also was a strategy to "shield" those forms of Islam that the French thought to be more "liberal". In Algeria this was the case of the Islam of the Kabyles, which was seen as less "fanatic" than the Islam of the Arabs. In West Africa the strategy of shielding African Islam from further foreign influence was shaped by the idea that this form of Islam was "syncretic" because it was mixed with animist elements and existing local cultural practices. This more "culturalised" Islam could be further developed based on French ideas. Finally, the support for a moderate, loyalist Islam and the shielding of syncretic forms of Islam was complemented with a policy of surveillance. In the colonies nearly all aspects of Islamic practice had to be negotiated with the French administration. Specialised institutions were created to control Islam in the different colonies and the French also kept a close eye on travelling marabouts (Harrison 1988: 43; Ageron 2005: 306).

## 3.3. Muslims and Mosques in France and Marseilles in the first half of the 20th century

The relationships between France and the Muslim colonies had become increasingly intimate in the first half of the 20th century for a number of reasons. Because of growing relations of commerce and the extraction of wealth from the colonies there was a constant flow of people, goods and information between metropolitan France and these overseas territories. Between 1900 and 1931 five national colonial exhibitions were organised in France, aimed at informing a French audience about the colonial empire and to create more interest and enthusiasm for it. Large numbers of Muslims came to work in France as colonial workers, or they were recruited as soldiers to fight in the First and Second World War. France's ambition to be recognised as a Great Muslim Power led to the wish to further develop strategic alliances with selected religious leaders in the colonies, and with religious and political rulers in the Levant, North Africa and the Middle East.

### 3.3.1. Colonial workers in France and in Marseilles 1900-1918

At the end of the first decade of the 20th century French industries began to recruit workers in the North African colonies. The controls on migration of Algerians to France had been liberalized in 1905 and in Algeria a large reservoir of underemployed and poor peasant-labourers was available. In Marseilles oil and sugar refineries started to recruit Kabyles as strike breakers and to replace European immigrant workers who had become increasingly unionised.

Around World War I public authorities also became more actively involved in the recruitment of workers from the colonies and protectorates. They would help ameliorate the labour shortages created by the war efforts. State initiated recruitment of colonial workers began in 1914 and two years later the *Service de l'Organisation des Travailleurs Coloniaux* (SOTC) was created to centralise the demand for labour. Special collection centres were created for newly arriving colonial workers, most notably in Marseilles. The vast majority of colonial workers were actively recruited and came on temporary contracts that had to be renewed every six months, but there were also the so-called "free workers" (*travailleurs libres*) from the colonies who came at their own initiative. When colonial workers were employed in state owned factories, notably in the arms industry, French authorities would provide for their housing and nourishment. When they worked in private industries this was an obligation of the employers. In total about 119,000 Algerians came to work in France during World War I, of whom 89,000 had been recruited by the French administration. In addition, about 35,500 workers were recruited in Morocco and 18,500 in Tunisia. In 1918 after the war, the quasi totality of these colonial workers were repatriated, also under pressure of the *colons*, who had repeatedly protested against the recruitment of "their" indigenous workers by French industries.[107]

Another important group of colonial migrants were the soldiers who were recruited massively before and during World War I. Estimates speak of a total number of between 535,000 and 607,000 colonial soldiers who were mobilised between 1914 and 1918, including 181,000 Senegalese 170,000 Algerians, 50,000 Tunisians, 37,000 Moroccans (voluntaries), 49,000 IndoChinese and 41,000 Malagasy.[108] Colonial soldiers and workers were as a rule housed in camps set up by French authorities. In Marseilles the camp *Mirabeau* contained barracks destined for soldiers and colonial workers and the camp *Sainte-Marthe* housed battalions of Senegalese *tirrailleurs* (Attard-Maraninchi and Temime 1990: 48-49).[109]

The reception of different groups of immigrants who disembarked in Marseilles – political refugees from Greece, Russia and Armenia, European labour immigrants and colonial workers – differed according to the ways the immigrants were categorized. Colonial workers were kept at a distance from the French population.[110] The camps for colonial workers were run

107. See Le Pautremat 2003: 280 ; MacMaster 1997: 134ff.

108. See Le Pautremat 2003: 173.

109. *Tirailleurs* were indigenous infantries consisting of recruits from the French colonies who were always under French commanders. The fist battalion of Senegalese *tirailleurs* had been created in 1857. They had already fought in the war in Mexico (1862-1867) and in the Franco/German war (1870-1871) but not on the scale as in the First World War. Military conscription had been introduced in Algeria in 1912 (Le Pautremat 2003: 146).

110. Péraldi (1990: 32) describes what happened when colonial workers disembarked in Marseilles: "everything is done to avoid contacts between these colonial workers and the populations. Throughout their voyage, these Indochinese, Malagasy, Moroccan or Algerian workers, are under the responsibility of the military authorities

mostly by military personnel or administrators who had served in Algeria. For the Algerians the native code applied during their stay in France and constituted an explicit manifestation of their inferior status when compared with reception of Italian and Maltese immigrants (Péraldi 1990: 44).

In 1913 a private company, *La Maison Familiale*, had been established in Marseilles. The company specialised in the construction of "salubrious workers housing" (*habitations ouvrières salubres*). The construction of workers villages and company towns, it was hoped, would also contribute to morally uplift the workers (Silverstein 2004: 92ff.). Several French companies established these kinds of villages for their workers and also tried to attract immigrants by advertising the availability of company accommodations. Employers thought that workers villages would lead to some sort of social stability and would prevent single male migrant workers from living an undisciplined and morally degenerate life.[111] The construction of "model villages" had also been experimented with in the colonies.[112]

In this ideological and social context the Chamber of Commerce of Marseilles deliberated in October 1916 about the possibility of creating a new village or a neighbourhood in which to house the North African workers. The Chamber decided to develop a report for a Preliminary Project for the Establishment of a Management Association for the Construction and Exploitation of a Muslim Village.[113] Between October 1916 and February 1917 the director of the technical service, Mr. Chapusot, drew up a file for the project. The Chamber of Commerce wanted to investigate the possibilities of establishing the village on a plot of land of some 41,000 square meters, owned by the refineries and located outside the city, near the harbour and the industries and close to the national road that connected Paris via Lyons to Marseilles. Mr. Resplandy, a French architect based in Tunisia, was asked to make an outline for the village, which would serve to accommodate both Kabyle and "Arabs of different tribes".

In December Resplandy presented his ideas. The village would contain 400 houses each of which could accommodate 6 single male workers and 50 houses for married couples. The village would be built in the image of the mountain villages in Algeria and near the typical Kabyle

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who escort them. They disembark at night in the city and are immediately taken to camps, which are placed under military authority, where they are subjected to medical exams, disinfections and are systematically rid of their fleas". ["tout est fait pour éviter les contacts entre ces travailleurs coloniaux en les populations. D'un bout à l'autre de leur voyage, ces travailleurs, indochinois, malgaches, marocains ou algériens, sont pris en charge par les autorités militaires qui les convoient. Ils débarquent de nuit dans la ville et sont aussitôt emmenés dans des camps, placés sous autorité militaire, où ils sont soumis à des examens médicaux, une désinfection et un épouillage systématique"].

111. I will return to the creation of workers villages when discussing the French guest workers regime in chapter 5.

112. Ideas and institutional arrangements travelled back and forth between France and the colonies. An interesting example was the case of the Alsatian industrialist Jean Dollfus. He had a workers village built for his workers in Mulhouse but also sponsored the establishment of a village for his French employees who worked in his overseas factory in Algeria. This village, that was created shortly after the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, was built in an Islamic, neo-Arab style which was thought to be appropriate to its North African surroundings (Leprun 1992: 102).

