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# French Settlement In Algeria And Its Impact On Rural Areas (1834-1900)

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#### **Abstract:**

This study aims to highlight the importance of both official and free settlement in consolidating the foundations of the French colonial project in Algeria, after Algeria was directly annexed to France and considered part of its possessions in North Africa in 1834. Following this, the new colonial authority in Algeria, after the dismantling of the Algerian state, sought to encourage European migration to Algeria. They promised to settle these migrants on the land at the expense of the indigenous population, providing them with all the facilities to own and exploit it, while making its rightful owners serve them. Settlement was one of the key pillars relied upon by the French colonial administration to impose its dominance over Algeria, control it, and establish the occupation as a reality. The success of their project could not be achieved without settlement, as it alone ensured their control over Algeria and their permanence in it

Keywords: Occupation, official settlement, free settlement, land, colonial administration.

#### **Introduction:**

Settlement was one of the key issues that preoccupied the French colonial administration in Algeria, as they sought every possible means to entice the French and other Europeans to migrate to Algeria at the onset of the occupation. However, the hesitation surrounding the French occupation policy in Algeria, due to security concerns and the lack of a clear vision for governing Algeria, led the French to fear migration to this new territory. To address this issue, after Algeria was annexed to France in 1834, French colonial authorities devised new tools and methods to accompany their expansionist policies in Algeria's interior, especially after neutralizing powerful local resistances such as those led by Emir Abdelkader, Ahmed Bey, the Zaatcha revolt, the Mokrani uprising, and others. The authorities established a new administrative system in the fertile lands of the occupied areas, aligning it with the settlement movement. However, the pace of migration did not proceed as the colonial administration desired, so they issued numerous oppressive laws against the landowners by expropriating their lands and granting ownership to the "new masters" without justification, preventing them from ever thinking of returning to Europe. The administration provided all the means to encourage the settlers to stay and develop the land. the settlers to stay and develop the land. The central question of my study is: Did the French colonial administration succeed in imposing its authority over Algeria through settlement movements between 1834 and 1900?

## 1-The Early Stages of French Settlement in Algeria:

The problems related to the administrative organization of Algeria during the first ten years of occupation caused very slow growth of the European population. Initially, the concept of occupation was unclear and there were differing views on it, especially regarding the status of settlers outside the direct administrative system of France. During Clauzel's rule, the occupation did not extend beyond the capital and the coastal areas. In Mitija, settlers were taking risks with their own safety due to the intense resistance they faced. <sup>i</sup>.Clauzel

<sup>1</sup>Lecturer (A), University of Haj Lakhdar-Batna1, Batna, (Algeria), E-mail: <a href="mohamed.chagra@univ-batna.dz">mohamed.chagra@univ-batna.dz</a> Received: 05/03/2024, Published: 30/06/2024 was given the opportunity to implement his settlement policy during his second term as Governor-General of Algeria in 1835-1836, where he established the first agricultural settlement in Boufarik. This marked the early beginnings of what is known as official settlement. However, the high costs of this type of settlement led to objections from the deputies.<sup>ii</sup>

## European settlers by the end of 1836.

The total	The Europeans	The French	the province
9094	5469	3625	Algiers
3068	2109	959	Oran
1967	1244	723	Annaba
357	200	157	Bejaia
75	54	21	Mostaganem
14561	9076	5485	Total

source: Ernest Mercier, Algeria and Algerian questions, Historical, Statistical and Economic study, Algerian and colonial bookstore, Paris, 1883, p114.

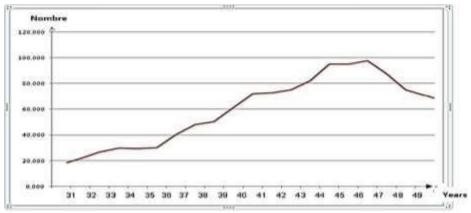
# 2-Types of French Settlement in Algeria:

#### **A-Official Settlement:**

The idea of creating settlements emerged with the full occupation of Algeria, as emphasized by Bugeaud before the Chamber of Deputies when he said, "Settlement preserves occupation..." Therefore, Bugeaud was one of the strongest advocates of official settlement. Initially, he relied on soldiers, symbolized by the sword and the plow, as they were considered the most capable of implementing the official settlement policy<sup>iii</sup>.

