

**Contested Classrooms: Cultural Control and Resistance in Alsace and Algeria,  
1918-1940**

by

Bronwen Alexandra Magrath  
B.A., McMaster University, 2003

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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## Abstract

France's Third Republic, which was in place from 1871 to 1940, saw the establishment of the nation's first state-run primary school system. This school system was far from politically neutral: it was designed to strengthen the Republic by wresting control of education away from religious orders and by encouraging the use of a universalized French language. The implementation of French education encountered significant resistance in rural provinces and overseas colonies, where linguistic and religious traditions clashed with the secularizing and universalizing tendencies of Republican France. This thesis explores how education was imposed and resisted through a case-study analysis of French schooling in Alsace and Algeria between 1918 and 1940. The experience in colony and metropole are examined on the same plane, in order to see how France sought to control the cultural identity of its citizens and subjects and how local populations in both locations resisted this imposition.

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## Introduction and Literature Review

This thesis focuses on education as a means of political and cultural control during France's Third Republic. I explore how education was imposed in colony and metropole, how local populations resisted the imposition of French education, and how this resistance forced a re-evaluation of government policy. I carry out my analysis through a case-study examination of French primary schooling in interwar Alsace and Algeria. Taking a cue from a recent suggestion by Edmund Burke III<sup>1</sup>, my goal is to break away from the usual course of world history that seems to operate on two different trajectories – one for the Western world and one for the rest of the world. I place the experience of imposed education in Algeria and Alsace on the same plane, in order to see how the Third Republic sought to control cultural identity and how local populations in both locations resisted this imposition.

Alsace and Algeria present an interesting comparison for a number of reasons. In both regions, religion and language set local populations apart from those of interior France and clashed considerably with the Republican ideals of secularism and linguistic unity. In the former, the vast majority of people spoke a German dialect and understood little, if any, of the French language. Furthermore, Alsatians were religiously observant and had not experienced the separation of church and state that occurred in France in 1905. Similarly, most Algerians observed Islamic religious custom and spoke either Arabic or Berber. As in Alsace, the religious establishment in Algeria was often openly hostile towards the French authorities, whose secularism and demands for linguistic unity were at odds with the convictions of most Alsatians and Algerians.

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<sup>1</sup> Edmund Burke III, "The Terror and Religion: Brittany and Algeria" in G. Blue *et al.*, eds., *Colonialism and the Modern World: Selected Studies*. (London: ME Sharpe, 2002), 49.

My project seeks points of comparison between the education projects in Algeria and Alsace in order to situate the imposition of cultural identities as a world historical process. It is important, however, to note that experiences in these two locations were fundamentally different. The French government sought to quicken the assimilation of Alsace in order to draw it away from the sphere of German influence and integrate it more fully into France. Immediately after World War One, the differences between the German and French “races” were frequently cited as a justification for the *commissions de triage* and subsequent purging of disloyal Alsatians from the province.<sup>2</sup> By the early 1920s, however, any perceived racial differences between German and French Alsatians were minimized. French school texts used inside and outside Alsace, as well as numerous popular history books, emphasized that Alsatians were historically, culturally and racially French despite the prevalence of German dialect in the area.<sup>3</sup>

In Algeria, unlike in Alsace, there was a recognized and emphasized racial difference separating the local population from the French colonizers. Education, like most colonial institutions, was highly racialized. A two-track school system provided two distinct educational experiences: one for European settlers and a small number of Algerian elites, the other for the Algerian masses. The curriculum at the former was identical to that used in France, while at the *écoles franco-indigènes* lessons were loosely based on metropolitan curricula, but with a heavy emphasis on agriculture and manual labour. Textbooks used in Algerian schools contained an extraordinary number of lessons on the benefits of European farming methods. Children were instructed to ease their parents’ reservations about French schooling by explaining the new agricultural

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<sup>2</sup> Laird Boswell, “From Liberation to Purge Trials in the ‘Mythic Provinces’: Recasting French Identities in Alsace and Lorraine, 1918–1920”, *French Historical Studies*, 23.1 (2000), 140-141.

<sup>3</sup> Boswell, 131.

practices they were learning.<sup>4</sup> The emphasis on agriculture and labour, as well as the general low quality of instruction at the *écoles franco-indigènes*, made it difficult or impossible for students in this system to gain acceptance to a French secondary school or university.<sup>5</sup> This is a striking difference from education in Alsace, which was designed to facilitate the integration of young Alsatians into French society.

Several historians, most notably Fanny Colonna and Alf-Andrew Heggoy, have criticized French primary schooling in Algeria as a deliberate policy to keep the colonial subjects subservient. By emphasizing agriculture at primary schools, the French were limiting the future of the students to one exclusively tied to the land. It is also important to consider the role played by European settlers, or *colons*, many of whom were vehemently anti-Arab and refused to allow Algerian children in their classrooms.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, they feared that if an Algerian were able to obtain the same school credentials as a European, the former would be more desirable in government and business because a far lower wage could be paid to a non-European worker. In order to protect their privileged status in Algeria, the *colons* demanded that their school system be kept separate from that of the Algerian masses, and that the former should receive additional funding to ensure that the quality of education met with metropolitan standards. Throughout the interwar period, roughly 80% of the Algerian education budget went to schools for European settlers, despite the fact that they made up only ten percent of the population.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Bernard et Veler, *Le Livre de Lecture Courante de l'École Indigène* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1919). Reprinted in Fanny Colonna, *Instituteurs Algériens 1883-1939* (Alger: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1975), 231.

<sup>5</sup> Colonna, 57-58.

<sup>6</sup> John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria: The Origins and Development of a Nation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 104-105.

<sup>7</sup> Ruedy, 126.

The French government was unable or unwilling to establish an accessible public education system in Algeria equal in quality to that for the European settlers. This failure underscores a number of inherent contradictions in the colonial situation that separates Algerian experience from that of Alsace. The rhetoric of the *mission civilisatrice* so prevalent in the Third Republic claimed that France was primarily interested in bringing social, political and economic progress to the colonies. At its peak, however, the French school system in Algeria educated less than 9% of the Algerian school-age population<sup>8</sup>, which certainly casts doubt on the validity of this claim. The contradiction between rhetoric and action is most striking when one examines liberal reform projects proposed in the interwar period. Almost all attempts to improve the status of Algerian subjects met with such resistance among conservative circles in Paris and among the *colons* that they were quickly weakened in favour of continuing authoritarian practices.<sup>9</sup>

The development of education in Algeria points to a particularly complex contradiction in colonial policy. The stated purpose of building a French school system in the colonies was to ingratiate the local population and cultivate among the youth a sense of loyalty and duty to France. It was, however, precisely those who had received French education who led nationalist and anticolonial movements in the interwar period. The inequalities of the colonial situation were most apparent to those who had studied French republican history and literature. From the turmoil of the interwar era arose fundamental questions about how to govern colonies and, most crucially, about the ultimate aim of the colonial project. Assimilation had long been touted as the purpose of imperial expansion in order to create what one Minister of Colonies referred to as “sixty million overseas

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<sup>8</sup> Ruedy, 126.

<sup>9</sup> Tony Chafer and Amanda Sackur, *French Colonial Empire and the Popular Front: Hope and Disillusion*. (London: MacMillan Press, 1999), 10.

Frenchmen.”<sup>10</sup> But colonial subjects were not Frenchmen, and their attempts to become so inspired extreme discomfort from even the most liberal republicans. At the same time, education policy, which enforced French as the only language of instruction and openly derided certain aspects of local culture, seemed designed to undermine Algerian identity.