113. *Avant-projet de création d'une société d'exploitation pour l'édification et l'exploitation d'un village musulman*. This account is based on reading of the original file on the "Avant-projet de village arabe et kabyle" archived in the *Archives de la Chambre de Commerce de Marseille*. Série ML 4274, 1916-1917. In the different documents the village is referred to as "Arab", "Kabyle" and "Muslim". See also Péraldi 1990, Leprun 1992 and Granet 1993.

houses there would be a mosque, a Moorish Bath, some Arab fountains and grocery shops, and a central square where the typical assembly of the adult men of the community (*the djemâa*) could take place in the open air. The architect explained the function of the different elements of the village for the daily life and needs of the Algerian workers. The Moorish Bath would be used on the occasion of major Muslim celebrations, but on normal days it would be little frequented since "the indigenous peoples, and the Kabyle in particular, have, with good reasons, the reputation of being very filthy (*fort sales*)".[114] The Arab fountains would serve as decoration, but they would also be very "useful for the indigenous who are used to drink there and wash themselves". These sanitary facilities were necessary to prevent the village in Marseilles from becoming just as dirty as the ones in Kabylia. Resplandy also thought that the central square would be useful as a place where the Kabyles could discuss their interests, and perhaps elect a village representative. Such a village representative might also be recruited in Algeria, and he could then become an intermediary for "the management of the village and the contacts with the administration" (idem).[115] Finally, Resplandy thought that the village would not only provide for practical needs, but that because of its "artistic style and purely Arab character", it could also become "another attraction for which the city of Marseilles will be indebted to the Chamber of Commerce".

In February 1917, the *Service des Hangars et de l'Outillage* presented its final report on the Kabyle and Arab village. The village would have both "the Muslim architecture that will remind the indigenous of the country that they have left" and "the hygienic conditions of our modern cities, streetlights, water, and everything with sewers (*le tout à égout*)".[116] The original idea to establish a mosque had also been maintained. Despite the fact that the governor general of Algeria had mentioned – true to the Kabyle Myth – that "the indigenous of the country side, and most of all the workers, do not care much about prayer". According to the governor general, a mosque was also unessential because the workers could worship in every place that was clean and proper.[117] Nevertheless, the Chamber of Commerce wanted to establish a typical North-African mosque with arched windows and a 20 meters high square-shaped minaret and an accommodation for the Muezzin. The idea was that the village would function for about 30 years, and accommodations would be rented to the workers for 100 francs a year. Marseilles would be the first city to "receive the children of Algeria in such conditions that they will accept the voluntary exile that they impose upon themselves".[118]

Despite the elaborate and detailed plans for the Kabyle village in Marseilles, the project was never carried out. It is not altogether clear why, but it may well have been because of the war (Granet 1993). As a public policy response the project is important and interesting nevertheless

114. "Renseignments fournis par monsieur Resplandy", December 11 1916.

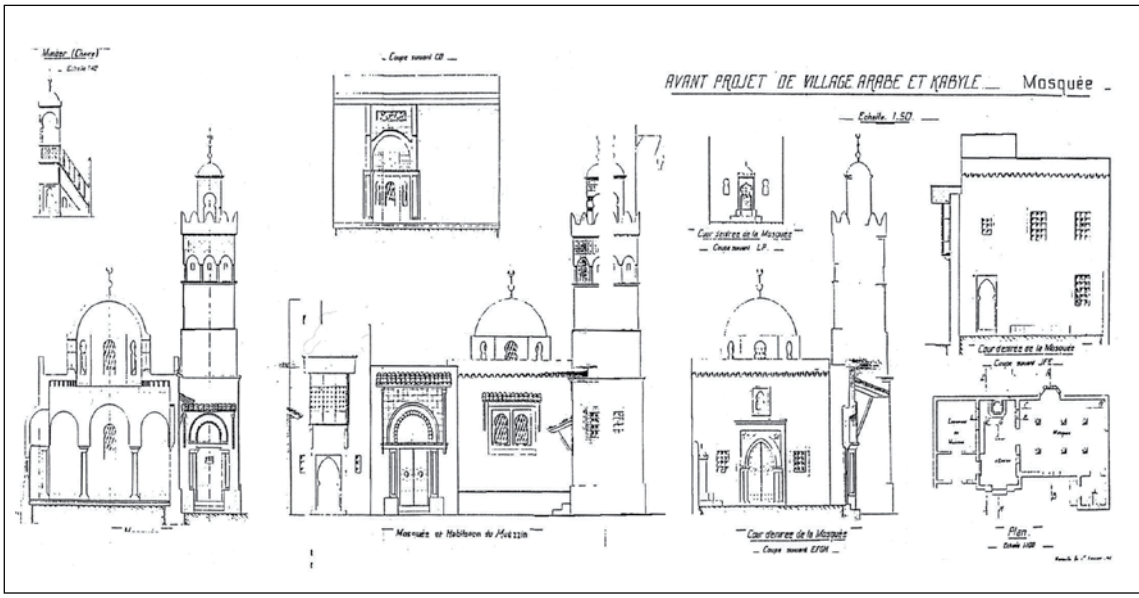
115. The idea that the social and political organisation of the Kabyle villages resembled the egalitarian forms of democracy of the Greek polis was part of the Kabyle Myth, in which it was opposed to the hierarchic and despotic political organisation of "the Arabs" (Lorcin 1995).

116. "*Tout à égout"* was the slogan of modernist movements concerned about hygiene in France in the late 19th century (De Swaan 1996: 143).

117. ["La prière, assez négligée par les indigènes des campagnes et surtout par les ouvriers, peut se faire dans tout endroit exempt de souillures…" ] (Renseignement fournis par le gouvernement de l'Algérie).

118. The future residents would not hesitate to "become acclimatised" (*s'y acclimater*) if they would find "a milieu which is similar to the one they leave behind" (*un milieu semblable à celui qu'ils quittent*). Citations from "Avant projet d'un village Arabe et Kabyle" February 1 1917.

because of the way several foundational ideas of the French colonial regime were being combined in framing the creation of the village. First, there were the modernist ideas on order and hygiene and on the possibilities of improving the living conditions and social habits of populations via urban planning and architecture. In the colonies, these modernist ideas had become embroiled with the ideology of a civilizing mission.[119] The Kabyle village in Marseilles was in that sense a unique opportunity to design anew a village which was both traditional and modern but which would not copy the flaws of the original version, such as the tendency to be "very dirty".[120]




*Picture 3.1 Project for Kabyle village, 1916*

Second, the project for a Kabyle village in Marseilles, was framed in light of more widely developed efforts during the First World War to create housing and accommodations for colonial workers and soldiers. Officials from Algeria, Tunis and Morocco were placed on secondment in France and charged with "recreating the atmosphere of the countries of origin". In the Paris region Moorish cafés and makeshift prayer houses were created close to hostels and nurseries

119. Marshall Thomas Robert Bugeaud, for example, initiated the construction of model villages in Algeria in 1838 and 1845, which would help attach the Arabs to the land and encourage agricultural pursuits. The French were involved in the construction of houses and public utilities, such as fountains, wells, public baths and markets. In West Africa French colonial administrators intervened to establish model native cities with roads, potable water, sewers and electric lights, or they tried to modify the appearance of African villages. Lorcin 1995: 38; Çelik 1997: 123-124. See Ageron 1980: 25ff; Lorcin 1995: 80; Conklin 1997: 50 and 70; and Amselle 2003: 60ff..

120. A similar project for a village for Algerian workers was developed in Lyons in 1927. This project was called the *Cité-jardin kabyle moderne* (Granet 1993: 35-37). A wooden mosque also existed in Toulouse in the 1920s (Frégosi et al. 2006: 42).

for North-African immigrants (Sbaï 2006: 232). The impermanent barracks camps and hostels were usually located at a distance from French society.[121]

Third, the idea of establishing a separate village together with a small mosque, was also to be understood in light of policy efforts to accommodate the religious needs of Muslim colonial soldiers.[122] Against the background of Turkish-German propaganda[123] and in an attempt to strengthen the morale of the colonial soldiers, French authorities sought to make use of Muslim religious personnel and created facilities for Islam in France.[124] At the end of 1914 the chérif Si Ibrahim Ben El-Hadj Mohammed visited wounded Muslim soldiers in France, accompanied by fifteen Moroccan soldiers (*goumiers*), for which he later received the *Légion d'honneur*. Military officers had instructions to respect the Muslim religious funeral rites and dietary obligations and in 1917 a *Journée de l'armée d'Afrique et des troupes coloniales* was organised to collect funds for war casualties among the colonial soldiers. In 1914 a hospital had also been created in the "colonial garden" of Nogent-sur-Marne which catered to Muslims, and in 1915 the CIAM had suggested the construction of a wooden mosque. The temporary mosque was inaugurated in April 1916 and was financed with a subsidy from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of War as well as with gifts collected among Muslims in the colonies.[125]

Fourth, the Kabyle village was also represented as "an attraction" that could occasionally be visited by the French population of Marseilles. The village therefore was seen as a kind of genuine version of the replica villages that were being displayed at the colonial exhibitions. It is to these exhibitions that I now turn.