Bugeaud aimed to eliminate resistance, seize land, relocate its inhabitants into settlements, and settle Europeans, initially made up of soldiers, by offering incentives for them to remain in Algeria. He sought to form a large army that would be as strong in times of peace as it was in times of war, knowing that he was not facing a real army, but rather the local population. Bugeaud's theory was based on the idea that the army was everything in Africa, and thus the only authority was military power. Therefore, this policy did not cease after Bugeaud's departure; he continued to offer "advice" to the colonial authorities, believing that the army's size should increase in proportion to the number of settlers to confront the "natives" if a large number of them were introduced, as they would inevitably face resistance from the rightful landowners. In his view, anyone who wished to be unjust must first be strong.<sup>iv</sup>

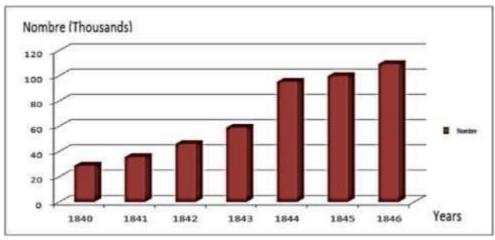
The development of the French army between 1831 and 1850.



Resource: PléeLéon ,Abd-EL-Kader, Our Soldiers, Our Generals, The Figures of Africa, Georges Barba Collection 7, Paris, 1866, p10.

Bugeaud designed a plan to turn officers and soldiers into farmers, believing that a soldier would be more capable of defending his farm if it were threatened. He allotted them lands and distributed them for free, and he established around seven settlement villages in the form of collective farms. V.He supported them with the necessary resources such as agricultural tools, seeds, animals, and even marriage expenses for settlers who wished to marry. Vi.Bugeaud wanted to turn soldiers into settlers. Vii.In 1841, he issued a decree to seize the lands of the rebellious locals to benefit these soldiers, as well as European migrants. However, this policy was not successful. Of the 800 soldiers and officers who were granted land to settle, only 60 remained in Algeria, while the rest returned to France as soon as their military service ended. Viii. However, this did not prevent the Second Republic, after declaring Algeria an integral part of France, from continuing Bugeaud's official settlement policy, but through civilians. Additionally, the republic exiled opponents to Algeria, and these punishments served as gifts that none of the exiled could have doffer. In the colonial authorities also issued calls to Europeans to migrate to Algeria, enticing them with the incentives they would offer. In the colonial settlement policy, but they would offer. In the colonial settlement policy is sued to Europeans to migrate to Algeria, enticing them with the incentives they would offer. In the colonial settlement policy is sued to Europeans to migrate to Algeria, enticing them with the incentives they would offer. In the colonial settlement policy is sued to Europeans to migrate to Algeria, enticing them with the incentives they would offer. In the colonial settlement policy is sued to Europeans to migrate to Algeria, enticing them with the incentives they would offer. In the colonial settlement policy is an acceptance of the entire transfer and settlement policy.

# The number of settlers between 1840 and 1846.



**Source**: Ernest Mercier, Algeria and Algerian questions, Historical, Statistical and Economic study, p 114.

When Bugeaud completed his mission and left Algeria in 1847, he left behind a considerable nun of settlers, estimated at 109,400 European settlers, of whom 47,247 were of French origin.<sup>x</sup>

The Second Republic focused on the settlement policy and developed a plan to deport two hundred thousand Europeans over a period of ten years, especially troublemakers and those with criminal records. The French Parliament allocated 50 million francs to implement this plan, hoping to silence the voices of workers for whom the government had failed to find employment opportunities. They managed to deport 15,000 people and settle them in 42 settlement villages, including 12 in the capital area, 9 in the Oran region, and 8 in the Constantine province.<sup>xi</sup>.

During the imperial era, the idea of opening the Algerian colony to European capital emerged, and the movement of European migration to Algeria became more active<sup>xii</sup> Encouraged by the Governor-General, Randon.<sup>xiii</sup> He built more than 50 settlement villages between 1853 and 1859 and implemented Bugeaud's policy, which relied on expropriating the property of the locals and fragmenting the lands of the tribes<sup>xiv</sup>.

