


Upholding Identity amidst Adversity

The Religious and Traditional Practices of Muslim Soldiers in WWI and WWII in Europe

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OPEN ACCESS

Date received: Jan 17, 2024

Date revised: Feb 25, 2024

Date accepted: Mar 20, 2024

DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.12543981](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12543981)



ABSTRACT


Muslim soldiers fought bravely in the first and second world wars, yet their contributions are generally overlooked in historical archives. However, beneath the surface of official documentation lies a group of individuals whose faith and cultural practices greatly impacted their experiences amidst immense challenges in the land of "unbelievers". Throughout the wars, Muslim soldiers grappled with managing their faith, fulfilling their military duties, and coping with the harsh European weather. The tension between military policy and religious responsibilities necessitated significant revisions, adaptations, and a willingness to explore unknown territory. This article examines Muslim soldiers' religious and traditional practices during World Wars I and II, drawing on personal and historical accounts, academic studies, and film footage to explore how they navigated their 'otherness' and the unfamiliar environment. By studying these experiences, we aim to celebrate their resilience, gain insight into their achievements, and underscore the importance of their religious and cultural identity during wartime.

KEYWORDS:

Muslim Soldiers; Historical Archives; WWI; WWII; Identity.

الحفاظ على الهوية وسط الشدائد

الممارسات الدينية والتقليدية للجنود المسلمين في الحربين العالميتين الأولى والثانية في أوروبا

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OPEN ACCESS



تاريخ الاستلام: 17 يناير 2024

تاريخ التعديل: 25 فبراير 2024

تاريخ القبول: 20 مارس 2024

المعرف الرقمي: DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.12543981

الملخص:

لقد قاتل الجنود المسلمون بشجاعة في الحربين العالميتين الأولى والثانية، لكن مساهماتهم يتم التغاضي عنها بشكل عام في الأرشيفات التاريخية الغربية. ومع ذلك، تحت سطح التوثيق الرسمي تكمن مجموعة من الأفراد الذين أثرت عقيدتهم وممارساتهم الثقافية بشكل كبير على تجاربهم في مواجهة التحديات الهائلة في أرض "الكفار". خلال الصراع، كافح الجنود المسلمون لإدارة عقيدتهم وأداء واجهم العسكري ومواجهة الطقس الأوروبي القاسي. استلزم الصراع بين السياسة العسكرية والمسؤوليات الدينية مراجعات وتعديلات كبيرة ورغبة في استكشاف مناطق مجهولة.

تتناول هذه المقالة الممارسات الدينية والتقليدية للجنود المسلمين خلال الحربين العالميتين الأولى والثانية، وذلك باستخدام الروايات الشخصية والتاريخية والدراسات الأكاديمية ولقطات الأفلام لاستكشاف كيفية تعاملهم مع الآخر والبيئة غير المألوفة. ومن خلال دراسة هذه التجارب، نكشف عن قدرتهم على الصمود، وتكون لنا نظرة ثاقبة على إنجازاتهم، ومن ثم ندرك أهمية هويتهم الدينية والثقافية خلال زمن الحرب.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

الجنود المسلمون؛ المحفوظات التاريخية؛ الحرب العالمية الأولى؛ الحرب العالمية الثانية؛ الهوية.

INTRODUCTION¹

The historical connection between Europe and the Muslim world has consistently been characterized by a constant ebb and flow. From the perspective of the Western world, the MENA region, where Islam is the predominant religion, is often seen as a place of backwardness, brutality, and aggression. Conversely, Muslims perceive Europe as a land of non-believers, where secularism and laicism prevail. This clash of cultures leaves little room for religious or political dialogue between the two shores of the Mediterranean. This contact zone, as described by Marry L. Pratt², has always been an alluring domain for anthropological, cultural, and ethnographic studies. Edward Said, the Palestinian-American literary critic and theorist, explores the relationship between Islam and Europe extensively. He argues that the West has a distorted history of misrepresenting Islam and passing it on to the East, leading to gross misunderstandings of the religion and its followers.