### 3.3.2. Representations of Islam at the colonial exhibitions in Marseilles

From the second half of the 19th century onwards the display of colonized territories and cultures became an increasingly important aspect of the World Exhibitions. Colonial sections were created for the first time at the exposition in Amsterdam in 1867 and special colonial expositions were held in Paris and Marseilles (both in 1906), Marseilles (1922), Strasbourg (1924), London (1924-1925), Paris (1931) and Porto (1934).[126] The exhibitions served to inform the general public about indigenous societies and the overseas colonies as well as to develop and cultivate support for colonial endeavours. France had to make considerable military and economic sacrifices in order to establish and maintain a colonial empire, but until the late 19th century the colonial empire met with overt scepticism and indifference by the French public and political classes (Andrew and Kanya-Forstner 1981: 12ff.). But the exhibitions would also

121. As MacMaster (1997: 84) observes: "A key feature of the social, political and economic organisation of the Algerians in France was their spatial location in dense 'micro-ghettos' or urban enclaves".

122. Le Pautremat 2003: 152. See also Recham 1996.

123. The Germans had set up a camp in Zossen where Muslim prisoners of war were incarnated and where they would find all necessary religious facilities, including a mosque (Le Pautremat 2003: 329).

124. These efforts were based on advises by the CIAM (Le Pautremat 2003: 152).

125. On the mosque in Nogent-sur-Marne see Le Pautremat 2003: 332; Granet 1993: 26; and Kepel 1991: 68. For further discussion on Algerians in the French army see Recham 1996.

126. See Leprun 1986 ; Lebovics 1992 ; Çelik 1992, Blanchard and Boëtsch (eds) 2005; Gouda 1995 ; Morton 2000 ; Simpson-Fletcher 1999a and 1999b; and Bloembergen 2001.

offer a pleasant pass-time to their visitors. They were not only places of instruction but also of amusement.

Marseilles hosted national colonial exhibitions in 1906 and in 1922.[127] In 1902 the Chamber of Commerce of Marseilles and the *Conseil Général des Bouches-du-Rhône*, developed plans for a colonial exhibition that would show more fully the human and economic potential of the colonies. Jules Charles-Roux, who presided over the local *Union Coloniale* and was a close friend of general Hubert Lyautey, was selected as the general commissioner of this national colonial exhibition. On a site of 24 hectares at the Place du Prado, 50 palaces and pavilions were displayed. The visitors could admire a number of typical scenes of indigenous villages, a life-size replica of the Cambodian temple of Angkor Wat and the minarets of the Algerian and Tunisian pavilions. With almost two million visitors the exhibition was a great success.

The success of the 1906 exhibition led to the idea of organizing a decennial update in Marseilles, which however was postponed because of the war. When the second exhibition in Marseilles was held after all in 1922 it was even more successful than the first. Under the presidency of Adrien Artaud the exhibition site at the Parc du Prado was enlarged to 36 hectares. When the exhibition closed in November 1922, three million people had been able to admire the displays of everyday village life in the replica West African villages, visit the 57 meters high West African tower, or wander around in the Near Eastern compound with its Moroccan, Algerian and Tunisian palaces. Colonial troops from Indochina, West Africa, Morocco and Algeria paraded at the exhibition site, where they were praised for their loyalty to France and bravery in combat.

For Marseilles the colonial exhibitions were a unique occasion to articulate the special relations between the city and the French colonial empire. The city was spoken of as the Gateway to the Orient (*Porte de l'Orient*) and as the Capital of the Colonies (*Capitale des Colonies*). The sobriquet "Gateway to the Orient" illustrated – as Yaël Simpson-Fletcher argues (1999a: 105ff.) – that Marseilles was both exit, entrance, and transit point for the Orient. Speaking of the "Capital of the Colonies" created an image of a city that was essentially a part of the colonies.[128] More than in other French cities the colonies were tangibly present in Marseilles in the forms of peoples, smells, images and sounds. The realistic evocation of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia in the form of replica streets and pavilions owed its success in part to the fact that the Mediterranean sun and the mountainous landscape constituted the natural *décor* for a colonial exhibition. While walking around in the Tunisian pavilion, the journalist André Dubosque (1922: 202) had the feeling of actually being on the other side of the Mediterranean. A reviewer commenting on the exhibition of 1922 wrote: "The Mediterranean does not separate, it unites for ever these two provinces that Rome has handed down to France, the *Provence* and Algeria".[129]

Marseilles provided a décor that could help to bridge the tensions that were invariably part of the staging of colonized societies for a European audience. French visitors could admire the

127. In this part on the colonial exhibitions in Marseilles I draw extensively on Simpson-Fletcher 1999a and 1999b. See also Leprun 1986.

128. The monumental stairs of the St Charles train station, which were built to commemorate the 1922 colonial exhibition, included statues that represented the Asian and African colonies and a statue entitled *Marseille Porte de l'Orient*.

129. ["La Méditerranée ne sépare point, elle unit à jamais les deux provinces que Rome a léguées à la France, la Provence et l'Algérie"] (Ripert 1922 : 546).

Arab houses or the West African villages, where they would see African families from Mauritania, Senegal, the Ivory Coast and French Sudan engaged in everyday activities of village life. Western objects, even if commonly used in the colonies, were rigorously excluded from the picture (Simpson-Fletcher 1999a: 137). At the same time the exhibitions meant to show how, thanks to hard work, indigenous society and economy had been developed. The journalist Émile Ripert argued that the Algerian pavilion at the exhibition in Marseilles invited the visitors to contemplate "the results of eighty years of French colonisation". French visitors could see how indigenous craftsmanship had been improved, and how the French had "fertilised a ground that had for such a long time been ravaged" and developed a flourishing wine industry in Algeria, even though "good Muslims ought not drink wine" (Ripert 1922: 542). The representations of Islam and of mosque buildings at the exhibitions was also characterised by the tension between the will to display authentic indigenous life and the will to show the beneficent results of French colonial rule.[130]

At the universal exposition in Paris in 1878 for the first time an Algerian pavilion was built, which contained a Moorish café as well as a reproduction of a mosque in Tlemcen with a minaret of 30 meters. Small Islamic houses of worship were also displayed as parts of the Senegalese villages at the exhibitions in Paris in 1889 and in Lyons in 1894.[131] These small mosque buildings were fully absorbed in the replicas of African villages and to complete the picture indigenous peoples would worship in the imitation mosque. This was entirely different in the case of the "spectacle mosques" (Leprun 1986). These kind of replicas of large and purpose built mosques started to appear at colonial exhibitions in the late 19th century. In Marseilles the Algerian pavilion in 1906 had a minaret. In 1922 mosques could be seen in the Algerian, Tunisian and Moroccan sections.

The display of replicas of purpose-built mosques served the curiosity of the audience for typical Islamic architecture. But now that France was positioning itself as a "friend of Islam" and as a Great Muslim Power, the way symbols of Islam were being displayed had become an important and sensitive issue. It would seem inappropriate, for example, to create the kind of spectacle as had been done in Paris in 1889 when the mosque was only the façade for a dance hall. At the 1922 colonial exhibition a mixture was made between a display of prestigious mosque architecture and the will to show respect for indigenous culture and religion. Thus in the Tunisian section a muezzin called out for the hours for Muslim prayer, and the functioning mosque was accessible only to the faithful (Simpson-Fletcher 1999a: 163).

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130. The *mis en scène* of colonial societies and indigenous culture through architecture and representation moved between two extremes (Leprun 1986). On the one extreme the organisers could choose to display true and accurate copies of indigenous architecture and to reproduce as authentically as possible indigenous houses, villages, mosques or temples. On the other extreme stood the possibility of using the exhibitions to display fantasy buildings, which combined elements taken from different places to give a synthetic representation of an architectural culture, in the form of quasi Arab palaces, composite assemblages and fairy tale palaces (Leprun 1986: 96). The kind of architecture that would dominate at a particular exhibition would also depend on the ideas of the organisers. One mode of display which combined authenticity with amusement, was the *rue spectacl*e which could be seen at the 1889 exhibition in Paris. At this exhibitions a remake of an Arab street could be seen which was deliberately made dusty and dirty to create an authentic atmosphere. Walking down the street the visitor could also see an authentic façade of a mosque, but when he or she would actually enter the "mosque" it would turn out to be a bar and dance hall. Critics who objected to the exhibition becoming a vulgarised spectacle insisted that a strict separation should be made between the didactic aims and the ludicrous aspects of the colonial expositions (Leprun 1986: 108).