Napoleon III tried<sup>xv</sup> He tried to win over the locals by announcing the establishment of an Arab kingdom in North Africa and issued the well-known senatorial decree, the Senatus Consultum.<sup>xvi</sup> In 1863, he visited Algeria to explain his policy aimed at integrating the locals into European society. However, Napoleon III's plan was thwarted due to the lack of cooperation from the Governors-General, Bedeau and MacMahon.<sup>xvii</sup> On one hand, the settlers rejected this strategy, while on the other hand, all the settlers dreamed of establishing a feudal bourgeoisie protected by the military, where they would play the role of "masters" while the Algerians would perform the role of "slaves."<sup>xviii</sup>

The French government encouraged the settlement movement after 1870 as a reaction to the Mokrani resistance<sup>xix</sup> And its loss of Alsace and Lorraine.<sup>xx</sup> Where it took a new direction to restore some form of balance, and this ide developed significantly from 1871 to 1890, all in an effort to fill the void in the areas that had been taken over.<sup>xxi</sup> European migration to Algeria became more active during the Third French Republic, where 10,000 hectares of fertile land were granted to those relocated from Alsace and Lorraine, which led to an increase in the number of settlers to 334,000 in 1876. <sup>xxiii</sup> The number of settlers increased between 1881 and 1882 after the arrival of the Governor-General, Terman, who established 197 settlement villages and settled 30,000 Europeans in them. The colonial authorities also granted them 34,726 hectares of agricultural land<sup>xxiii</sup>.

The development of the number of European settlers between 1853 and 1877.

The number of settlers.	The years
136194	1853
167640	1856
205888	1861
217990	1866
291073	1872
353639	1877

Source: Ernest Mercier, op.cit., p 118:

This policy began to develop and expand in areas that came under civilian rule, especially after the change in the governance system from military to civilian following the Franco-Prussian War in 1870. The official settlement policy was accompanied by facilitation for land ownership through companies operating in the economic sector, and banks that were established with branches in Algeria to facilitate financial transactions. They provided loans to settlers with reduced interest rates to encourage them to settle and remain in Algeria. This policy is known as capitalist settlement. \*xxiv\*.

With the dawn of the 20th century, the settlement movement increased as real power shifted into the hands of the settlers, due to the measures implemented by the Governor-General La Ferrière under the decrees of August 23, 1898, which strengthened the authority of the Governor-General, allowing him to exercise power freely for the sole benefit of Algeria's interests. \*\*xv\*.Naturally, this refers to the interests of the settlers, in addition to their financial exploitation following the issuance of the law on December 24, 1900, which stipulated the separation of Algeria's budget from that of France. \*\*xvi\*.

#### **B** – Free Settlement:

Free settlement coincided with official settlement in terms of importance and played a role in establishing the first agricultural investments in the coast and Mitija, which managed to maintain their presence despite various crises, largely due to their protection by the French army. Although Bugeaud opposed this type of settlement, he believed it was necessary to maintain French dominance.

The final fate of free settlement began in the last quarter of the 19th century, coinciding with the emergence of private vineyards. These vineyards contributed to the production of wine, which encouraged the migration of Europeans to Algeria, as well as the flow of capital that contributed to the development of the French economy at the expense of the local economy. New settlers acquired land by purchasing it from the "natives" or from former Europeans who had left Algeria, particularly soldiers and officers who had completed their military service, or by expropriation with the help of the administration. xxviii.

The administration provided significant support to this exploitative group to establish their agricultural investments. In 1851, the customs barriers between Algeria and France were abolished, and the Bank of Algeria was established in the same year, followed by the Algerian Stock Exchange in April 1852. The cultivation of cotton, tobacco, potatoes, hard wheat, and particularly vineyards was successful. \*\*xix\*\*

Europeans, rather than Algerians, benefited from agricultural loans to develop their investments, and they demanded more land to expand their agriculture and establish settlement villages. \*\*xx\*\*.

There was a integration between the two systems (official settlement and free settlement), resulting in the formation of a European population in Algeria composed of various ethnicities. They merged together, governed by mutual interests based on plunder and exploitation, and the contempt for the rightful owners, which led to a profound economic and social transformation in Algeria in favor of this exploitative class.