Rather than addressing the question of motivations for colonialism, or determining to what extent the Third Republic sought to enact reform rather than maintain domination, I am instead choosing to focus on how education policy was reformed and transformed in the interwar period. This analysis allows me to compare the experience of two regions whose political status was clearly different but which shared similar struggles in defining cultural identity in the face of imposed education systems. In this way, the colonial history of Algeria can be seen as part of the same historical processes that shaped modern European history rather than as something that developed in isolation.<sup>11</sup>

My thesis begins with a review of academic literature on French nation-building, colonialism and education as well as a brief sketch of available primary source material on these topics. A discussion of these sources allows me to locate my own research in the larger body of work on French education and identity construction. According to Eric Hobsbawm, “the progress of schools and universities measures that of nationalism”<sup>12</sup>. This dictum is echoed by Benedict Anderson, who emphasizes in *Imagined Communities* that education played a leading role in the creation of national identity in Europe and

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<sup>10</sup> Jacques Stern, quoted in Martin Deming Lewis, “One Hundred Million Frenchmen: The Assimilation Theory in French Colonial Policy”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 4, no. 2 (January 1962), 129.

<sup>11</sup> Edmund Burke III, “Theorizing Histories of Colonialism and Nationalism in the Arab Maghrib” in Ali Abdullatif Ahmida, ed., *Beyond Colonialism and Nationalism in the Maghrib*. (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 20.

<sup>12</sup> E.J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: 1789-1848* (New York: Vintage books, 1996).

across the colonial empires.<sup>13</sup> Borrowing from Benedict Anderson, I characterize French education in Alsace and Algeria as an effort to create an “imagined community” of French citizens on one hand and French subjects on the other. Standardized textbooks and curricula were specifically designed to promote French culture in both regions in order to instill in students loyalty to France. In my thesis, however, I seek to move beyond Anderson to focus on competing imaginings. My goal is to shed light on how various groups and individuals resisted the imposition of French culture in the classroom and how the presence of multiple imagined identities influenced the realization of education policy at the local level.

A number of general works on modern France and specifically on the Third Republic have discussed education as a key feature of twentieth century French history. Eugen Weber’s *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914*, is an often-cited but very general work on the early Third Republic. Weber devotes an entire chapter of his book to the creation of state schooling in the early Third Republic and emphasises the crucial role of government-regulated primary education in the construction of French national unity.<sup>14</sup> James Lehning’s recent work, *To be a Citizen: The Political Culture of the Early French Third Republic* echoes much of Weber’s argument about the republican school system. Although he allocates only a small section to the topic of education, Lehning does stress that the goal of state schooling was to

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<sup>13</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 124-126.

<sup>14</sup> Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976).

create a universal concept of citizenry. He argues that in France and in the colonies, education was “the Third Republic’s favourite instrument of acculturation.”<sup>15</sup>

In his survey history of twentieth-century France, James F. McMillan discusses education as it evolved from the Ferry Laws until the 1990s. Like Weber and Lehning, he emphasizes that education in the Third Republic was touted as a great social leveller and a force for unity. McMillan, however, is critical of this analysis. He argues that the state school system instigated by Jules Ferry and developed over the following half-century was highly divisive in terms of class and gender. Far from democratic and unifying, the design of the republican education system made it very difficult for the children of the working class to pursue post-primary education.<sup>16</sup> McMillan’s critique is a compelling one, and could provide an interesting comparison to education policy in the French colonies. In the scope of this paper, however, the topic will remain untouched.

The state school system developed under the Third Republic was firmly secular. Many historians, including Weber and Lehning, have therefore argued that the national education project was a method to minimize the political and social influence of religious orders in France. Instead of traditional bible study, the republican curriculum created common points of reference based on stories and symbols that transcended geographical boundaries. In this way, according to Weber, the unity of shared religion and religious observance was replaced with a sense of civic duty.<sup>17</sup>

Robert Gildea and Caroline Ford, in their studies of nation building in the French provinces, have borrowed from Weber’s work while focussing their own analysis on

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<sup>15</sup> James R. Lehning, *To be a Citizen: The Political Culture of the Early French Third Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 141.

<sup>16</sup> James F. McMillan, *Twentieth-Century France: Politics and Society, 1898-1991* (London: Edward Arnold, 1992), 57-58.

<sup>17</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 332-337.

particular thematic and geographical areas. Gildea's *Education in Provincial France, 1800-1914: A Study of Three Departments* argues that education during the Third Republic was a clear attempt at internal colonization. Although Gildea does not include Alsace in his discussion, I find his work quite useful in understanding the theoretical underpinnings of education policy in this era. Like Weber, Gildea argues that the classroom was meant to replace the church as the location for community solidarity and shared cultural experience. Gildea, however, characterizes this "church of the republic" as based on fundamental principles shared by conservative and religious groups, namely that education was designed to deal with social ills and regulate public morality.<sup>18</sup> -

Ford also argues that the republican left and the conservative right had certain fundamental ideas in common, particularly a shared interest in fostering cultural unity. For the republicans, secularization was essential to national unity because a religious population would put interests of the church ahead of interests of the state. She argues that linguistic uniformity, achieved through universal primary schooling, was an essential component of secularization. According to Ford, after 1900 the French government began a campaign to destroy the power of the Catholic Church and conservatism in general, and at this point local dialects began to be associated with monarchism, religion, division and oppression.<sup>19</sup> Although her focus is on Brittany, I find Ford's work useful in its emphasis on the association between religion and language, and on their symbolic importance in both education policy and resistance.

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<sup>18</sup> Robert Gildea, *Education in Provincial France, 1800-1914: A Study of Three Departments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).

<sup>19</sup> Caroline Ford, *Creating the Nation in Provincial France: Religion and Political Identity in Brittany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 8-15.

Denis Ager's *Identity, Insecurity and Image: France and Language* is focussed on contemporary France but does provide a detailed account of linguistic policy since the Revolution. Ager maintains that republicanism is deeply concerned with safeguarding the French language as the most potent symbol of French nationalism. He argues that the concept of French national unity is artificial, what he terms "the myth of the hexagon". Linguistic policy, according to Ager, is a reaction to the fear that if the cultural variation of France is allowed to flourish, the nation will crumble into regionalism. Politicians since the Third Republic have seen the imposition of a universal language as the only way to safeguard national interests from the tyranny of regional and religious leadership.<sup>20</sup> Like Ford, Ager maintains that republican politicians believed there was a connection between regional dialects, monarchism and Catholicism and that the presence of provincial languages was therefore threatening to the Republic. Ager's arguments about the importance placed on linguistic unity in the French Republic provide a strong basis for my examination of education policy in Alsace and Algeria.

The imposition of French language and culture in interwar Alsace has led several scholars to describe this period as one of internal colonization.<sup>21</sup> Jean Chanet's *L'École Républicaine et les Petites Patries* and numerous works by Mona Ozouf have examined the French school system as a tool of acculturation in rural provinces. Like Ager, these scholars focus considerable attention on the symbolic importance of the French language and its imposition on non-Francophone populations. While Ozouf argues that the Third Republic engaged in a policy of *déracinement* by enforcing unilingual education across

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<sup>20</sup> Ager, Denis. *Identity, Insecurity and Image: France and Language* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd., 1999) 18, 29-30.

<sup>21</sup> According to Jean-François Chanet, the first scholars to express this view were Robert Lafont in *La Revindication Occitane* (1974) and Alain Touraine and François Dubet in *Le Pays Contre l'Etat*, (1981).

France<sup>22</sup>, Chanet argues that this goal met with considerable, and sometimes successful, resistance. Chanet's examination of education in rural France is unique for its emphasis on how policy was put into practice. Through an examination of source material including report cards and school assignments, Chanet reveals that the universalism dictated from Paris was often altered to suit needs and demands at the local level.<sup>23</sup> I find this analysis very compelling, and in my work I also examine the way policy was adapted and reformed on the ground. I believe that this approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of education in Alsace and Algeria by focussing on the fluidity of plan and practice.

Stephen Harp's *Learning to be Loyal* examines primary schooling in Alsace from 1850 to 1940. Although his focus is predominantly on education under German rule, his last section is a good discussion of the reincorporation of Alsace into France. Harp borrows from Benedict Anderson by characterizing Alsatian identity as two competing "imagined communities": one German and the other French. His focus lies on how education systems in both nations fostered an imagined national identity for Alsatians. Harp argues that France was successful in incorporating Alsace primarily because of the amount of attention and resources put into education. Harp's analysis of education in interwar Alsace is concerned with the conflict and compromise that developed with the application of republican schooling. He provides an in-depth discussion of religious and linguistic issues as they evolved through subsequent French governments. Harp does not limit his study to education policy emanating from France, but also examines how this

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<sup>22</sup> Mona Ozouf, *L'École, L'Église et la République, 1971-1914* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1963) and Jacques and Mona Ozouf, "Le Tour de France par Deux Enfants", in P. Nora, ed., *Les lieux de mémoire vol 1: La République* (Paris: Galimard, 1984).