131. See also Bergougniou et al. (eds) 2001 and Blanchard and Boëtsch (eds) 2005.

*Picture 3.2 and 3.3 Moroccan and Argelian pavilion at colonial exhibition, Marseilles 1922*

The story of the West African pavilion is also informative about the ways colonial representations and ideologies were being articulated. In 1906, the organisers erected a typical sand tower, 35 meters high, in the West African pavilion. However, in 1922 the organisers decided to build a larger construction, inspired by the mosques of Djenné and Timbuktu. As Prussin (1987: 18) has observed, representations of African architecture at the exhibitions often underlined "the Islamic character of the African empire". These particular mosques had been renovated and rebuilt under the directive of French colonial authorities and engineers. The imitation tower was 57 meters high, and the building itself was three times bigger than the original mosque in Djenné. Thus the French displayed their technical superiority over indigenous African architecture and craftsmanship three times: the mosque in Djenné had been renovated and improved with the help of the French between 1907 and 1909; the replica mosque in Marseilles was designed by French engineers; and the replica was far bigger than the African original (cf. Simpson-Fletcher 1999b).

The fact that the expositions took place in European cities also created opportunities to protest against colonialism. In May 1922, a communist orator protested against the colonial exposition, by declaring that it "symbolized all the thievery, all the murders, all the plundering [that took place] in the name of civilization" (cited in Simpson-Fletcher 1999a: 183-184). Protesters also held a gathering around the celebrations of the building of a mosque in Paris only a few years later.

### 3.3.3. France as a Great Muslim Power: A monumental mosque in Paris

The construction of the Paris Mosque, between 1922 and 1926, was a key event in the articulation of relations between French colonialism and Islam.[132] The idea to build a mosque in the French Capital originated in 1846 in discussions of the *Société Orientale* on the possibility to

132. This section is based on Kepel 1991; Boyer 1992; Granet 1993; Bayoumi 2000; MacMaster 2002; Le Pautremat 2003; Bowen 2006; and Sbaï 2006.

create at the same time a mosque, a Muslim cemetery and a college in Paris and in Marseilles.[133] The same year a commission created by the *Société* handed over a report on the matter to the Undersecretary of State on Religion (*ministre secrétaire d'État au Culte*) arguing that the assimilation of the Algerians to the French required a form of religious assimilation that could be facilitated by the construction of a mosque in Paris. After the capitulation of Abdelkader in 1847 the Minister of Foreign Affairs put an end to the further discussion of the project. In 1894, however, Charles Rouvier, resident general in Tunis, again suggested the construction of a mosque in Paris as a sign of the generosity and goodwill (*bienveillance*) of France. The project was supported by the French colonial party and Orientalists who set up an association that collected gifts and in 1895 a *Comité de l'Oeuvre de la Mosquée* was created. However, the project disappeared from the agenda due to the Armenian massacre in 1896, the political instability in Algeria and the political conflicts between Republicans and Catholics around the Dreyfus Affair.[134] In 1916 the project emerged anew, this time in the context of the development of a Muslim Policy (*Politique Musulmane*) and the need for the French government to care for the Muslim soldiers and to provide for their moral and religious needs. With the support of the CIAM a *Comité de l'Institut musulman à Paris* was established, which supported the creation of a "reunion centre".[135] The committee was a French initiative and the French government was willing to make a financial contribution. The idea was that the Muslim centre would be a recognition of the sacrifices made by Muslim soldiers. The colonial administration in Algeria objected to the plans and argued that a public subsidy for the creation of a mosque was a violation of the 1905 Law on the Separation of Churches and the State. However, in 1920 the government presented a bill for the creation of a Muslim Institute in Paris and in 1921 the Society of Pious Trusts and Islamic Holy Places (*Société des Habous et Lieux saints de l'Islam*) was charged with carrying out the project. This association had been created in 1917 to aid Muslims in their pilgrimage to Medina and Mecca. By leaving the execution of the initiative to this association the principle of separation of church and state was formally respected and French authorities also hoped to avoid the appearance that they merely tried to manipulate Islam for their colonial propaganda (Kepel 1991: 67-68).

The president of the Society of Pious Trusts and Islamic Holy Places, Abdelkader Si Kaddour Ben Ghabrit, was to become the rector of the Muslim Institute of the Paris Mosque, a post he occupied until his death in 1954. The financial resources to establish the mosque included a gift of 500,000 francs from the French State and two donations of the City of Paris, one of 1,620,000 francs and one of 175,000 francs.[136] Ben Ghabrit managed to collect 5 million

133. According to *Le monde colonial illustré* the beginnings of the project date even further back and resulted from a treaty between Louis XV and Moulay Ismail of Morocco of 1767 (Bayoumi 2000 : 275).

134. Bayoumi (2000: 276) mentions that the project of 1895 was meant to be designed in the Ottoman-Turkish style. The project met with hostility in the French press (Sbaï 2006: 227ff.).

135. The naming of the project led to debates. Suggestions were made to call it a Muslim University, a Muslim Institute, a Muslim College, a Muslim Foundation or a Muslim Circle. According to Gonsalve Lyautey and Augustin Bernard, who was a member of the CIAM, a name that suggested a Muslim education centre should be avoided. According to Lyautey a mosque would be a public building that could easily be controlled, but speaking of a Muslim institute should be avoided. He argued that a Muslim educational institute in Paris risked to expose the young Moroccan Muslims to all the "global and social influences" that were concentrated in Paris (in Le Pautremat 2003: 338; Sbaï 2006: 230). However, the CIAM decided in favour of the name Muslim Institute.

136. In 1929 Ben Ghabrit successfully asked the Minister of Finance to exempt the mosque of all real estate tax and direct taxations. This decision was confirmed by two decision of 1931 and 1932 (Le Pautremat 2003: 341).

*Picture 3.4 Paris Mosque, 1926*

francs via subscriptions in North Africa and in the Arab world. Additional contributions were made by the administrations of the protectorates in Morocco and Tunisia as well as by those of other African and Asian colonies. The Sultan of Morocco promised to provide the carpets, the chandeliers and other decorative objects for the mosque (Le Pautremat 2003: 339ff.).

Between 1922 and 1926 the Paris Mosque, designed by two French architects and built by native North African craftsmen, was established in the fifth *arrondissement* in the centre of Paris across from the *Jardin des Plantes*. It was built in a Maghrebi style with "an airy courtyard flanked by arcades of columned arches and a green and white minaret" standing at 32 meters (Bayoumi 2000: 275).[137] Besides a prayer room, the mosque complex provided a place for ritual ablutions, a library, conference rooms, housing for the mufti and imam, a bathhouse (*hammam)*, a boarding house and a Moorish café.

In 1922 the ground breaking ceremony took place in the presence of, among others, the Sultan of Morocco, Moulay Youssef, and the governor general of Morocco, Hubert Lyautey. Four years later, in July 1926, the official opening of the Muslim Institute was attended by the president of the Republic, Gaston Doumergue and Moulay Youssef. In August 1926 the Bey of Tunis, Sidi Mohammed El Habib Pacha, inaugurated the conference room. The distinguished visitors, the speeches and declarations around these events are illustrative of the particular significances that were attributed to the Paris Mosque. The president of the municipal council of Paris, Pierre Godin, declared in 1922:

137. See Bayoumi for a detailed description of the mosque's architecture, and see the website for pictures of the construction of the mosque: *http://www.mosquee-de-paris.org/* accessed on September 27 2005.

> This foundation shows our brotherly affection for the Muslim populations who are part of our colonial empire (…) Ever since it has put foot in Africa, taking up the civilising work, of which Rome has handed over the tradition, France is a Great Muslim Power.[138]

Ben Ghabrit declared that the new mosque would certainly not become a place of Islamic anti-colonial opposition: "[F]rom this place of meditation, work or prayer, political agitation will be rigorously excluded because our thought is to bring together and not to divide" (cited in Bayoumi 2000: 283).