# 3- The Effects of the French Colonial Settlement Policy on the Algerian Countryside:

- The settlement policy left numerous impacts on the Algerian countryside, including: The colonial policy implemented in Algeria, especially after the issuance of the Senatus Consultum law in 1863, established a new administrative system, namely the "douar," which was made up of a heterogeneous group of remnants from fragmented tribes \*xxxiii\* This became the new key to administrative, land, and social division that Emperor Napoleon III sought to use to manage Algeria's affairs, weaken the influence of tribal leaders, and create a leadership vacuum that could only be filled by colonial presence. Thus, the process of defining and dividing land into a group of douars aimed to replace collective ownership with individual ownership, something that could not be achieved without first defining the land and fragmenting the tribes. \*xxxiv\*\* Napoleon III, through this measure, sought to deceive the Algerians by claiming that its purpose was to develop production and improve the living standards of rural society, as he emphasized during his second visit to Algeria on May 5, 1865, stating: "I firmly affirm your right to own the land you cultivate... I also want your

welfare and prosperity...". However, in reality, the emperor's aim was to break the power of the tribes, destroy the spirit of cooperation and solidarity that characterized the rural population, and prevent the emergence of new bonds and relationships similar to the old ones. He also aimed to establish peace and security, and fully subjugate the locals. XXXXV Since they were now under the strict supervision of the army and the colonial administration. However, in reality, the importance of these douars was not at the level of the tribes, and thus their existence became meaningless starting in 1870. According to the decree of October 27, 1866, which organized fully empowered municipalities, as well as the decisions of 1874 and December 1875, these douars, the communities they represented, and their local representatives were placed under the authority of the mayor or the municipal council of the fully empowered municipalities. As for the mixed municipalities, they were subordinate to the administration or the municipal committee. However, the communities representing the douars were not allowed to meet, and therefore their roles became very limited starting in 1871. XXXXVI

- The Algerian farmer, due to the laws related to expropriation and land confiscation, experienced fluctuations in grain prices, which were further exacerbated by the communal years that greatly impacted him in the late 1860s. This was especially problematic as he relied on subsistence farming, which came from the land, something that became impossible with the emergence of individual ownership within the tribe. \*\*xxxviii\*\* In addition, these douars consisted of heterogeneous population groups, which destroyed the policy of solidarity and cooperation among the Algerians. \*\*xxxviii\*\*.
- The emergence of a capitalist (monetary) economy that relies on modern machinery, fertilizers, and the best lands, focusing on intensive agriculture primarily aimed at export, competed with the douar economy, which depended on traditional subsistence farming directed towards self-consumption and relied on conventional methodss a result, the economy of the locals was destroyed, and they were forced to sell what remained of their land due to the failure of their agricultural policies against the greed of the settlers, compounded by high taxes and usury. This was especially difficult since they had no one to defend them due to the absence of the role of jumaa (communities), either in fully empowered municipalities or in mixed municipalities, according to the strict decree of April 5, 1884, which only recognized the branches of the municipality, where jumaa had no importance. Since then, the douars and regular municipal branches had no councils for deliberations, which were considered as labor unions called to resolve issues, defend the rights of the residents, and calm the situation.
- Through the judiciary, the municipalities began to exploit the vast lands of the douars through occupation, sales under the guise of long-term leasing, and the products were diverted to fund the expenses of the French village. An example of this is the statement by the Governor of Oran in November 1911, who reported that the douars under his jurisdiction had an amount of 1,100,000 francs, of which only 110,000 francs were spent over six years on the douars. \*\*xxxix\*\*
- This applied policy led to the bankruptcy of the rural population, who were stripped of their property. The agricultural land under their control decreased from 8,188,410 hectares in 1883 to 5,791,255 hectares in 1903. Their grain production, especially wheat, which represented 80% of their output in 1860, dropped to 72% in 1900. The area allocated for grain cultivation also shrank due to the agricultural policy adopted by the settlers, which focused on exportThis applied policy led to the bankruptcy of the rural population, who were stripped of their property. The agricultural land under their control decreased from 8,188,410 hectares in 1883 to 5,791,255 hectares in 1903. Their grain production, especially wheat, which represented 80% of their output in 1860, dropped to 72% in 1900.

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#### **Conclusion:**

The French settlement policy in Algeria between 1834 and 1900 led to significant and dangerous transformations in Algerian society, especially among the rural population who were directly affected by the settlement movement. They were stripped of their lands, displaced, and exiled without justification, while their lands were given to criminals and ex-convicts brought from various parts of Europe, such as Spain, Germany, Italy, Malta, and the occupying country, France.