In his renowned book *Orientalism*, Said contends that the West has established a clear-cut dichotomy between itself and the Orient, with the later viewed as exotic, enigmatic, and inferior³. The West exploited this orientalist ideology to legitimize colonialism and imperialism, as well as to demonize Muslims and Islam. Said argues that the West possesses an inherent inclination to essentialize Islam, viewing it as a unified and unchanging religion⁴.

¹ To cite this article:

DAOUDI, Mimoune; CHIG, Salah, Upholding Identity Amidst Adversity: the Religious and Traditional Practices of Muslim Soldiers in WWI and WWII in Europe, Ijtihad Center for Studies and Training, Belgium, Vol. 1, Issue 1, June 2024, 147-162.

ميمون داودي، صلاح الشيك، الحفاظ على الهوية وسط الشدائد: الممارسات الدينية والتقليدية للجنود المسلمين في الحربين العالميتين الأولى والثانية في أوروبا، مجلة اجتهاد للدراسات الإسلامية والعربية، مركز اجتهاد للدراسات والتكوين، بلجيكا، مج. 1، ع. 1، يونيو 2024، 147-162.

² In cultural studies, the term "**contact zone**" refers to an area where cultures, languages, and beliefs meet and interact. It was first coined by Mary Louise Pratt, a professor of postcolonial studies. The concept of contact zones highlights the dynamic nature of cultural encounters and the dynamics of power that emerge in such spaces. A contact zone brings together people from different backgrounds, often because of historical factors such as immigration, migration, or globalization. It is a place of contact between individuals or groups historically separated by language, culture, or other factors. These sessions can involve different types of interactions, exchanges, conflicts and changes.

³ Said, Edward. *Orientalism* (Penguin Modern Classics). Royaume-Uni, Penguin, 2003

⁴ Ibid

This inclination is further reinforced by dominant anthropology and historiography, which overlooks the diverse range of Islamic thought and practice, thereby hindering a comprehensive understanding of the intricate relationship between Islam and modernity.

Despite being a Christian himself, Said's work has been helpful in combating the limitless orientalist preconceptions of Islam and Arabs in general, while promoting a more nuanced comprehension of the religion. He also became an outspoken critic of Western foreign policy in the Middle East, saying it was based on ignorance and arrogance but his work on what appeared to be bigotry, denying Muslims privilege to shape their own destiny and limited attention to the Middle East has met with criticism of their hegemony and pursuit of power. However, his work has faced criticism for its perceived pessimism, its failure to acknowledge the agency of Muslims in shaping their own destinies, and its limited focus on the Middle East, disregarding the atrocities committed by France, Italy, and Spain in North Africa in their pursuit of dominance and control.

In order to comprehend the source of this hostility, it is necessary to delve into the past and revisit the Moorish invasion of Spain in 711 and the Crusades (1095-1291). The swift and decisive conquest of Europe by the Muslims left a profound scar on the European psyche, as highlighted by Khalid Bekkaoui in his book *Signes of Spectacular Resistance*¹. Consequently, following the fall of Granada in 1492 and the collective expulsion of Muslims from Europe, the major European powers became fixated on seeking retribution for the seven centuries during which Muslims governed the Iberian Peninsula. During a speech on the topic of "global threat" in Washington in 2006, José Maria Aznar drew a parallel between the struggle against Muslims and the concept of Reconquista. He asserted, "It's a matter of us or them. The West did not initiate an attack on Islam; rather, it was they who attacked us... We are constantly under assault and must defend ourselves. I stand in support of Ferdinand and Isabella"². Aznar also called upon Muslims to apologize for the invasion of Spain in the eighth century.