Another element of the framing of the significance of this mosque was that it could be a symbol of gratitude for the colonial soldiers. Municipal council member Paul Fleurot even compared the new Muslim Institute to the neighbouring Panthéon, the crypt in which the French state honoured its most notable political leaders and personalities.[139] Special sections for the Muslim soldiers were created in (military) cemeteries, such as those in Arras, Douaumont and Arcachon.[140] In Fréjus, where a camp and a military hospital had been constructed during the war to cater for Senegalese *tirailleur*s a memorial was built in 1930, which also contained a replica of the mosque in Djenné.[141]

The Paris Mosque would accommodate travelling notables from friendly Muslim states and Muslim elites who visited Paris. With its boarding house, library, bathhouse and prayer room it was planned to function as a display window and an embassy of an Islam of France (Sbaï 2006: 231). Because of the conference rooms, library and restaurant it was said to be a "cultural centre" allowing the French government to argue that public subsidies did not violate the 1905 law. Just like the replica mosques at colonial expositions the new mosque of Paris was also to be enjoyed by the Parisian bourgeoisie. The French upper classes could visit the steam baths or drink coffee or mint tea in the Moorish café. This combination of meanings and functions explain why this purpose-built mosque was widely celebrated in France as a beautiful monument adding to the prestige of Paris.[142] The North African immigrants living in the Paris region,

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138. ["Cette foundation traduit notre affection fraternelle pour les populations musulmanes qui font partie de notre empire colonial (…) Depuis qu'elle a mis pied sur le sol de l'Afrique, reprenant l'œuvre civilisatrice dont la Rome antique lui a transmis la tradition, la France est devenue une grande puissance musulmane"] (cited in Granet 1993: 28). The original transcript of the speech is included in the brochure "Fondation de l'Institut musulman et la Mosquée de Paris", Thouars. Imp. Nouvelle, 1922, p.32. See also Bayoumi 2000 : 285.

139. Estimates speak of between 66,000 and 71,000 colonial soldiers killed in World War I, including between 28,200 and 36,000 North Africans and between 30,000 and 35,000 Senegalese (Le Pautremat 2003: 173).

140. In June 2006 president Jacques Chirac inaugurated a commemorative monument at the cemetery of Douaumont for the Muslim soldiers who were killed in World War I.

141. See *http://www.frejus.fr/Mosquee_Soudanaise__149.html*, accessed on September 27 2005. See also Bernard (2007) "Camps de Caïs à Fréjus", available on : *http://islamenfrance.canalblog.com/archives/2007/05/03/4831671.html* accessed on January 16 2008.

142. There were some protests, however, against the building of a mosque in Paris. Granet (1993 : 31) cites a certain man named Bertrand writing in 1922: ["Comme si les musulmans n'avaient pas déjà trop de tendance à s'aboucher en conciliables séditieux, il faut que nous-mêmes nous leur fournissions les moyens de se voir et de comploter ensemble en toute sécurité, à notre barbe, avec l'estampille administrative!... Il faut qu'en plein Paris nous fondions ce qu'on appelle ridiculement une Université musulmane pour permettre aux gens de Boukhara, de Delhi de venir prendre langue, chez nous, avec ceux de Rabat ou de Marrakech! Au lieu de les européaniser à Paris, nous les convivons à s'y musulmaniser davantage! Sommes nous fous ou imbéciles?"] (L.Bertrand in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, July 15 1922).

including 60,000 Algerian migrant workers in the Paris region, were discouraged from using the mosque. Immigrant workers were sometimes turned away because of their shabby clothing when they wanted to enter the mosque (MacMaster 2002: 74). Colonial workers were expected to make use of other prayer halls, such as the places in the hostels located in the suburbs.

The most outspoken protests against the construction of the Paris Mosque came from those who cared primarily about the plight of the colonial workers in Paris and who challenged the colonial system itself. The leader of the nationalist movement *Étoile Nord Africaine* (ENA), Messali Hadj, organised a protest against the opening of the mosque in 1926 attended by some 2000 migrant workers. A communiqué proclaimed: "The so-claimed mosque will be inaugurated … The Sultan Moulay Youssef and the Bey Si Mohammed el Habil will banquet with the Lyauteys, the Saints, the Steegs, etc. All of them still have red hands from the blood of our Muslim brothers. We must unmask the game of imperialist France and make the treacherous leaders wither" (cited in Bayoumi 2000: 287).

### 3.3.4. Native management (encadrement) and Islam in interwar France

In the interwar period North African workers, mostly from Algeria, once more came to France to find temporary work. In 1921 there were about 36,300 North Africans in France, in 1926 about 69,800, in 1931 about 102,000 and in 1936 about 110,000 (Le Pautremat 2003: 289; Sbaï 2006: 233). They were for the most part housed in the most cost-effective buildings, sheds, ex-army barracks and abandoned factory buildings. In 1924 a special service was created to survey, assist and protect the Algerian population and cut short the activities of nationalist movements: the *Service de Surveillance, Protection, et Assistance des Indigènes Nord-Africains* (SAINA). Foyers for North African Muslims were created beginning in 1926, especially in the Paris region, which contained prayer rooms and cafés. In 1936 the City of Paris ordered the building of *foyers* for North African workers that could accommodate in total 1,250 immigrants. Besides a Muslim hospital in Bobigny, created in 1935, other nurseries and dispensaries exclusively treated North African workers in France.[143] A recent study concluded that during the interwar years the Muslim hospital was "an integral part of a surveillance effort that treated every North African as a potential threat, both physically and morally" (Rosenberg 2006: 197).

In Marseilles many Algerians were housed in a squalid reception camp that had been used during the First World War for workers and soldiers in transit. Algerian workers could also be found in the centre of Marseilles, for instance in a hostel on boulevard Brunel where a small barrack was in use as a prayer room. A *foyer colonial* was created in 1928, the same year a bureau of SAINA was set up in the city.[144] Algerian immigrant workers were constantly subject to special institutional arrangements. There could be no question of family migration and only single male workers could come to live in France temporarily. This meant that the Algerian and other North African immigrants could not establish themselves as immigrant communities in Marseilles in the way other immigrants from Italy, Spain and Armenia had done in the interwar

143. See Attard-Maranchini and Temime 1990: 109; MacMaster 2002; Le Pautremat 2003; Rosenberg 2004; 2006: 168ff.; Abdelfettah 2004; and Sbaï 2006.

144. Rambaud 1928; Renard 2000: 138-139; and Kepel 1991: 75.

period.[145] Besides being subject to hard working conditions, exclusion, segregation and constant surveillance, the 10,000 Algerians who lived in Marseilles in the 1920s and 1930s also were confronted with increasing xenophobia. The few Algerians who managed more or less to stay at a distance from the institutional arrangements and the practices of surveillance and *encadrement* were the *commerçants*, such as those who had established Moorish cafés in Marseilles. These occupied a central role in the social life of the North African migrants. In the interwar period these cafés became meeting places for the members of the anti-colonial resistance and of the nationalist movement ENA (MacMaster 1997: 98ff.).[146] One of the Algerian shop-keepers became involved in plans to build a mosque in the city.

### 3.3.5. Projects for a newly built mosque in Marseilles 1937

Ideas to honour the Muslim soldiers and casualties by building a monumental mosque in the image of the one in Paris also came up in other cities, such as Bordeaux, Lille and Marseilles.[147] In 1937 the founder of a real estate group in Marseilles, Louis Cottin, created a *Comité marseillais de la Mosquée de Marseille*.[148] He made an alliance with the local section of the *Congrès musulman* founded earlier that year and presided by an Algerian war veteran and shop keeper, Mohamed Talmoudi.[149] The two men wanted to establish a mosque and a hostel for North African workers. The Mayor of the city, Henri Tasso, not only agreed to become the president of this patronage committee, but also offered a property for the construction of the mosque next to the St. Charles railway station. Cottin wrote a letter to the prefect of the Bouches-du-Rhône, in which he requested his approval and invited him to join the committee. He explained the initiative as follows:

> Our attention has been drawn repeatedly to the miserable condition of Muslims who transit our city and we have thought that it was an obligation for Marseilles to offer our Arab brothers a testimony of our affection by reserving a hostel for them. Moreover, the 20,000 inhabitants in our city are deprived of the possibility of practising their religion because of the absence of a sanctified building (*sic*) … The Mosque of Marseilles will be a testimony of the French gratitude towards our Muslim brothers who have died for the fatherland.[150]

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145. I discuss this further in chapter 5.

146. See also Renard 2000; and 2005 for Marseilles.

147. See Bergeaud 2000.

148. He founded it together with an Algerian, Hadjem Mohamed Boudjemaa (Renard 2000:143). In 1933 Cottin had already founded the Franco-Muslim association. See "Cette mosquée qui ne vit jamais le jour" in *Le Méridional* November 13 1989.

149. Talmoudi was to become a militant of the FLN during the Algerian independence war. See "Cette mosquée qui ne vit jamais le jour" in *Le Méridional* November 13 1989.