This study has shown that the encouragement of European settlement in Algeria by the French colonial administration aimed to:

- Seize all the property held by the Algerians, particularly the fertile lands in the coastal and inland areas.
- Establish settlement villages to attract European migrants and settle them there.
- Create a new social class to solidify the foundations of French colonization in Algeria and protect the interests of the French state.
- Change the identity of Algerian society by creating a dominant culture in Algeria based on French culture and language.
- Develop the French economy by focusing on cash crops that attracted settlers, particularly the cultivation of vineyards.
- The French colonial administration, through settlers, was able to develop individual land ownership and a capitalist economy, thus a small group came to control the Algerian economy in alliance with the Jews.
- Through settlement, French occupation succeeded in destroying the social and economic structure of the Algerians, creating a new social class suffering from poverty and misery, which was exploited by the settlers to carry out their various projects in Algeria.

**Footnotes:** 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>i</sup> Yver Georges, Algeria from 1830 to the present day, North African Questions, 1st Year, No. 3 Librairie du Recueil Sirey Paris June 1935 p14.

ii Karim Ould Nabia, The Algerians and the Colonial Local Administration in the Oran Province (1866-1947), Doctoral Dissertation in Modern and Contemporary History, Department of History, University of Sidi Bel-Abbes, 2005/2006, p. 12.

iii Yver Georges Algeria from 1830 to the present day North African Questions pp14-15. iv Mustafa Al-Ashraf, Algeria: The Nation and Society, Translated by Hanfi Ben Issa, National Book Foundation, Algiers, 1983, pp. 299-300.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>v</sup> Yahya Bouaziz, Colonial Domination Policy and the National Movement (1830-1954), Dwan Al-Matbou'at Al-Jami'a, Algiers, 2007, p. 9.

xii Karim Ould Nabia, Op. cit., p. 16.

xiii MarshalRandon: Born in Grenoble on March 27, 1795, he became Governor-General of Algeria in 1852. He led the invasion of Algeria, which significantly increased his fame as the ruler of Algeria. Marshal Randon witnessed many events, including the resistance in Laghouat in southern Algeria, led by Nacer Ben Chahra and Sheikh Bouchehcha, as well as the resistance of Sheikh Mohamed Ben Abdullah and the resistance of Lalla Fatima N'soumer, which caused him many defeats. He was promoted to the rank of Marshal on March 10, 1856. He did not take a leadership role in the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 due to his advanced age. However, he was heavily criticized after the French defeat, accused of failing to properly prepare the army for such a war. He died in Geneva in 1871. Look; Petit Larousse, Dictionary of the French Language, Librairie Larousse, 17, Paris, 1991, p 1532. xiv Yahya Bouaziz, Op. cit., p. 15.

xv The Revolution of 1848 led to a change in the system in France from a monarchy to a republic, with the declaration of the Second French Republic, led by Napoleon III, who declared himself Emperor of France on December 2, 1851. He managed to consolidate all powers. He visited Algeria in 1865 and announced the creation of an Arab Kingdom in Algeria, but it was thwarted by the settlers. He led the war of 1870 against Prussia, which ended his reign after his defeat at the Battle of Sedan on September 2, 1870, where he was captured, leading to the fall of the Second French Republic. He died on January 9, 1873. xvi Napoleon III issued a decree in which he halted the colonization of lands and recognized the right of Algerians to enjoy the lands that traditionally belonged to them, i.e., lands without ownership contracts. Abu Al-Qasim Saad Allah, Op. cit, p24.

xvii MacMahon was the Governor-General of Algeria from 1864 to 1870. He benefited from Emperor Napoleon III's visit to Algeria in 1865, which led him to dissuade the emperor from his project to create an Arab Kingdom in Algeria, fearing backlash from the settlers. MacMahon sought to encourage French expansion in Algeria while respecting the interests of the settlers, alongside supporting and officially registering small landholdings. He worked on developing infrastructure such as ports, roads, railways, and more to stimulate the colonial economy and expand it further. During his rule, Algeria saw widespread epidemics and famine between 1867 and 1869. He passed away in 1879. Petit Larousse, , Dictionary of the French Language, , p 1409.

xviii Abu Al-Qasim Saad Allah, Op. cit, p. 25.