Nowadays, no one denies that Al-Andalus is the most glorious period in Spain's history. Under Muslims rule, Spain was the epicenter of human civilization, particularly under the

¹ Khalid, Bekkaoui. *Signes of Spectacular Resistance: The Spanish Moor and British Orientalism*. Maroc. Impremerie Najah El Jadida. 1998

² Charles, Hirschkind. *The Contemporary Afterlife of Moorish Spain*. Western Political Science Association 2010 Annual Meeting Paper, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1580616>

Umayyad dynasty, when the region saw unprecedented affluence and creative success. This period witnessed remarkable prosperity and cultural achievements, with the Umayyads constructing magnificent palaces and mosques, while also fostering advancements in science, philosophy, and literature. Al-Andalus became a vibrant melting pot of diverse cultures, where Muslims, Christians, and Jews coexisted in relative harmony.

The Muslim rule in the Iberian Peninsula left a lasting impact on the region. Muslims introduced innovative agricultural techniques and technologies, as well as constructed impressive cities and monuments that still stand today as a testament to the skill of Muslim architects. This period also saw developments in fields such as philosophy, science, medicine and literature. The influence of Islamic rule can still be seen in the language and culture of the Iberian Peninsula. Conversely, European colonists brought turmoil and conflict to their former colonies, as they attempted to maintain political, economic and economic control over the continent. In contrast, European colonialism led to chaos and conflict in their former colonies, as they sought to maintain political, economic, and financial control over the continent.

The contact between European and Muslim populations during colonial expansion resulted in a clash of civilizations, which was frequently exacerbated by dominant Orientalist narratives. These narratives maintained false perceptions of Arabs and Muslims, influencing the western prism through which the MENA region was regarded, depicting them as exotic, backward, and inherently incompatible with Western principles. Such prejudices not only shaped colonial administration but also permeated into the psyche of the Western world in general.

The interaction between European and Muslim populations during colonial expansion often resulted in a clash of civilizations, fueled by dominant Orientalist narratives that portrayed Arabs and Muslims as exotic and incompatible with Western principles. These prejudices not only influenced colonial administration but also shaped the perception of the MENA region in the Western world.

The animosity of the Western world towards Muslims was intensified due to the invasions of North African countries by empires and the subsequent resistance from the locals. However, the French military authorities were able to enlist troops from their colonies to fight against

the Germans in both World Wars. Whether they were conscripted or volunteered, the Moroccan soldiers made a distinct impact on all the battlefields with their unwavering determination and bravery. They left a lasting impression on both their enemies and comrades, showcasing their effectiveness in even the most challenging terrains, particularly in the mountains of Italy (Monti Cassino). The following quote corroborates the aforementioned statements and enclose the prevailing French rhetoric about the Moroccan soldiers in particular. Lieutenant-Colonel Leblanc wrote:

Under the orders of brave hardworking officers, they [the goumiers] showed themselves to be remarkable soldiers. Above all, the tabors were mountain soldiers, recruited among the Berbers of the Middle Atlas. They feel at ease in the difficult terrain. They used their native qualities of combat ... their rural habits, their resistance to fatigue, cold weather, and hunger, to give them an unquestionable superiority over the European enemy.¹

The exceptional fighting skills of these soldiers, known as the 'Swallows of Death' between the Germans, compelled the French high command to issue new military orders to their officers, instructing them to provide the necessary facilities for Muslim soldiers to practice their religious rituals to the fullest extent possible.

The French military authorities' accommodation of Muslim soldiers during World War II has been a topic that has not received much scholarly attention. Nevertheless, it is a subject of great historical and contemporary significance. The preconceived images that French officers hold about Morocco and its people have a significant impact on how the tirailleurs and gomiers are treated compared to other troops. Muslim soldiers, many of whom originated from colonial territories, not only found themselves fighting on the front lines but also battling against existing prejudices that diminished their contributions and identities. According to scholar Reina Lewis, "Muslim soldiers often became the focal point for colonial anxieties about the 'otherness' of Islam in relation to Western values"². This highlights the link between colonial concerns and the portrayal of Muslim troops, further complicating their experiences.