150. ["Notre attention a été attirée a maintes reprises sur la condition miserable de certains musulmans de passage en notre ville et nous avons estimé qu'il était du devoir de Marseille de donner à nos frères arabes un témoignage de notre affection en leur réservant un foyer. De plus, les 20.000 résidents an (*sic*) notre ville se trouvent privés des secours de leur culte, par suite de l'absence d'édifice consacré" (...) La Mosquée de Marseille sera le témoignage de la reconnaissance française à nos frères musulmans morts pour la patrie."] Letter of the "comité de patronage" dated on the 22nd of June 1937, included in Falanga and Temin (1990). In *Dépêche Tunisienne* of August 29 and September 14 1937 Cottin is also mentioned saying: ["... Soucieux de donner la plus haute portée

Interestingly, Cottin underlined that the initiative, which he had developed with two Algerians living in Marseilles, was primarily motivated by the will to improve the miserable conditions of Muslims who transited or lived in Marseilles. Cottin also argued that the Islamic inhumation rituals had to take place in a mosque, mentioning that only those who had been purified in a mosque could have access to "Allah's Paradise".[151] Moreover, the mosque could help to "morally unite the 22,000 North African indigenous people living by our sides."[152] The association started to look for financial contributions, both within the city and from different sources in North Africa. The detailed plans that were made by three architects André Dévin, Paul Duclos and Jacques Garnier and which are kept in the archives of the Bouches-du-Rhône department, showed a mosque complex that included a hostel, an office, a restaurant, several dormitories, a meeting-room and medical facilities. Inspired by the Paris Mosque, a traditional Maghrebi design was made with a square-shaped minaret of about 30 meters, a small dome and a courtyard with a gallery covered by arches.

However, Cottin still had to discuss the project with Muslim religious leaders and above all with Abdelkader Ben Ghabrit, the rector of the Paris Mosque. In a meeting the rector gave his approval, but insisted that the Society of Pious Trusts and Islamic Holy Places that Ghabrit presided over would also become the proprietor and overseer of the mosque in Marseilles. Agreeing with this demand would put Cottin in a difficult position, because the North African religious leaders that supported the project in Marseilles, such the *ulama* of Cairo, had declared that the presidency of the co-opted Ben Ghabrit was unacceptable to them. In his memoirs, published in 1977, Cottin wrote that after their meeting Ben Ghabrit had used his influence on the leaders of the French protectorate in Morocco and on the European elites in Algeria to obstruct the establishment of a mosque in Marseilles if this mosque would not be under the control of the Paris Mosque (Renard 2000: 145).

However, there was another reason for the failure of the project. In Marseilles the *Parti populaire français*, a political movement close to the Communist Party which was led by Simon Sabiani[153], was engaged in a political campaign to gain support among the Algerian shopkeepers and the Algerian workers in the city. Sabiani claimed that he had been supporting the creation of a North African hostel and a mosque for a long time. According to Sabiani, Louis Cottin, who had recently left the *Parti populaire* and a local newspaper that Sabiani directed, merely tried to frustrate Sabiani by presenting an alternative mosque project. According to a secret report of

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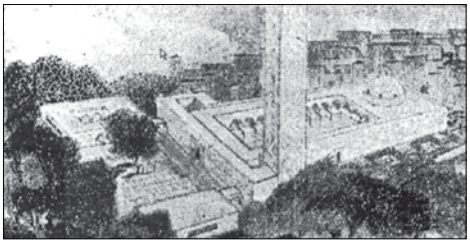
morale à l'oeuvre que nous entreprenons, poursuit M.Louis Cottin, l'initiateur de ce projet, nous voulons dédier la mosquée aux 200 000 Musulmans morts pendant la Grande Guerre, réparant ainsi l'oubli d'un monument commémoratif, qui, depuis longtemps, aurait dû être édifié à leur gloire sur le sol de la France"] (cited by Ph.Barroit in *L'Afrique française* in 1939, cited by Renard 2000: 144).

151. See "Cette mosquée qui ne vit jamais le jour" in *Le Méridional* November 13 1989.

152. Cottin in an interview of 27th of August 1937, cited in "Cette mosquée qui ne vit jamais le jour" in *Le Méridional* 13 November 1989

153. Simon Sabiani had left the Communist Party in 1923 to found his own Social Communist movement under the name *Parti Populaire Français*. He was mayor of Marseilles from 1931 tot 1935. He is known as one of the founders of the networks and practices of partronage and corruption in Marseilles, drawing heavily upon the clan structures to gain support in his struggle for power and control over the workers movements in Marseilles. This form of corporate communism with fascist elements is known in Marseilles as "Sabianisme". Its disastrous rule, financial mismanagement and corruption paved the way for the receivership under which Marseilles was placed in 1939 (see Sanmarco and Morel 1985: 42-47; Jankowski 1989).

July 1937, written by the chef of the *Services de police spéciale* that policed the North African nationalists in Marseilles, Sabiani actively tried to obstruct the project of Cottin. An additional reason for the failure of the projects in the late 1930s therefore was that they had become controversial in the struggles between different political factions of the Left in Marseilles.[154]



*Picture 3.5 Project Mosque Marseilles 1937*

### 3.3.6. The project of 1942-1949[155]

The idea to build a mosque in Marseilles reappeared during the war. In October 1942, the municipal council of Marseilles discussed whether the city could participate in the acquisition of a terrain for a mosque. The minutes of the deliberations mentioned:

> At this time there is a project to construct a mosque in Marseilles, meant for the North Africans who live in the city and for those who transit Marseilles when travelling between France and North Africa. The government thus wants to give a tangible proof of its concern for the Muslim French subjects and to strengthen the ties that unite the *métropole* and the Empire.[156]

Interestingly, once again the mosque would primarily provide for the needs of ordinary North African Muslims. This in contrast to the Paris Mosque, that was mainly to be enjoyed by Muslim notables and the Parisian bourgeoisie. In 1943, when a Muslim cemetery was created in Marseilles, the authorities had linked the possibility of constructing a symbol of Islamic presence to the need to provide for religious rituals. The cemetery had been given a North African look

154. Secret report of a "*commissaire divisionnaire spéciale*" of July 21 1937, copy included in Falanga and Temin 1990: 84. A journalist, René Janon, wrote in November 1937: ["Malheureusement, à Marseille plus qu'ailleurs, la politique s'infiltre partout. Voici les partis en compétition autour de la future mosquée. C'est à qui s'attribuera le mérite de son éventuelle construction et exploitera cet argument pour son propre prestige et pour élargir sa clientèle dans les milieux musulmans."] (cited in Renard 2000: 143).

155. In this section I draw upon a file kept in the municipal archives of the city of Marseilles, entitled Dossier sous série 423, Numéro d'article W34, "Projet d'Édification d'une Mosquée à Marseille". See also Renard 2000 and 2005.

156. ["Il est à l'heure actuelle projeté de construire à Marseille une mosquée, destinée aux Nord-africains habitant la ville et à ceux qui voyageant entre la France et l'Afrique du Nord, transitent par Marseille. Le gouvernement désire ainsi donner preuve tangible de la sollicitude qu'il porte aux sujets français de religion musulmane, et resserrer les liens qui unissent la métropole et l'empire"]. In dossier sous série 423, Numéro d'article W34, "Projet d'Édification d'une Mosquée à Marseille".

by building a typical *Koubba*, a dome that is placed on the grave of a marabout.[157] The mosque of Marseilles should not merely cater for prayer, it was also seen as an opportunity to construct some typical Muslim architecture:[158]

> The realisation of such an architectural ensemble will contribute to the enhancement of the artistic patrimony of our city, while at the same time it will assert the primordial role that our city must play in the relations between France and North Africa [it will also illustrate the gratitude of France towards, my insertion, M.M.] the Muslim subjects for the effort they have made since 1940 and for their participation in the final liberation of the country.[159]

In 1944 the project was taken up by a French *Comité de reconnaissance aux soldats musulmans ayant combattu pour la France*. North African Muslims who lived in Marseilles also wanted to have a say in the project and a delegation of Muslim representatives addressed itself directly to the prefect of the Bouches-du-Rhône, Mr. Baylot. The prefect had a reputation for being sympathetic and helpful for the Muslim community in Marseilles. In a letter written to the mayor of Marseilles in 1948 he mentioned that a Muslim delegation had come to see him and had expressed the desire to see a mosque built in Marseilles (Renard 2001: 150). The Muslim delegation had also suggested that a Muslim secretariat would be established at the City Hall that would employ an Arab-speaking civil servant.[160] The municipality decided to make a reservation of a terrain for the development of the project, located close to the Boulevard des Dames in the centre of the city.[161]

When a new design had been made by one of the architects of the 1937 project, Roger Dévin, and when a number of subventions and gifts had been collected by the committee, everything was ready for the mosque to be built in 1949. Municipal authorities even urged the

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157. Marseille was occupied by the Germans at the end of 1942, after the allied troops had landed in North Africa (Simpson-Fletcher 1999a: 364ff.). The Muslim cemetery was created in the city at the initiative of M.Bourgeois, the president of the SAINA, and consisted of a square (*carré*) capable of containing 1000 places in the cemetery St-Pierre in Marseilles. The *Koubba* that was built by the technical service of the cemetery, was to give the cemetery "the same ambiance as our Muslim cemeteries in North Africa" (cited in Renard 2000: 148). The direct motive to create a Muslim cemetery was the important number of deaths in the camps in Marseilles. The bodies could no longer be repatriated to Algeria because of the German occupation. The cemetery was only officially inaugurated when the *Koubba* had been completed, which was after the German capitulation in 1945 (Attard-Maraninchi and Temime 1990: 152).