<sup>23</sup> Jean-François Chanet, *L'École Républicaine et les Petites Patries* (Paris: Aubier, 1996).

policy played out in Alsace. He discusses reactions to French schooling among Alsatian teachers and religious leaders and how these reactions forced policy reform.<sup>24</sup> In this way, Harp demonstrates that education policy was negotiated on all sides and not simply imposed from Paris.

Laird Boswell's research on the reincorporation of Alsace and Lorraine after World War One provides valuable insight on the clash between regional and national identity. His work focuses on the *commissions de triage* carried out after the war, which forced supposedly disloyal Alsatians to relocate to Germany. Boswell argues that the tensions in post-war Alsace stemmed from the mythic importance attached to this area as the epicentre of French nationalism and the "lost child" of the *mère patrie*. This identity was particularly problematic as Alsace was a largely Germanic-speaking region that had been part of Germany for half a century. The symbolic importance attached to Alsace had a tremendous influence on the education system developed in the interwar period. Eager to maintain that Alsace was a rightful part of France, governments of the Third Republic were reluctant to carry out reforms that would inspire hostility from the local population. Education policy had to tread a fine line between promoting French culture and allowing the persistence of a uniquely Alsatian identity.<sup>25</sup>

A considerable amount of academic literature has examined the formation of autonomist organizations in interwar Alsace. Malcolm Anderson<sup>26</sup>, David Harvey<sup>27</sup>,

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<sup>24</sup> Stephen Harp, *Learning to be Loyal: Primary Schooling as Nation Building in Alsace and Lorraine, 1850-1940* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1998).

<sup>25</sup> Boswell, 129-162.

<sup>26</sup> Malcolm Anderson, "Regional Identity and Political Change: The Case of Alsace from the Third to the Fifth Republic", *Political Studies*, vol. 20, no 1, 17-30.

<sup>27</sup> David Allen Harvey, *Constructing Class and Nationality in Alsace 1830-1945* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001).

Genevieve Baas<sup>28</sup> and Samuel Goodfellow<sup>29</sup> have all contributed major works to this field. All share a focus on the role of religious and linguistic identity in fueling autonomism in the province. The imposition of republican *laïcité* in Alsatian schools and the enforcement of unilingual French instruction were the focus of much political and social unrest in the interwar period. In order to affirm that being Alsatian meant being French, the republican government pursued an aggressive policy of “Frenchification” in public schools. This policy was based on a fear that German-speakers and churchgoers would identify more closely with those who shared their language and their religion, and thus their loyalty to France would be undermined. Harvey, Baas, Goodfellow, and Anderson track the progression of republican policy toward Alsace and the subsequent reaction from autonomist groups. Baas’ work is particularly valuable because it includes a significant number of primary source excerpts and a strong bibliography. Because I am unable to access much primary material on Alsatian resistance movements, the work of these four scholars is extremely valuable. Their approach reveals that policy, particularly education policy, played an essential role in the formation of Alsatian autonomism and that autonomism in turn shaped policy reform.

No available work examines the commonalities between the colonial experience in Alsace and Algeria. In fact, it is rare to find academic literature that seeks to compare any facet of western and non-western history. Edmund Burke III is among the few historians who have attempted to bridge this apparent chasm. In his book chapter “Theorizing Histories of Colonialism and Nationalism in the Arab Maghrib”, Burke criticizes colonial historians for failing to examine their subject as part of a larger world

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<sup>28</sup> Genevieve Baas, *La Malaise Alsacien – 1919-1924* (Strasbourg: Development et Communaute, 1972).

<sup>29</sup> Samuel Huston Goodfellow, *Between the Swastika and the Cross of Lorraine: Fascisms in Interwar Alsace* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois Press, 1999).

process. Instead, he argues, this branch of history is generally studied as a derivative of European history that takes place in a forum completely separate from the western world.<sup>30</sup> Burke attempts to answer his own call for a comparative approach to colonial history in his essay “The Terror and Religion: Brittany and Algeria”. He carries out a cursory examination of similarities between the enforcement of Revolutionary anticlericalism in Brittany and the attack on Islamic institutions in colonial Algeria. Although Burke acknowledges that the experience in Algeria was far more violent and oppressive than that in Brittany, he argues that the comparative framework is still an essential one in order to understand colonialism as a world historical process.<sup>31</sup>

Taking a cue from Burke’s work, my case-study analysis of education in Alsace and Algeria requires that I explore two separate bodies of literature and bring together what I feel are shared experiences. French colonialism has received a resurgence of academic attention in the past decade, due in part to the opening of archives and because continuing conflicts in many formerly colonized areas have generated a re-examination of the heritage of colonialism.<sup>32</sup> The 2005 riots in the suburbs of Paris have similarly drawn attention to the legacies of colonialism in the Arab world and among the immigrant population of France. These events signal that cultural, linguistic and religious identities continue to be a source of conflict in the French Republic.

Studies of French colonialism have tended to focus on the economic and political ramifications of empire. As a study of colonial education, my work fits more closely with recent scholarship on the cultural realm of colonialism. Although works dating from the

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<sup>30</sup> Edmund Burke III, “Theorizing Histories of Colonialism and Nationalism in the Arab Maghrib” 17-34.

<sup>31</sup> Edmund Burke III, “The Terror and Religion: Brittany and Algeria”

<sup>32</sup> Robert Aldrich, “Imperial Mise en Valeur and Mise en Scène: Recent works on French Colonialism”, *Historical Journal*, 45(4) 2002, 918.

late 1970s by Fanny Colonna, Pierre Nora and others, touched on cultural themes in their analysis of French colonialism, only recently have scholars moved beyond analyses that subordinate culture to economic and political considerations. Nicholas Dirks and Edward Said have been leaders in this area. In the words of the former, "Colonialism not only has had cultural effects that have been too often ignored or displaced by the inexorable logics of modernization and world capitalism, it was itself a cultural project of control."<sup>33</sup> Only a small number of academic works have focussed on education as an aspect of French cultural colonialism. My research has therefore drawn on a wide array of literature dealing with French colonial policy and practice.

Raymond Betts' seminal *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory* was the first major work to carry out an in-depth analysis and critique of French policy in the colonies. Betts traces the history of both "assimilationist" and "associationist" thinking in French politics. He concludes that the former was the product of enlightenment thought and led to the assumption that democracy would be served and all men would be made equal if they were inculcated with French culture, language and philosophy. According to Betts, "scientific" thinking helped destroy assimilation theory and replaced it with the idea of association. This theory, which Betts seems to support, favoured educating local populations in their own milieu rather than attempting to make them French in thought and deed.<sup>34</sup> Although recent scholars have criticized Betts for failing to link either assimilation or association with larger issues of racism and

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<sup>33</sup> Nicholas Dirks, "Introduction: Colonialism and Culture", in Nicholas Dirks, ed., *Colonialism and Culture* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 3.

<sup>34</sup> Raymond F. Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890-1914* (Columbia University Press, 1961), 20-27, 107.

domination, his work is essential as a thorough analysis of policy and policy makers in metropolitan and colonial governments.