¹ Yves, Salkin,. *Histoires des Goums Marocains*. Paris: La Koumia, 1989

² Ilya, Parkins. "Interview with Reina Lewis." *Australian Feminist Studies*, undefined (2018). doi: 10.1080/08164649.2019.1567258

During the Second World War, the situation differed slightly from that of the First World War in France. The official authorities recognized the significance of religious faith among North African soldiers and the growing threat of German propaganda. As a result, accommodating religious beliefs within the French army became a top priority. Collaboration between the “Bureau des Affaires Indigènes” and local authorities in Morocco intensified to provide qualified imams to support Muslim soldiers on the front lines with their sacred customs, burial procedures, and the observance of holy days. These actions restored order within the troops, strengthened trust between soldiers and officers, and effectively countered German propaganda, boosting the soldiers' focus and determination in combat.

Allies' military authorities seem have learned from their experience in the First World War, when the Germans launched the war propaganda, which to some extent could destabilize North African soldiers' troops and make doubt penetrate their souls and turned their steadiness to ambivalence. The German-Ottoman tentative to give the war a religious dimension to the extent that they built the country's first mosque in a prisoner-of-war camp in Wünsdorf near Berlin in order to urge the Muslim colonial soldiers to stop fighting with their colonizers and hold their weapons against rather than with the motherland. Obviously, the time of spreading the propaganda pamphlets was based upon military intelligence reports, because Muslim soldiers during that time were feeling themselves deprived all the religious assistance in the war. In this regard, Richard Fogarty states:

Allied military authorities have clearly taken lessons from their experiences during the First World War, particularly in response to the German propaganda efforts that targeted North African soldiers. The Germans attempted to sow doubt and ambivalence among these troops by introducing a religious dimension to the conflict, even going so far as to construct a mosque in a prisoner-of-war camp near Berlin. This move was aimed at persuading the Muslim colonial soldiers to stop fighting with their colonizers and hold their weapons against rather than with the motherland. The timing of the propaganda distribution was carefully planned based on military intelligence reports, as Muslim soldiers were feeling a lack of religious support during the war. Richard Fogarty highlights these tactics in his analysis.

Burial of the dead was an obvious concern for many soldiers facing death in a faraway, non-Muslim land. One Algerian soldier, for instance, lamented the placement of Muslims and ‘unbelievers’ in mass graves at the front. French officials recognized this as one of the most serious issues they faced in using Muslim soldiers.¹

In the end, the French officials, working together with the Sultan of Morocco, successfully dismantled and countered the propaganda. They also persuaded the foreign soldiers that their involvement in the war was a form of Jihad against a mutual enemy. Additionally, they instilled the belief that failure to defeat the Germans would result in both Europe and Africa falling under German rule in the future.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

Moroccan soldiers prioritize prayer as one of their utmost concerns. Despite the challenging circumstances of war, they make every effort to fulfill their religious obligations by finding appropriate locations and times to pray. Prayer, being the cornerstone of Islam, is performed in accordance with the ‘Sharia’ (Islamic doctrine) under specific conditions. With the ample provisions provided to Muslims, there is no valid excuse for neglecting prayer. Hence, Muslim soldiers are highly committed to performing their daily prayers, regardless of the adversities of war. On the contrary, prayer grants them inner peace and comfort. Additionally, observing the month-long fast of Ramadan, where food and drink are prohibited from dawn until sunset, is another religious practice followed even during wartime. However, exceptions are made for those who are physically and mentally exhausted or ill due to their military duties.

The Moroccan soldiers also tried to uphold other Islamic principles, including abstaining from alcohol and pork. They followed these dietary restrictions and sought alternatives consistent with their religious beliefs. They also fostered a sense of camaraderie and support among themselves, forming prayer groups and aiding each other in their duties. Through their religious practices during the World Wars, the Moroccan soldiers showcased their dedication to Islam and their resolve to uphold their faith amidst challenging circumstances.

¹ Richard S. Fogarty. “Islam in the French Army during the Great War: Between Accommodation and Suspicion.” *Colonial Soldiers in Europe 1914-1945*, Edited by Eric Storm and Ali Al Tuma, Routledge, 2016, pp. 23-40.