158. The cityscape of Marseilles already included a number of prestigious buildings following an oriental architectural design. Three religious buildings which were built in the 19th century, the cathedral *La Major* (built between 1852 and 1893), the basilica *Notre Dame de la Garde* (built between 1852 and 1880), and the Jewish Synagogue (built between 1862 and 1863), all express an oriental inspiration and Roman-Byzantine style. See Barry Bergdoll 1995.

159. ["La réalisation d'un tel ensemble architecturale contribuerait à enrichir le patrimoine artistique de la ville en même temps qu'il affirmerait le rôle primordial que doit jouer notre cité dans les relations entre la France et l'Afrique du Nord et plus généralement ses sujets de religion musulmane pour l'effort qu'ils n'ont cessé de fournir depuis 1940 et leur participation à la libération définitive du pays"]. "Extraits des registres des délibérations de la délégation municipale" December 19 1944.

160. Letter of the prefect of the Bouches-du-Rhône to the Mayor of Marseilles, dated 27 December 1948.

161. Soon it became clear that the municipality only owned a part of the parcel. Because the municipality did not succeed in expropriating the private owner it was decided to reduce the size of the project.

committee to start the construction, so that some of the unemployed in the building sector could find a job. In August 1949, the mayor of Marseilles, Michel Carlini, already invited members of the French government to come and attend the ground breaking ceremony and in a letter to the prefect he insisted that the French president should also give *acte de présence* at that occasion. It seemed that finally the building of a mosque in Marseilles seemed nearby… had it not been for the rector of the Paris Mosque.

In 1949 the mosque's architects had mentioned to the mayor of Marseilles that they had refrained from consulting the leaders of the Paris Mosque. They were afraid that the rector, Ben Ghabrit, would once again insist on controlling the mosque project in Marseilles.[162] Apparently Ben Ghabrit did not like being sidelined for he himself organised in November 1950 a meeting in Marseilles with municipal officials. At that occasion he said that it was "against the Islamic tradition" to build a mosque on land that had been given in lease to a non-Muslim association. According to Ben Ghabrit the municipality should reconsider its gift, and further pursuing his strategic interests, the rector suggested that the Society of Pious Trusts and Islamic Holy Places might build a mosque in Marseilles instead.[163]

The *Comité de reconnaissance aux soldats musulmans ayant combattu pour la France* now decided to return the land lease. However, in the meanwhile the Algerian shopkeeper Talmoudi – the partner of Louis Cottin's in the mosque project of 1937 – had founded a new *Comité musulmane pour la mosquée*. The municipal council of Marseilles decided to give the property and a donation of 2 million francs to this new committee. This decision meant that the project for the construction of a mosque in Marseilles was now in the hands of independent local Muslim Algerians. This was in contrast to the wider governing strategies, in which the financing of Islamic worship and mosques had always been the correlate of co-optation, surveillance and control.

At this point the national government decided to intervene directly. It was now said that the municipal subvention violated the 1905 Law on the Separation of Churches and the State. This was of course a partial interpretation of the law, because the Paris Mosque had also benefited from public subsidies for its construction and continued to be subsidized by the French state and the municipality of Paris. A report by the French Secret Services, dated 21 April 1951, mentioned that French authorities feared that nationalists might abuse the mosque project in Marseilles. A mosque that was not controlled by the co-opted Ben Ghabrit might become an enclave where "Arabs" might engage in "non religious activities" that would be against French interests. Only the personality of Ben Ghabrit, "*ami de la France*", was a guarantee against such developments (Renard 2000: 152).[164] When, in addition, the secretary of the Muslim Committee fled to Tunis in August of the same year to escape from his creditors, the last chances of establishing a Grand Mosque in Marseilles during colonial times vanished. A few years later the municipality of Marseilles returned the funds that had already been made available to the contributors.

162. "Note pour monsieur le Maire", directeur des services administratifs, March 25 1949.

163. Délibérations conseil municipal, April 9 1951.

164. Renard (2000: 152) argues that the strategy of the Paris Mosque was to keep control over mosque projects in the 1940s in Marseilles, Lille and Bordeaux.

## 3.4. Direct policy legacies of colonial rule for the government of Islam in France

The closing stages of the French colonial empire were characterised by savage warfare, notably in Indochina and in Algeria.[165] Despite these hostilities, France managed to establish new political, economic and cultural bonds with the former colonies.[166] Successive French governments invested in the promotion of French civilization and its continued influence in Africa and elsewhere, and generously sponsored French cultural institutions. An important issue that presented itself after the ending of colonial rule was to untangle the linkages between the government of Islam in Algeria and in France. In this respect two issues were of particular significance: the accommodation of "Muslim French" or *harkis* who immigrated to France and defining the legal and administrative status of the Muslim Institute in Paris in the post-colonial period.

### 3.4.1. The harkis

The Algerian war of independence ended officially with the signing of the Evian Accords. However the violence and atrocities of the war did not stop in 1962. During the war the *Moudjahidin* of the National Liberation Front (*Front de Libération Nationale*) (FLN) had terrorised the Algerian countryside. In 1962, the FLN started a systematic campaign to kill those who had sided with the French. The exact numbers of casualties of these massacres are still not known, but estimates go from 15,000 to 150,000 peoples.[167] The main target of these killings were those known as the *harkis*.

In a strict sense the term *harki* referred to the members of the military support units which were recruited by the French, the so-called *harkas* which consisted of 25 *harkis* under the command of an Algerian military officer. However, the term *harkis* was also used to refer to pro-French elites, indigenous notables who worked in the colonial administration and civilians who provided services for the military (the *moghazis*). The French had recruited about 200,000 *harkis* during the war. In 1962, the French government initially refused to repatriate the *harkis* arguing that it was already difficult to provide for the needs for housing of the *pieds noirs* who massively left Algeria to settle in France. Eventually the French government did decide to repatriate some 25,000 *harkis* who were officially called "Repatriated Muslim French" (*Français musulmans rapatriés*). Some 53,000 others managed to reach France on their own initiative.

Almost all the *harkis*-immigrants arrived in Marseilles, where they were temporarily housed in the Sainte-Marthe camp and then dispersed to other camps, such as the camp Larza (in the Aveyron region) and to camps in the regions around Arles and the Pyrenees. In 1963 and 1964 the French government started building barracks in some camps, as well as special villages for *harkis* and forestry hamlets (*hameaux forestiers*), where the newcomers could live with

165. See Dalloz 1987; Hargreaves 1988; Stora 1991; and Shepard 2006.

166. Already in 1963, for example, the Cultural Association France Algeria was established. See Hargreaves 1988: 172.

167. Jordi and Hamoumou 1999: 36ff. See also Charbit 2005; and Besnaci-Lancou and Manceron 2008.

their families for a few years and work in forestry and agriculture. The housing of the *harkis* in special camps and villages that were managed by French war veterans and *pieds noirs* resulted from the need to provide rapidly some sort of housing for the newcomers. But the creation of special resorts in the French countryside for the *harkis*, and not for the *pieds noirs* for example, was also based on estimations that the Algerians were unable to live in French neighbourhoods or cities (Jordi and Hamoumou 1999: 95).