Alice Conklin's approach to the assimilation-association debate is markedly different from that of Betts. In *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930*, Conklin argues that the move towards association as colonial policy in the late 1920s indicates a growth in conservatism and racism among policy makers. Prior to this period, the French authorities had believed that educating an elite class of *évoués* to fill the ranks of colonial governments was the best means to safeguard French interests. Association dictated that colonial subjects could never "evolve" to be French and should be encouraged to remain in "traditional" occupations. The turn toward association in West African policy also meant that certain tribal leaders were given economic and educational preferences in the name of protecting local culture. This, according to Conklin, reflects an increase in racism and a respect for hierarchies of all kind in this era.<sup>35</sup>

One of the most compelling aspects of Conklin's work is the link she demonstrates between republicanism and the *mission civilisatrice*. She offers a very rich analysis of how the Third Republic justified its imperial excursions in Africa and emphasizes the contradictions and compromises between republican philosophy and colonialism. Conklin argues that the rhetoric of progress was frequently used to rationalize colonialism in Africa, but the idea of what progress was and how it was to be achieved was constantly changing due to circumstances in both colony and metropole. Conklin focuses on theory and policy emanating from Paris and among various colonial

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<sup>35</sup> Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 210-211.

Governors General, but she enriches this examination by scrutinizing how the civilizing mission played out in education, health care and law. Like Jean Chanet, in his work on education in rural France, Conklin emphasizes that policy was not monolithic but constantly in flux.<sup>36</sup> Her effort to decentralize French history by examining the interplay of political events in France and in the colonies informs much of my own examination of education policy. Although Conklin looks at events in West Africa, her analysis rests almost exclusively on the colonial government. Local populations appear only as a barrier to the realization of policy, without any discussion of the different ways they reacted to the civilizing mission.

Conklin's work is part of a recent movement to view colonies as laboratories for scientific, social and political experimentation. Scholars adopting this analysis of colonization are attempting to reintegrate colonial experience into mainstream French history and not view it as an isolated field. Another crucial work in this vein is Elizabeth Thompson's *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon*. Like Conklin, Thompson examines the adaptation of policy in the colonies and how it affected behaviours in the French Republic. Thompson, however, focuses far more on the experience of local populations than does Conklin, and her work is particularly important for its sketches of individual women in French-controlled Syria and Lebanon. Thompson argues that individuals had a crucial role in defining their own status in colonial society and actively influenced the realization of French policy.<sup>37</sup> Her work is one of the few studies of French colonialism that pays significant attention to local culture, particularly religious traditions. Thompson's

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<sup>36</sup> Conklin, 3.

<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

methodology very much informs my own, as I seek to give a voice to local populations in order to demonstrate the role of culture in resistance to French education.

Trinh Van Thao's *L'École Française en Indochine* is cautiously positive about the legacy of French education in Indochina. Like Conklin and Thompson, he argues that the education system in Indochina was a laboratory in which the competing concepts of assimilation and association played out. Trinh argues that this experimentation revealed a genuine desire to improve education for the Indochinese and that in comparison to other colonial powers the French were relatively successful in this field. Trinh offers a thorough examination of French textbooks, curricula and student and teacher demographics as well as a discussion of resistance among Confucian scholars and subsequent French repression.<sup>38</sup> Despite reservations about the conclusions Trinh draws, I borrow from him a methodological approach that examines the practice of education as well as the policy.

Gail Kelly's numerous works on French education policy are cited by almost everyone writing on this topic. Her regional focus has been on West Africa and Vietnam, but many of her arguments can be extrapolated to include policy in North Africa and within the French departments. A significant amount of her research involves assessing the success rate of French education in terms of numbers of students in school across the period and literacy rates in both French and local languages. Kelly, unlike many academics writing about education, focuses particularly on female education.<sup>39</sup> More important to my thesis, however, is her research on the way cultural identities were created and imposed in colonial schools. Using excerpts from textbooks and teaching

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<sup>38</sup> Trinh Van Thao, *L'École Française en Indochine*. (Paris: Karthala, 1995).

<sup>39</sup> Gail Paradise Kelly, *French Colonial Education: Essays on Vietnam and West Africa* (New York: AMS Press, 2000), 3-25.

manuals, Kelly argues that in both African and Indochinese schools lessons were created with the intention of reinforcing the inferiority of local culture and the necessity of the civilizing mission. Students were exposed to French language and customs because it was believed that this would inspire loyalty to France and would undermine any collective identity on the part of the colonial subjects.<sup>40</sup> My work similarly focuses on cultural identity as enforced in French schools and applies Kelly's arguments to the development of education in Algeria and Alsace.

John Ruedy's *Modern Algeria* is an excellent recent survey of Algerian history since the colonial encounter. The breadth of Ruedy's work is such that only a few sections deal with the theme of colonial education. Ruedy's discussion of schooling echoes many of the themes of other recent scholarship on French colonialism and education. He emphasizes that education was the primary tool wielded by the French in order to control the religious and cultural identities of the Algerian population. He offers a fairly detailed and thoughtful discussion of French policy towards Islamic institutions and how this changed in the course of the colonial era. Ruedy argues that French policy in education and other cultural realms was often dictated by the demands of the European settler population. The settlers tended to be far more conservative than the politicians of the Third Republic, which led to considerable compromise in the enacting of reform programs in the interwar period.<sup>41</sup>

Andrew Alf Heggoy and Fanny Colonna have carried out extensive work on colonial education in Algeria. Colonna, like Gail Kelly and Trinh Van Thao, includes

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<sup>40</sup> Gail Paradise Kelly, "Education Reform and Re-Reform: Politics and the State in Colonial Vietnam", in Colin Brock, ed., *Cultural Identity and Education Policy* (St. Martin's Press, 1985), 11-39. Philip Altbach & Gail Paradise Kelly, *Education and the Colonial Experience* (New Jersey: Transaction Inc., 1984).

<sup>41</sup> Ruedy, *Modern Algeria: The Origins and Development of a Nation*.

excerpts from teaching manuals and textbooks to provide evidence for her argument that French education sought to keep the native population tied to the soil. She argues that the rhetoric of the civilizing mission is questionable when the actual number of schools and school funding for Algerians is taken into consideration. According to Colonna, the little education that did exist for the local population was deliberately poor in quality and was meant to give the appearance of progress while denying the majority of Algerians political and social mobility.<sup>42</sup>

Heggoy's numerous essays on Algerian education are more useful for my research because he focuses on cultural identity in the school system. Heggoy argues that after World War One demand for French education increased among the Algerian population, but that conflict arose over linguistic and religious identity. Heggoy maintains that education policy toward the Arab population was based on fear of pan-Arab or pan-Muslim opposition to French rule across the empire. He traces the evolution of education policy with particular focus on the way French language was imposed in schools. French was taught through the "direct method", which did not allow translation through a secondary language. In this way, academic success was compromised in order to maintain the ideal of linguistic unity. Arabic, when permitted at all, was only taught in its colloquial and oral form. Heggoy argues that this was a means to minimize the cultivation of Arabic identity that would challenge the hegemony of French culture. Heggoy, in an analysis later picked up by Ruedy, also argues that French authorities sought to influence religious identity through support for certain educational institutions.<sup>43</sup> Heggoy's emphasis on language and religion has influenced my

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<sup>42</sup> Fanny Colonna, *Instituteurs Algériens 1883-1939*.

<sup>43</sup> Alf Andrew Heggoy, "Education in French Algeria: An Essay on Cultural Conflict", *Comparative*

examination of French education and dovetails nicely with the work of Chanet and Harp on education in Alsace.

Heggoy has also written extensively on the Association of Reform Ulama and their role in resisting the imposition of French education in Algeria. His emphasis has been less on the actions of the ulama than on how they affected French policy. Heggoy argues that colonial authorities sought to limit the influence of the reformist school system by controlling its numbers and the content of its curriculum. At the same time, the French government hoped to avoid inciting hostility from its supporters by overtly attacking the reform Koranic school system. This allowed the reform ulama to operate quite freely until the mid 1930s.<sup>44</sup>

Allan Christelow has similarly examined the struggle between the French and the reform Ulama in the field of education. In order to limit the influence of the reform movement, the government offered financial support to French-friendly religious organizations that would submit to regulations governing their political conduct. Christelow argues that the reform ulama constructed their education system in such a way as to shield it from government control and allow it to exist independent of French funding.<sup>45</sup> Christelow demonstrates how the organization of free school movements, such as that of the reform ulama, played an important role in defining the parameters of French education in Algeria.

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*Education Review*, vol. 17, no. 2 (June 1973), 180-197.