xix Mohamed El-Mokrani belonged to a distinguished family. His father, Haj Ahmed El-Mokrani, participated with Haj Ahmed Bey in resisting the occupation of the capital in 1830 and in repelling the campaign on Constantine in 1837. After his surrender, the colonial authorities appointed him as the deputy of Maghana. When he passed away, the French appointed his son, Mohamed, as the new Bachağa, a title of lesser value than that of a deputy. From then on, the colonial authorities began to diminish the political and social influence of the family, worsened by the dire situation of the Algerian people, especially the famine of 1867-1869, and the lack of intervention by the colonial authorities to alleviate its effects. This led Mohamed El-Mokrani to rebel and declare a revolution on March 16, 1871, and he continued to resist until his martyrdom on May 5, 1871. See: Yahya Bouaziz, Revolutions of Algeria in the 19th and 20th Centuries, Vol. 1, 2nd ed., M.M.W.M, Algiers, 1996, pp. 232-240.

vi Karim Ould Nabia, The Algerians and the Colonial Local Administration in the Oran Province (1866-1947), Doctoral Dissertation in Modern and Contemporary History, p. 13. vii Abu Al-Oasim Saad Allah, The Algerian National Movement, Vol. 2, 1st ed., Dar Al-Basa'ir, Algiers, 2007, p. 22.

viii Yahva Bouaziz, Colonial Domination Policy and the National Movement (1830-1954). p. 9. ix Abu Al-Qasim Saad Allah, The Algerian National Movement, Vol. 2, p. 22.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>x</sup> Karim Ould Nabia, Op. cit., p. 13.

xi Yahya Bouaziz, Colonial Domination Policy and the National Movement (1830-1954), p. 13.

- xx Alsace and Lorraine: Two French provinces on the northeastern border with Germany, which were controlled by Prussian forces after their victory over the French army in 1870, and were returned to France after World War I in 1919.
- xxi Yver Georges. Algeria from 1830 to the present day, op-cit pp 14-15.
- xxii Saleh Ferkous, A Concise History of Algeria, From the Phoenician Era to the Departure of the French (814 BC 1962), Dar Al-Uloom for Publishing and Distribution, Annaba, Algeria, p. 212.
- xxiii Saleh Ferkous; op.cit, p213.
- xxiv Yahya Bouaziz, Colonial Domination Policy and the National Movement (1830-1954), p. 16.
- xxv Dupond Octave , The Algerian Assemblies, North African Questions, 1st Year, N , Librairie du Recueil Sirey , Paris , November , 1934 p53.
- xxvi Yahya Bouaziz, Op. cit., p. 33
- xxvii Yver Georges Algeria from 1830 to the present day op-cit p17.
- xxviii Ibid. p18.
- xxix Yahya Bouaziz, Op. cit., p. 17
- xxx Yahya Bouaziz, Op. cit., p. 32
- xxxi YverGeorges, op-cit p18.
- xxxii El-Houari Addi, French Colonialism in Algeria: The Policy of Economic and Social Disintegration, 1830-1960, Translated by Joseph Abdullah, 1st ed., Dar Al-Hadatha, Beirut, Lebanon, 1983, pp. 60-61.
- xxxiii Ibrahim Lounisi, Real Estate Ownership in Algeria, Through the Newspaper "Al-Mubashir" under Military Rule, First and Second National Conference on Real Estate in Algeria during the French Occupation (1830-1962), Ministry of Mujahideen Publications, Algiers, 2007, p. 146.
- xxxiv El-Houari Addi, French Colonialism in Algeria: The Policy of Economic and Social Disintegration, 1830-1960, Op. cit., pp. 60-61.
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- xxxvi Claude Collot, The Institutions of Algeria During the Colonial Period 1830-1962, Office of University Publications, Alger, 1987, p120.
- xxxvii El-Houari Addi, Op. cit., p. 71.
- xxxviii Ibrahim Lounisi, Op. cit., p. 146.
- xxxix Claude Collot, The Institutions of Algeria During the Colonial Period 1830-1962, pp 120-121.
- xl Albert Glorieux, French Colonization in its Relations with the Algerian Natives, Study Presented to the Society of Algerian Farmers, Oriental Printing House, P.Fontana, Alger, 1900, pp 7-8.
- xli Yahya Bouaziz, Op. cit., p. 24.

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