The *harkis* were called "Muslim French", but the term "Muslim" primarily referred to the North African or Algerian origins of the newcomers. Many of the pro-French Algerians did not practice Islam. In the 1960s some *harkis* even protested against the label "Muslim French" and demanded to be seen and treated as regular French citizens. Still, the administrative institutions that were to facilitate the insertion of the *harkis* in France took their religious needs into account.[168] However, to my knowledge, there was no policy to create mosques for the *harkis* in France in the period immediately following their settlement. In the late 1970s and 1980s, many of the first generation *harkis* began to practice Islam again, which was often also related to the desperate situation in which they found themselves and the lack of interest of French authorities in their plight. Many of the newly founded associations of *harkis* now included the terms "Muslim" or "Islamic" in their names (Kepel 1991: 324ff.). In contrast to many of the post-war labour migrants in France, the *harkis* had French citizenship, and they could therefore take the lead in demanding religious freedom for Muslims. Many *harkis* became the favoured interlocutors for French municipal authorities in the 1970s and 1980s and tried to position themselves as the leaders of the newly emerging Muslim communities in France. In 1978 the *Commission consultative des Français musulmans* was created which discussed the possibility of creating Muslim cemeteries to be used exclusively for *harkis* (Geisser and Zémouri 2007: 44).

### 3.4.2. The Paris Mosque

The existence of the Muslim Institute of the Paris Mosque also immediately presented a challenge to French authorities. The management and administration of the institute had to be taken care of, but there was also the issue of defining how this symbol of France as a Great Muslim Power was to be understood now that the French no longer were an imperial power. In 1954 the death of the rector of the mosque, Si Kaddour Ben Ghabrit, had coincided with the beginning of the war in Algeria. Ben Ghabrit had designated his nephew – Ahmed Ben Ghabrit – to become the new rector. In 1957 the French government decided however to replace Ahmed Ben Ghabrit with Si Hamza Boubakeur, who was seen as more loyal to France (Boyer 1992: 37). After the independence of Algeria, the new rector opted for French nationality, which he obtained in 1963.

Because Algeria was no longer a part of France, the status and the ownership of the Paris Mosque was subject to discussion, which now also involved the government in Algiers. The French government insisted that the mosque should remain a French institution and could not be handed over to the Algerian government. The status of the Mosque remained somewhat unclear but officially it continued to be owned and administrated by the Society of Pious Trusts and Islamic Holy Places. The city of Paris and the French Ministry of Interior also continued to

168. See Krosigk 1999: 169-171.

subsidize the Muslim Institute. The French government thought that the mosque should provide for "Muslim French" and in the 1960s the visitors were mainly the *harkis* who lived in Paris (Kepel 1991: 94).

In the late 1960s the composition of the Muslim population in France began to change because of labour immigration, especially from Algeria. Older conflicts re-emerged in France between Algerians who had sided with the French and those who had sided with the FLN. In this context the Paris Mosque became seen as a symbol of the French colonial state. The opposition of Algerian nationalists and Muslims against the rector, Si Hamza Boubakeur, became more intense in the 1970s. The rector was accused of using the Muslim Institute to enrich himself. This led to protests, especially because the vast majority of the ordinary Muslim immigrants in the Paris region were obliged to worship in poorly maintained prayer spaces. In 1982 the ownership of the Paris Mosque was handed over to the Algerian government. In the same year the Algerian Cheikh Abbas, who did not speak or understand French, was installed as the rector of the Muslim Institute (Kepel 1991: 314). Since then both the French and the Algerian government had sought to employ the Paris Mosque to exercise influence on the development of Islam in France. These and other aspects of French governing strategies with regard to Islam in the post-colonial period will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

## 3.5. Conclusion

Over a period of more than one hundred years the French developed a series of strategies to govern Muslim societies in North and West Africa. One strategy was the co-optation of those Muslim elites and confraternities that were willing to collaborate with the French administration. They acquired the prospect of administering a regular form of Islam, compatible with colonial rule and enabling the French to demonstrate their respect for the religion of the indigenous. In the early 20th century the French grew more ambitious in their role as a Muslim Great Power. They strove to develop their diplomatic role in the Levant, North Africa and the Middle East and even envisaged taking the lead in developing a more modern and liberal brand of Islam. Another strategy for governing in Africa was the shielding of those forms of Islam that were believed to be superficial and syncretic. This was thought to be the case with the worship of the Kabyle and with *l'islam noir*. Colonial governments sought to "protect" these local forms of Islam from doctrinal and cultural purification under the influence of reformist movements. Finally there was the strategy of constant surveillance and repression of all forms of "bad Islam", usually equated with "Arab fanaticism" and seen as a source of inspiration for united opposition against "infidel rule" in the colonies.

The significance of French church-state traditions for the governance of religion in North and West Africa can only be understood in light of these broader strategies aimed at securing colonial rule. The Napoleonic Concordatarian regime of the 19th century was exported to Algeria where a system of official clergy and official religious institutions enabled the state to employ religion to sustain colonial rule. The colonial administration compensated the official Muslim clergy and paid some other costs for the maintenance of Islamic practice. These forms of support remained fairly minimal, especially when compared to the more generous state support for the religious needs of European settlers. The 1905 Law on the Separation of Churches and the State

created a challenge for colonial government. Strict secularism undermined the Gallican element in French church-state traditions because it guaranteed privately organised religions more freedom *from* state interference. The French decided to refrain from implementing the new secular regime in Algeria. Between 1907 and 1962 they essentially continued the Concordatarian-styled regime and even intensified practices of surveillance and control over Islam. Paradoxically, this strategy was justified by suggesting that Muslims were unable to understand and accept the principle of separation of church and state. In West Africa the governance of Islam remained primarily organised around cooperation with selected confraternities and Muslim elites. The French sought to respect the various ethnic and localised religious traditions, and they used financial support for mosque building and pilgrimage sporadically and strategically to sustain practices of co-optation.

The building and renovation of Islamic houses of worship was incidentally an issue. In Algeria the colonial administration grudgingly accepted a little responsibility for the maintenance of some existing mosques, but the vast majority was left to Muslims to maintain. The Muslims were clearly worse off, given that the French had not only destroyed many mosques during the occupation of Algeria but had also deprived the religious foundations of their means to finance the costs of religion. In the first two decades of the 20th century intensified control over Islam was combined with French involvement with the accommodation of religious facilities and support for the creation of 15 new mosques in Algeria. These newly built and more prestigious mosque buildings served to demonstrate the superiority of Western building techniques, concern for the needs of the Muslim population and respect for Islam. The mosques were also represented as offerings to Muslim communities and as illustrations of the good will of French authorities.

In Europe, the traditionally styled, pastiche mosque buildings erected at the colonial exhibitions fulfilled a function similar to their genuine versions in the African colonies: they stood to show how the French respected Islamic culture. These embellished displays of Islamic worship stood in glaring contrast to the ways thousands of Muslim colonial workers and soldiers were living in France in the first half of the 20th century. They were mostly housed in make-shift accommodations, segregated from mainstream French society and subject to government strategies that mixed social assistance with strict surveillance. A primary belief was that Algerians were inassimilable and that they should remain rooted in their Muslim culture during their temporary sojourn in France. The plans for a Kabyle village in Marseilles should be understood in the light of these strategies, even though it also drew upon the imagery of the typical Muslim villages that were re-built in the colonies and displayed at the exhibitions.

The creation of a prestigious Muslim institute and a traditionally styled mosque in the centre of Paris in the 1920s was an altogether different event. The building served to show that France was a Great Muslim Power and that it honoured its Muslim soldiers who had died during the First World War. Because it was located in the centre of Paris and because it was combined with annex facilities, including a bathhouse and Moorish cafe, the centre could also offer a pleasant diversion to the Parisian bourgeoisie. Ironically, these functions of the Paris Mosque did not go well with it actually functioning as a house of worship for ordinary and poor Algerian Muslims. From the moment of its creation the Paris Mosque was a contested symbol in the eyes of those who opposed French rule. In Marseilles there were also plans to create a central mosque in the interwar period and shortly after World War Two. In the "Capital of the Colonies" a mosque would also provide for the needs of local Muslim communities. The plans

were developed by local French elites together with leading men among the Algerian community in Marseilles. However, the French government and the rector of the Paris Mosque intervened directly to prevent the mosque in Marseilles being built in the 1930s and early 1950s. In the post-colonial period the French government and the leadership of the Paris Mosque would continue to join together in order to prevent the formation of autonomous Islamic institutions in Marseilles.