<sup>44</sup> Alf Andrew Heggoy, "Arab Education in Colonial Algeria", *Journal of African Studies*, 2:2 (Summer, 1975), and Alf Andrew Heggoy, *Insurgency and Counter Insurgency in Algeria* (Indiana University Press, 1972).

<sup>45</sup> Allan Christelow, "Ritual, Culture and Politics of Islamic Reformism in Algeria", *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 23, no. 3 July 1987, 255-273.

Ali Merad has carried out extensive research on the doctrines of religious reformist movements in Algeria, and Said Ali Alghailani has revisited his work recently in a doctoral thesis. Both draw heavily on the religious and pedagogical writings of the reform ulama and argue that although they appealed to a traditionalist concept of Algerian identity, they were very much influenced by French concepts of progress and rationality. The curriculum of the reformist schools included French science textbooks as well as Arabic literature and religious instruction. A purified, rationalized Islam was seen by the reform ulama as the best way to unite and strengthen the population in resistance to French imperialism. In fact, as both Merad and Alghailani argue, much of their educational campaign was meant to target the influence of superstitious Muslim brotherhoods as much as French secularization.<sup>46</sup>

While Merad focuses almost exclusively on the philosophy and pedagogy of the reform ulama, Alghailani offers a critique of French policy toward this organization. Like Heggoy, he argues that the French government sought to minimize the cultivation of Arab identity by enforcing the exclusive use of French in the classroom. According to Alghailani, this served to lower educational standards to such an extent that literacy rates plummeted as a result of the “civilizing mission”. Almost as destructive to Algerian culture was the French policy of funding certain religious leaders and mosques. Alghailani argues that this was a tactic designed not only to secure loyalty but also to divide the Islamic community in order to reduce the threat of a united resistance to French education.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Said Ali Alghailani, *Islam and the French Decolonisation of Algeria: The Role of the Algerian Ulama 1919-1940* (PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 2002) and Ali Merad, *Le Réformisme Musulman en Algérie de 1925 à 1940* (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1967).

<sup>47</sup> Alghailani, 159.

James McDougall has recently examined an educational establishment in Algeria altogether different from that of the reform ulama. The “*Shabiba Islamiyya*” or “Progress Club” of Algiers was an open school dedicated to promoting the cause of French culture among the urban Algerian population. I do not deal with this type of organization in my thesis, however McDougall’s analysis of French support for the *Shabiba Islamiyya* educational system has influenced my own understanding of colonial education policy. McDougall argues that this policy was neither coherent nor universal in its implementation. Expanding his line of reasoning to all European colonial rule, he states that domination generally, and education specifically, was a forum where competing discourses and agendas engaged with each other and left policy in a constant state of flux. Despite the determination of the French government and the adversity of the colonial situation, Algerian cultural institutions continued to exist in this period. This is a point to which McDougall returns throughout his work because, as he argues, literature on Algeria has all too often reduced the colonial relationship to a simple dichotomy of colonizer and colonized.<sup>48</sup>

My analysis of French education in Alsace and Algeria has been strengthened through the use of primary source material. Textbooks, curriculum plans, education bulletins and speeches circulated during the Third Republic highlight the ways that French schooling sought to create cultural identity. G. Bruno’s *La Tour de France Par Deux Enfants*, published first in 1877 and updated in 1906, provides an excellent example of republican education at the classroom level. This primary-level reader has been described as “the little red book of the republic” due to its pervasiveness in French public

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<sup>48</sup> James McDougall, “The Shabiba Islamiyya of Algiers: Education, Authority, and Colonial Control, 1921-57”, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol. 24, no. 1 (2004), 147-154.

schools and its constant emphasis on the republican virtues of patriotism, civic duty and the unifying power of the French language.<sup>49</sup> Because the reader was so common in classrooms of the Third Republic, a number of scholars have carried out in-depth examinations of the lessons it taught.

In a 1977 centenary edition of the text, Jean-Michel Bardos provides a useful epilogue that discusses the anti-clericalism of the 1906 version. He cites many examples of alterations that were made to the new edition and places these in the historical context of the battle between church and state over control of the education system.<sup>50</sup> John Strachan and Hans Siepe have similarly analysed the two editions of *Tour de France* and argue that both represent the political climate in which they were written. Strachan's focus is on how regionalism is depicted in the textbook. He argues that superficial elements of local cultures, such as costume and food, are celebrated, but always with the caveat that every region is a loyal part of the *patrie*. The French language is mentioned throughout both editions as the tie that binds all citizens to each other and as evidence for national unity.<sup>51</sup> Hans Siepe argues that promoting a common value system was the primary concern of *Tour de France*. He cites many passages in the 1906 edition and reveals that a strong work ethic and patriotism, "*devoir* and *patrie*", were key lessons of the popular textbook.<sup>52</sup>

Several textbooks used in the French colonies are available in their original editions and provide an invaluable glimpse into educational practices in Algeria. *Les*

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<sup>49</sup> G. Bruno, *La Tour de France Par Deux Enfants* (Paris: Librairie Belin, 1877 and 1906).

<sup>50</sup> Jean-Michel Bardos, "Epilogue", in G. Bruno, *La Tour de France Par Deux Enfants* (Paris: Librairie Belin, 1977).

<sup>51</sup> John Strachan, "Romance, Religion and the Republic: Bruno's *Le Tour de France par Deux Enfants*", *French History*, vol. 18, no. 1, (2004), 96-118.

<sup>52</sup> Hans T. Siepe, "L'Imaginaire Historique Dans "Le Tour de France par Deux Enfants", *Storia della Storiografia*, vol. 14, 1988.

*Premières Lectures de Mamadou et Bineta* is one in a series of books developed for African schools beginning in 1930. This text demonstrates the “direct method” of language instruction, used across France and in the colonies, where vocabulary is taught through images of everyday life. The title characters teach students French language through lessons about the classroom, the village, the family, clothing, food and animals. Each topic centres on the locale of the intended audience: the children walk barefoot to their open-air school, the village is a series of straw huts surrounding a market and couscous is cooked by women over an open fire.<sup>53</sup> *Mamadou et Bineta* demonstrates well the compromise between assimilationist education, where students are forced to speak only French and follow metropolitan curricula, and associationist theory that promotes education tailored to the students’ milieu.

Edgar Colin’s *L’Algérie: Histoire et Géographie à l’Usage des Cours Moyens et des Classes de Fin d’Études* was also designed specifically for the colonial classroom. This textbook is for the highest grades in primary school, and focus is therefore not on acquisition of French language but on promoting respect and loyalty toward France. Although the theme of the textbook is Algerian history and geography, the majority of lessons concentrate on the colonial period and highlight the benefits of French presence in Algeria.<sup>54</sup> Colin’s textbook demonstrates clearly the French policy to subordinate Algerian culture and promote France as the bearer of civilization. The treatment of Islam in this text is particularly useful to my discussion of religious identities in education.

Jonathan Gosnell has examined a number of French textbooks used in Algeria in his book *The Politics of Frenchness in Colonial Algeria, 1930-1954*. His emphasis is

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<sup>53</sup> A. Davense, *Les Premières Lectures de Mamadou et Bineta* (Paris: Librairie Istra, 1930).

<sup>54</sup> Edgar Colin, *L’Algérie: Histoire et Géographie: à l’Usage des Cours Moyens et des Classes de Fin d’Études* (Alger: Baconnier frères, 1949).

overwhelmingly on the post 1940 era, but some of his insights are valuable for my study of the interwar period. Gosnell analyzes the *Mamdou et Bineta* series of textbooks as well as several texts available only in the French archives. Using specific passages from these school books, Gosnell argues that French primary schooling was designed primarily as a means to increase use of the French language. Promoting French was practical in terms of easing communication in the colony, but it was also believed by many republicans that French was superior to Arabic and its spread was therefore an essential component of the civilizing mission.<sup>55</sup>

Fanny Colonna has also included a textbook analysis in her discussion of colonial schooling in Algeria. She includes an excerpt from Bernard and Veler's *Le Livre Courante de l'Écolier Indigène* that illustrates the weight placed on manual labour in the *écoles franco-indigènes*. Colonna argues that curricula promoted agriculture and labour as a means to deny Algerian youth access to higher-status jobs.<sup>56</sup> This is an area of French colonial education I am unable to explore in my thesis, but Colonna's work indicates the importance of studying French policy as it was practiced in the classroom.