The presence of non-Christian Arab troops in a continent traditionally associated with Christianity caused significant turmoil in the Western world, leading to a division between pro-African and anti-African factions. For many Africans, the war underscored Europe's reputation as a volatile region rife with conflict. The evolving political dynamics further complicated the enduring cultural exchange between these two worlds.

The story of European soldiers has been extensively documented and analyzed in a plethora of academic and sociological studies. Additionally, there are countless movies in the cinematic archives that portray them as heroes or victims, aiming to raise funds for their families. Unlikely, the Moroccan soldiers never cared to speak about their experience, which remained by large an overshadowed episode of Morocco's history about the participation in the Second World War. As Driss Maghraoui points out, the colonial discourse appropriates the Moroccan soldiers' involvement in this significant event of the twentieth century, while their voices are silenced in the national discourse¹. Without the contributions of Maghraoui and more recently, Otman Bychou, the stories of these veterans would remain unheard, and the one-sided rhetoric that currently surrounds them would continue to be the sole reference for future generations. Both Maghraoui and Bychou proffer an alternative narrative based on the oral accounts of these soldiers, challenging both the nationalist and colonial discourse.

Despite the significance of the topic, it has not garnered much attention in the national conversation and mainstream narrative in Morocco. The majority of the literature discussing the experiences of Moroccan veterans from the First and/or Second World War consists of basic journal articles in Arabic and French that highlight the important role of the sultan in collaboration with the Allies to combat Nazism and Fascism. Recognizing the lack of available resources and the passing of many veterans, we made the decision to approach their wives for insight. Given that a large number of soldiers were polygamous, we targeted the second wives who are now in their 60s and 70s, likely possessing the mental acuity to delve into their memories and recount their husbands' tales. However, the wives requested anonymity without providing further details as a condition for sharing their stories with us. Moreover, when

¹ Driss Maghraoui. "The goumiers in the Second World War: history and colonial representation." *The Journal of North African Studies*, Rotledge, U.K, vol 19, 2014, pp. 571-586.

encountering women who were hesitant to speak with unfamiliar men, we enlisted the help of female colleagues due to the sensitive nature of the interviews, which delved into topics such as sexuality. Mosh Gershovich encountered similar ethical challenges during his travels from Khenifra to Marrakech to engage with Moroccan veterans, particularly as he focused on their romantic relationships with European women and the alleged instances of rape against the Italian population of La Ciociara¹.

In my oral history project...I met with complete refusal to discuss the matter. A case in point was an eighty-five-year-old former *goumier* and veteran of the Italian campaign, whom I had met in the summer of 2000 at the veterans' bureau in the Middle Atlas town of Khenifra... As the interview progressed... [T]he man seemed to understand where we were heading, or so I imagined from the look that came to his face. 'All kinds of things happen in war', he muttered, indicating an unwillingness to further discuss the matter.²

The testimonies of these wives, from the regions of Taza and Sefrou, leave no room for doubt concerning the cultural disparities between the metropole³ and the Moroccan Berber villages. They shed light on the challenges faced by their husbands in fulfilling their religious duties during the Second World War and later in the Indochina war. F. B said that her husband was repeatedly talking about their suffering with the deadly European winter, which made it for them impossible to perform ablution or take shower for prayer⁴. On the other hand, F. H stated that she couldn't forget her husband's grief about the confusion and the state of loss they lived in the forests especially during winter, which made it impossible for them to observe the first day of Ramadan and the times to stop eating at dawn and to break their fast at dusk. She added that soldiers had always that fear and doubt they may have missed fasting days when Ramadan coincided with long fighting days; therefore, they voluntarily fasted extra days as a form of

¹ La Ciociara is an Italian village south of Rome where the Moroccan soldiers were accused of committing acts of rape and pillaging against the village's population in a barbaric and savage way. For further understanding of these alleged crimes against the Moroccan soldiers watch Vittorio de Sica's movie: *La Ciociara or Two Women* 1960.