A significant number of government documents dealing with education policy in the Third Republic have been published. Jules Ferry, the architect of the republican education system, made a number of key speeches on education both within France and in the colonies. These have since been translated and published in source document books.<sup>57</sup> Ferry's commitment to universal education as a means to unify and strengthen

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<sup>55</sup> Jonathan K. Gosnell, *The Politics of Frenchness in Colonial Algeria, 1930-1954* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2002).

<sup>56</sup> Fanny Colonna, *Instituteurs Algériens 1883-1939*.

<sup>57</sup> Jules Ferry, "Speech in the Chamber of Deputies, 6 June 1889" *Journal Officiel de la République Française*. 7 Juin 1889; reprinted in William Fortescue, *The Third Republic in France 1870-1940: Conflicts and Continuities* (London: Routledge, 2000), 36-37, and Jules Ferry, "Speech Before the French Chamber of Deputies, March 28, 1884", in Paul Robiquet, ed., *Discours et Opinions de Jules Ferry* (Paris:

the French nation is best illustrated in his own words. Despite the gap between policy and practice, these speeches provide an important glimpse of the motivations for, and rhetoric surrounding, the establishment of public education in France.

The practice of colonial expansion was accompanied by a significant amount of political debate surrounding the methods and theories of imperialism. Several vocal supporters of colonialism in the Third Republic wrote books to promote the spread of empire and articulate the best means of doing so. Albert Sarraut's *La Mise en Valeur des Colonies Françaises*, Jules Ferry's *Le Tonkin et la Mère-Patrie; Témoignages et Documents* and Jules Harmand's *Domination et Colonisation* all justify French colonialism as an effort to spread French civilization in order to enhance national prestige and power. Education in the colonies is promoted as a way to instill loyalty in colonial subjects and encourage economic prosperity.<sup>58</sup> Sarraut's work, written in 1923, is most useful to me because it deals specifically with the interwar era. Unrest in the colonies, particularly among the French-educated *évoués*, required a re-evaluation of the education system. Sarraut emphasizes that this unrest is due to the inapplicability of French education to most colonial subjects. He argues that an associationist approach to schooling must be applied in the colonies in order to combat instability and promote French economic and political interests.<sup>59</sup>

A few government reports on education in Algeria during the interwar period are available in North American libraries. A 1924 lesson plan for primary schooling was

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Armand Colin, 1897), trans. J. S. Arkenberg, <<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1884ferry.html>> (1 December 2005).

<sup>58</sup> Albert Sarraut, *La Mise en Valeur des Colonies Françaises* (Paris: Payot, 1923) and Jules Ferry, *Le Tonkin et la Mère-Patrie; Témoignages et Documents* (Paris: Victor Harvard, 1890) and Jules Harmand, *Domination et Colonisation* (Paris: Ernest Flammarion, 1910).

<sup>59</sup> Sarraut, 83-126.

reprinted in *La Voix des Humbles*, a publication put out by Algerian teachers in the interwar period. The lesson plan indicates the importance placed on French language acquisition. It recommends that this is to take up to half the school day and explicitly states that language instruction should be a component of all other subjects.<sup>60</sup> W. Bryant Mumford's *Africans Learn to Be French* includes extracts from speeches by two officials in French West Africa, Governor-General Brevie and Inspector-General of Education Charton. Although these deal with French education specifically in West Africa, they also discuss education policy and how it should be applied to colonial subjects more generally. Both documents support the theory of association in African schools as the best means to educate Africans "in their own milieu".<sup>61</sup>

M.F. de Paemelaere's report on primary education, commissioned by the inter-colonial congress in 1930, provides a detailed description of education in Algeria. As the inspector of education in Oran, de Paemelaere is a fierce defender of French schooling and his report provides an excellent example of the arguments advanced in favour of promoting French culture. He emphasizes the importance of unilingual French language instruction and the inherent futility of teaching Arabic. He also argues that Koranic education has no place in French schools, not only because of their secular nature but also because promoting Islam would serve to undermine the spread of French culture and could prove dangerous to French security.<sup>62</sup> Although I cannot claim that de Paemelaere

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<sup>60</sup> S. Faci, "Plan d'Études et Programmes de l'Enseignement Primaire des Indigènes en Algérie", *La Voix des Humbles*, vol. 27 (juil. 1924), 4-8.

<sup>61</sup> Albert Charton, "The Social Function of Education in French West Africa", and M. Brévié "Statement of Policy: The Present Position of Education in French West Africa, 1930", both reprinted in W. Bryant Mumford, *Africans Learn to be French: A Review of Educational Activities in the Seven Federated Colonies of French West Africa* (London: Evans Brothers Limited, 1935).

<sup>62</sup> M. F. de Paemelaere, "Rapport sur l'Algérie", *L'Adaptation de l'Enseignement dans les Colonies: Rapports et Compte-Rendu du Congrès Intercolonial de l'Enseignement dans les Colonies et les Pays d'Outre-Mer, 25-27 Septembre 1931* (Paris: Henri Didier, 1932).

speaks for all education officials in Algeria, his report is useful in demonstrating some of the key arguments advanced to support French education policy in the colony.

To complement government documents on education, I draw on several primary sources that indicate resistance to the imposition of French schooling. Claude Collot has compiled a number of texts on Algerian nationalism. Most useful to me are the manifestos of the Association of Reform Ulama, the Young Algerians movement and the *Étoile Nord-Africaine*, as well as a letter by the latter to the Popular Front government. Each of these documents emphasizes the importance of learning Arabic in school as a means to promote Algerian culture and national identity.<sup>63</sup> Oscar de Ferenzy has assembled a few similar documents in his work on Alsatian unrest after World War One. In *La Vérité sur L'Alsace*, he includes the 1924 program of the *Union Populaire Républicaine*, an Alsatian autonomist organization, a letter written by the *Heimatbund* to the pope in 1927, which outlines specific grievances over the imposition of French education, and a number of other texts and newspaper excerpts. Unlike Collot, de Ferenzy offers commentaries on each of these sources as well as extensive personal reflections on the reincorporation of Alsace into France. Deeply sympathetic to the cause of regionalism in Alsace, de Ferenzy includes a lengthy discussion of issues on linguistic and religious education in the province.<sup>64</sup> His work is valuable both for the sources he reprints and as a contemporary analysis of the adaptation of school policy in Alsace.

The interwar period saw the publication of a number of works dealing with the reincorporation of Alsace that are similar in tone to Ferenzy's *La Vérité sur L'Alsace*. Other writers, however, expressed contrasting opinions and argued that Alsace was

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<sup>63</sup> Claude Collot, *Le Mouvement National Algérien: Textes 1912-1954* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1978).

<sup>64</sup> Oscar de Férenzy, *La Vérité sur L'Alsace* (Paris: Librairie Bloud & Gay, 1930).

culturally part of France and should be subject to the same legislation as other French departments. An excellent example of this genre is Louis Batiffol's *L'Alsace est Française par Ses Origins, Sa Race, Son Passé*. As the title indicates, Batiffol argues that Alsace is historically and culturally French despite the fact that the majority of its inhabitants speak German. He draws on archaeological evidence that locates ancient Gallic ruins in the Alsatian region and determines that the area was never home to Germanic tribes. Battifol contrasts German and French treatment of the Alsatian people, characterizing the former as dominating and intolerant and the latter as respectful of local culture.<sup>65</sup> This line of argument is discussed in Laird Boswell's work on Alsatian identity, and provides an excellent example of how linguistic differences were minimized in the interwar era by those who wished to emphasize that Alsace was French territory.

Through examination of this primary source material, as well as secondary academic literature, the following chapters will draw comparisons between the French education projects in Algeria and Alsace. The first chapter will provide an analysis of primary-level education in France and the colonies as it developed from the French Revolution to World War One, with particular attention paid to the Third Republican period. The focus of this chapter will be on the role of state schooling in the construction of national and cultural identities. Competing pedagogical theories and policies vied with each other for influence in the classroom. The republican school system that gained dominance in the late nineteenth century was highly nationalistic and overtly anti-clerical, a reaction to the church-state conflict of its era. As my examination narrows to

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<sup>65</sup> Louis Batiffol, *L'Alsace est Française par Ses Origins, Sa Race, Son Passé* (Paris: Ernest Flammarion, 1919).

the interwar period, focus will remain on public schools as the forum for the republican battle against regionalism and religion.

The second chapter will examine how the French language was enforced in both Alsace and Algeria as an attempt to influence the cultural identity of students in French schools. Republican politicians believed that the expansion of education would inspire loyalty among the Alsatian and Algerian populations as well as ease the instability that characterized both regions in the interwar period. Local populations, however, resisted the imposition of unilingual French education. This opposition forced the French government to compromise aspects of their educational program, thus illustrating the role of local resistance in reforming the practice of education.

In the final chapter of my thesis, I will examine the conflict over religious education in Alsace and Algeria. The bulk of academic literature on French education has maintained that the central government adopted assimilationist cultural policies that served to destroy religious customs. I will argue, however, that religious custom in Algeria and Alsace influenced and modified the practice of education. The tenacity of local religious faith was such that the French government was unable to impose secularism on these two regions and was forced to compromise its determined *laïcité*. In this way, education policy was highly contested and negotiated by individuals and groups in Algeria, Alsace and Paris.

## Chapter One Education and the Republican Tradition

In the wake of World War One, France was faced with a number of socio-political dilemmas that became, in part, dilemmas of education. Although France emerged victorious in 1918, this triumph had been accompanied by a tremendous loss of human lives and considerable economic and political instability within France and in the colonies. The reaffirmation of unity was therefore among the chief concerns of the post-war education system. The French government saw two major obstacles to its project of strengthening and uniting the nation and empire. The first was the power of religious congregations, particularly the generally anti-republican Catholic Church, and the second was the tenacity of local cultures and regional loyalties.<sup>1</sup> Education became a tool to overcome these obstacles through the fostering of a new, loyal, republican identity among youths in France and across the empire. This identity was not universally understood, however, but was constantly debated and reformed to meet and reflect political and cultural contexts. This chapter will provide a brief historical analysis of education policy and conflict from the French Revolution to World War One, first within France and then in the colonies, in order to demonstrate how the classroom became such a politically and culturally contested terrain in the interwar period. Attention will focus on religion and language as sites of conflict and competing agendas in the French classroom.

The clash of religious and linguistic identities in education underscores an interesting aspect of French national identity that has persisted for at least two centuries.

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<sup>1</sup> Mona Ozouf, "Introduction", in Jean-Francois Chanut, *L'École Républicaine et les Petites Patries* (Paris: Aubier, 1996), 6.

Two distinct “imagined communities”<sup>2</sup> exist and compete with each other to define the French character. One is Catholic, conservative and generally royalist, favouring state protection for the clergy and recalling France’s historic association with the papacy. The other is republican and secular, emphasising France’s role as the Revolutionary state that brought the world enlightenment philosophy, liberty, equality and fraternity. These two identities do not exist in isolation but in fact overlap considerably. As John McManners has argued, “the spheres of nominal Catholicism and nominal anticlericalism overlapped, Catholics who resented clerical domination and right-wing politics being matched by priest-haters who accepted routine gestures of religion”.<sup>3</sup> There was, however, a considerable number of extremists on both sides who fought for the ability to define French national identity. The story of education development in the Third Republic is very much the story of this competition. The conflict between conservative, religious France and liberal, secular France has a much longer history stemming from the Revolutionary era. It is to this earlier republican period that attention will now turn.

Before 1789, education in France lay almost exclusively in the domain of the church. With the establishment of the constitutional monarchy in 1789 and the First Republic in 1792, the religious monopoly on education was dismantled in order to make the school system a vehicle for the creation of a new, “enlightened” citizenry. By the end of the Napoleonic period, however, the Catholic Church was regaining strength and sought to reassert its control over education. The Revolution of 1830 and the establishment of the July Monarchy re-inaugurated an official campaign to remove religious authorities from education. The Guizot Law of 1833 sought to expand public

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<sup>2</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

<sup>3</sup> John McManners, *Church and State in France, 1870-1914* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 14.

education by requiring every commune in France to build and maintain a primary school, an edict not easily applied due to financial constraint. More important in terms of the church-state relationship was the requirement that all teachers receive some formal training in an *école normal* and undergo regular inspection by a government supervisory body. Prior to 1833, a member of any religious order was eligible to teach as long as he or she could produce a "letter of obedience." The Guizot Law is generally considered anti-clerical because of this effort at state regulation of religious teaching orders.<sup>4</sup> Throughout the following two decades, Catholics in France vocally objected to state intervention in their schools and called for "liberty of education."<sup>5</sup>

The demand for independent religious schooling was heeded in 1850 through the application of the Falloux Law. The discourse of the Second Republic, in place from 1848 to 1852, preached religious liberty and sought to accommodate the Catholic Church in the field of education. The Falloux Law allowed religious orders, even those labelled as "unauthorized congregations" by the 1801 Concordat, to establish their own schools and their own credentials for teachers. The number of schools, particularly in the field of girls' education, increased dramatically as a result of this reform. Patrick Harrigan has argued that this period in French history was unique for its cooperation between church and state to achieve universal primary schooling.<sup>6</sup> The authority of the Catholic Church over public affairs began to weaken in 1860, however, after a falling out between Napoleon III and the papacy. Although the church remained in control of most schools

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Gildea, *Education in Provincial France, 1800-1914: A Study of Three Departments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 27-29.

<sup>5</sup> Patrick J. Harrigan, "Church, State, and Education in France from the Falloux to the Ferry Laws: A Reassessment", *Canadian Journal of History*, vol. 36 (April 2001), 55.

<sup>6</sup> Harrigan, 53.

across the country, the government adoption of an anti-clerical stance in 1860 is considered the turning point in church-state relations in education.<sup>7</sup>

Defeat at the hands of Prussia in 1871 led to widespread criticism of the school system, which was felt to have ill-trained French youths for battle. Public opinion held that the state schools of Prussia had physically and mentally trained young men to be successful soldiers. The republican government that came to power in 1871 capitalized on this discontent, arguing that “the battle of Sedan was won in the classrooms of Prussia,”<sup>8</sup> and that France, too, was in need of universal and state-run schooling. Religious schools, it was argued, were unable to train a new generation of soldiers because too much time was taken up with the teaching of biblical texts and the catechism.<sup>9</sup> Although it took several years for education reforms to begin, the Third Republic had taken its first step toward the creation of a secular and national school system.

The early 1880s saw a succession of education reforms designed to republicanize the population and wrest control of schools away from religious orders. Minister of Education Jules Ferry introduced a secular system of higher education in 1880, passed a law requiring all teachers to be professionally certified by the state in 1881, and in 1882 established free, compulsory and secular primary schooling across France. In defending this last law against religious and conservative opponents, Ferry drew on the history of the French Revolution to legitimize his school reforms: “this recognition of the value of

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<sup>7</sup> Gildea, 53-65, and Mona Ozouf, *L'École, L'Église et la République, 1971-1914* (Paris Armand Colin, 1963), 39-41.

<sup>8</sup> Martin Thom, “Tribes Within Nations: The Ancient Germans and Modern France”, in Homi K. Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990).