² Moshe Gershovich. "Memory and Representation of War and Violence: Moroccan Combatants in French Uniforms during the Second World War." *Colonial Soldiers in Europe 1914-1945*, Edited by Eric Storm and Ali Al Tuma, Routledge, 2016, pp. 23-40.

³ The Métropole is a way to denote the center of colonial power, in this case, France

⁴ Prayer is performed in Islam only if one is clean, this is why ablution is a mandatory condition, because when a Muslim is praying, he is standing in front of Allah.

atonement when on leave. Additionally, she mentioned her husband's constant fear of being buried in a mass grave or left behind for animals to prey on his body.

As a powerful tool of cultural production, cinema has become one of the main podiums for the representation of these new encounters. One major way of representing this is through the depiction of the political approaches to the shared issues. Over nearly eight decades, both Western and African societies have created numerous visual works centered on political themes, each offering unique viewpoints, despite the fact that their views vary in the perspectives they show. The produced texts highlight the history of this dramatic, key period in an outstanding manner. Additionally, Western and African fiction delves into social and cultural topics, examining the influence of these encounters on intellectuals and showcasing the distinct characteristics of each side.

Unlike other African troops, Moroccan soldiers did not find their way to the screen and their stories were put to oblivion either in the country they liberated (France) or in the country that sent them to the war (Morocco). Knowing that most of the soldiers in both wars were non-literate so there are few written accounts of their war experiences; their war is largely locked in oral memory, and that, of course, is a rapidly wasting asset. Unfortunately, only Morad Boucif, the Morocco-Belgium filmmaker, who felt the importance of this overshadowed chapter of Moroccan history, and invested his cinematic experience to resuscitate historical archives and transformed the oral testimonies into visual narratives through his movie “Les Hommes d’Argile” or “Clay Men” (2015).

Boucif's work primarily focuses on the cultural incompatibility of the Moroccan troops who were under the command of French officers. However, it is evident that these troops displayed undeniable efficiency, particularly in mountainous terrains that were considered impassable by the Germans. The film also addresses the issue of accommodating these 'alien' soldiers who hail from foreign lands with different cultures. The religious disparities were taken into consideration when dealing with Muslim soldiers, especially those from North Africa, in terms of their nourishment, clothing, and burial rituals. In one scene in the film the French colonel wakes up earlier and finds Moroccan soldiers in the river performing ablution for the first prayer of the day (Fajr or Dawn); For him it is very strange thinking that they are playing in

the river and addressed violently to the Lieutenant responsible of the squad asking him to reset discipline among the men, but later they have become familiar with those practices and gave them priority. This shift in France's policy towards the subalterns reflects the Empire's vulnerability in the face of the Germans. If the Moroccan soldiers were not deemed exceptionally useful, the Frères-d'armes policy would not have been adopted, and the colonial approach in their relationship with our soldiers would not have been temporarily halted.

The colonel's screaming 'Allaho Akbar', 'Allaho Akbar' at the end of a battle holds significant importance in France's revised military strategy during the Second World War. This strategic approach, though hypocritical, aimed to uphold morale and secure allegiance among the Muslim soldiers, while also deterring German attempts to persuade these troops to defect and fight against their colonial rulers.

THE FRENCH MILITARY AUTHORITIES' EFFORTS TO ACCOMMODATE MUSLIM SOLDIERS

During the great Wars and to save the French blood, France enlisted a good number of soldiers from its colonies in Africa, Asia and other parts of the globe. These multiple races gathering on a European land ignited many reactions from the enemies first and the church, because it was out of question to see the 'Other' race killing the White on a European territory. Concomitantly, acts of violence and victimization between ethnicities within the same battalions reached high levels. To put an end to such problems, the military authorities made many changes in its accommodating policies in order maintain order and discipline among the troops.

Most of the war soldiers were followers of the Islamic faith. Ensuring that these Muslim soldiers have adequate facilities such as a place and a pause to pray, providing halal food and the freedom to practice their religious beliefs was critical to maintaining their morale and commitment to serving the country. This was not only important for France as a colonizing power, but also held strategic and political significance. On one hand, France relied on these soldiers to combat the Axis powers and protect the French Republic, especially after France itself was invaded and a portion of the nation fell under enemy control.

The French military narratives highlight the accommodation of Muslim soldiers as a reflection of the core values of the French revolution, namely "Egalité et Fraternité". This accommodation is deeply ingrained in the French military culture and serves the purpose of revitalizing and reinforcing the spirit and tradition of camaraderie, especially in the face of severe defeats and humiliation. Additionally, it underscores the notion of a collective fight against fascism. Moreover, this accommodation serves as a reminder to soldiers of their relative insignificance in comparison to the greatness of their nation, motivating them to overcome the hardships and weariness associated with warfare.

By enabling Muslim soldiers to practice their religion, the French military aligns with the fundamental principles of an accommodation policy, which emphasizes the importance of respecting and providing space for religious practices. This recognition is crucial as it acknowledges that religious practice is a fundamental freedom, particularly, in staging areas, where spiritual preparation for battle and worship holds great significance for soldiers, accommodating religious practices becomes even more essential. Through this accommodation, the military acknowledges that soldiers are not only members of an organized religious group but also individuals whose personal beliefs deserve protection.

CONCLUSION

French officials' treatment of West African Muslims differed drastically from that of North Africans. French officials assumed that West Africans practiced less rigorous and devout Islam than North Africans. As a result, policies towards West African soldiers could not be monolithic but had to account for a diversity of religious beliefs and practices¹. As previously said, the relationship between the West and Islam has always been fraught with difficulty and suspicion. Both sides perceived a threat, which affected France's attitudes toward Muslim soldiers from Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. However, when French officials observed the soldiers' dedication to their religious practices and cultural rituals amidst the chaos of war, they accommodated their needs and even participated in holy day ceremonies such as slaughtering lambs during Aid-Ikber (religious feast), and most interestingly, some officers

¹ Richard S. Fogarty. "Islam in the French Army during the Great War. op. cit.

expressed their willingness to be buried in Muslim graveyards as an expression of the cultural fusion between them and their men from the Atlas and Rif mountains.

The construction of the Paris Mosque, between 1922 and 1926, was a key event in the articulation of relations between French colonialism and Islam¹ after the First World War. The Sultan of Morocco Muley Youssef was invited to the opening ceremony with the president of France, and this has a great impact on the Muslim colonial soldiers who chose to stay in France after the war and the colonial workers whose number started to be visible in comparison to the pre-war era. Correspondingly, suggestions 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 Marseilles². This initiative was launched by Louis Cottin, who made the principal arrangements with the local authorities of Marseille to make this revolutionary project, in term of religious tolerance and accommodating Muslims, seeing light³.

Unfortunately, all of France's efforts to accommodate Muslim soldiers on its territory during the Great Wars against Germany have systematically vanished with the rise of neo-orientalism following the Cold War, which has identified Islam as the West's major threat. Eventually, France became the official supporter of Islamophobia and anti-Islam legislation, which many countries have followed in recent decades. France, the country that carries the banner of modernity and tolerance, has been transformed from a society that accommodated Muslim soldiers and colonial laborers in every way conceivable to one that is unable to accommodate Muslim pupils in its schools. A country that has enacted laws stipulating the abolishment of all forms of religious (Muslim) expressions including clothing and ceremonies as well as vibrant discrimination against Arabic names, because they believe that all Arabs are Muslims and vice versa.

¹ Maussen, M. J. M. *Constructing mosques: the governance of Islam in France and the Netherlands*, University of Amsterdam, Holand, 2009

² Florence Bergeaud-Blackler. *La mosquée oubliée, la gestion coloniale de l'Islam à Bordeaux*. *Hommes & migrations*, 2000, 1228, pp.29-43.

³ ["Notre attention a été attirée à maintes reprises sur la condition misérable 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.*"] cited in : *ibid*

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