<sup>9</sup> William Fortescue, *The Third Republic in France 1870-1940: Conflicts and Continuities* (London: Routledge, 2000), 37-38.

the nation's intellectual capital, of all the latent abilities, of all the talents that can be misunderstood or stifled...that, gentlemen, was the dream of our forefathers."<sup>10</sup>

As Robert Gildea has argued, these reforms must be understood in the context of the political instability of the 1880s. The primary motivation for the Ferry Laws was not to carry out much needed social reform, but to prevent a clerico-royalist restoration by training a new generation to be loyal republicans.<sup>11</sup> An open attack on the church would have divided the French population between the two imagined identities of religion and republic. The promotion of state schooling, however, served to unite a population with varying degrees of religious faith.<sup>12</sup> This is not to say that Ferry was not genuine in his endorsement of universal education. Ferry described himself as a positivist deeply inspired by the work of Condorcet and Comte. He strongly believed that education was the chief instrument of progress and that the state had a crucial role in improving mankind.<sup>13</sup>

A second wave of anti-clerical education reforms began in 1902 after the election victory of the *Bloc des Gauches* under the leadership of Émile Combes. The 1901 Law of Associations required all religious congregations to apply for state authorization or face liquidation. Through this law, Combes attempted to close down almost all congregational schools, although both Gildea and Ford point out that this was not easily enforced in the rural provinces.<sup>14</sup> Three years later, a deathblow was served to religious schools in the form of the Law of 1905 Concerning the Separation of Church and State. This law, which

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<sup>10</sup> Jules Ferry, "Speech in the Chamber of Deputies, 6 June 1889", *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 7 Juin 1889, 1280-1281. Reprinted in Fortescue, 36-37.

<sup>11</sup> Gildea, 108.

<sup>12</sup> McManners, 46.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>14</sup> Gildea, 114-115 and Caroline Ford, *Creating the Nation in Provincial France: Religion and Political Identity in Brittany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 135-137.

famously stated that "La République ne reconnaît, ne salarie ni ne subventionne aucun culte"<sup>15</sup>, ended state support for the four major religious groups in France: Roman Catholics, Calvinist Protestants, Lutheran Protestants and Jews. Religious orders were removed from the state payroll and their property became the property of the state. Religious schools were forced to find means of private funding or close their doors permanently.<sup>16</sup> This law did not go unchallenged, however, and within the provinces demand for state-funded congregational schools continued in the decades following 1905. With the reincorporation of Alsace in 1918, the struggle between church and state for control of the French classroom was renewed.

The passing of such a radical and far-reaching law was certainly a victory for the Republic in its century-old battle against clericalism and conservatism. That a separation of church and state was achieved in 1905 must also be seen in the context of the Dreyfus Affair, which brought religious tensions to the surface of French society. Republican politicians defended the secularization of schools by citing the apparent prejudice of Catholic-educated conservatives, particularly military officers, toward religious minorities.<sup>17</sup> To downplay what could be perceived as a vicious political attack on the church, republican politicians emphasized that only through controlling schools could the government ensure the republican values of fraternity and equality would be fostered in the classroom.

In this church-state battle over education, the French government sought to replace religious loyalties with a sense of loyalty to the Republic. In classrooms across

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<sup>15</sup> République Française, "Loi du 9 Décembre 1905 Concernant le Séparation des Églises et de l'État: Titre Primaire, art. 2", *Journal Officiel de la République française*, 11 décembre 1905. <<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/texteconsolide/MCEBW.html>> (1December 2005)

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, Titre 2.

<sup>17</sup> Fortescue, 75.

France, Christian morality lessons were changed to lessons on civic virtue. Schools became the “churches of the Republic”.<sup>18</sup> To counteract the negative image of “*écoles sans Dieu*”, public schools were portrayed as locations for the training of future citizens. Republican educators assured parents that their children would not lose important ethical lessons just because the clergy was absent from the classroom. Morality would be taught through lessons about duty to family, to fellow citizens and to the Republic, as well as France’s great duty as the pinnacle of enlightenment and civilization. Education, even public, godless education, began to be seen as essential to economic and social security. The curricular emphasis on civic duty and patriotism made school “both meaningful and profitable in terms of altered values and perceptions.”<sup>19</sup>

The emphasis on morality in schools demonstrates that republican politicians shared with conservative and religious groups a fundamental belief that education was designed to counteract social ills.<sup>20</sup> Gildea has pointed out that the ethics of solidarism, the fostering of a sense of unity among all French people, was particularly important in republican education as a means to counteract threats from both the Left and the Right. Heavily influenced by Emile Durkheim, state curricula at both primary and secondary levels emphasized that the needs of society were greater than those of the individual, a philosophy not altogether at odds with the Christian teachings of a previous generation of schools.<sup>21</sup>

Religion was seen as a threat to the Third Republic’s tenuous hold on power, and nowhere was this more clear than in education. Closely associated with this fear of

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<sup>18</sup> Gildea, 254.

<sup>19</sup> Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 303.

<sup>20</sup> Gildea, 6.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 265.

religious affiliation was a fear of regionalism. The church was most influential in rural provinces, where French was rarely spoken and barely understood and Paris seemed a distant and removed symbol of cultural and political authority. In order to bring these outlying provinces into the fold, it was deemed essential to replace local culture with that of the French urban interior. Religious institutions and congregations were a significant part of that local culture, as much of rural France was religiously observant. The influence religious orders exerted over the education of youth was slowly removed through the previously discussed school reforms. The other front in the war against regional culture was language. A strong and united France, it was believed, would have to speak in a single tongue. If citizens could not understand each other, could not read and share the same stories and use the same expressions, then France would become fragmented and weak.<sup>22</sup> Like the battle against religion, the linguistic battle had a long history stemming from at least the era of the French Revolution. The history of republican linguistic policy will be briefly sketched below to provide context for subsequent discussions of language and education in the post-World War One period.

Following the French Revolution and the establishment of the First Republic, a large body of revolutionary ideas, laws and decrees had to be promulgated across the country. This raised the pressing question of language. In 1790, the Abbé Grégoire was commissioned by the government to research the use of languages across France, to ascertain how many citizens actually understood French and which dialects were most widely spoken. He discovered that out of an approximate population of twenty-five million, six million did not understand French at all, while only three million used the

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<sup>22</sup> Dennis Ager, *Identity, Insecurity and Image: France and Language* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd, 1999). For a more in-depth discussion of language and national identity, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

language in their everyday life. The title of his report foreshadowed later policy toward regional languages: “On the need and ways to annihilate dialects and universalize the use of French”.<sup>23</sup> In October of 1793, the National Assembly drew up a set of decrees as a response to Abbé Grégoire’s research:

Article 6: L’enseignement public est partout dirigé de manière qu’un de ses premiers bienfaits soit que la langue française devienne en peu de temps familière de toutes les patries de la République.

Article 7: Dans toutes les patries de la République, l’instruction ne se fait qu’en langue Française.<sup>24</sup>

The link between regional language and anti-republicanism was made clear in a report released in 1794, which claimed that dialects were used to misinform the public and to spread anti-revolutionary, royalist messages across the country. The German dialect of Alsace was targeted above all others for its possible counter-revolutionary uses, and a law was passed banning the use of German throughout the region.<sup>25</sup> The wording of the 1794 report underlines the imagined dichotomy between Parisian French as the language of enlightenment and republicanism, and dialect as the language of ignorance and conservatism:

la plus belle langue de l’Europe, celle qui la première a consacré franchement les droits de l’homme et du citoyen, celle qui est chargée de transmettre au monde les plus sublimes pensées de la liberté et les plus grandes speculations de la politique...

Le fédéralisme et la superstition parlent bas-breton; l’émigration et la haine de la République parlent allemand; la contre-révolution parle l’italien, et le fanatisme parle le basque. Cassons ces instruments de dommage et d’erreur.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ager, 24.

<sup>24</sup> Décret de 30 Vendémiaire an II (21 October 1793) quoted in F. Brunot, *Histoire de la Langue Française des Origines à Nos Jours* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1967), 148.

<sup>25</sup> Ager, 28.

<sup>26</sup> Barère, “Rapport Barère”, quoted in M. Certeau, D. Julia and J. Revel, *Une Politique de la Langue: La Révolution Française et les Patois* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1975), 291-9.

The embryonic state of the national education system through most of the nineteenth century made linguistic uniformity impossible to bring into practice. There was, however, a maintained ideal of universalized French carried through successive governments after the Revolution. Although Napoleon remarked that he did not mind what language his soldiers spoke as long as they used their sabres in French,<sup>27</sup> most French leaders in the nineteenth century believed that universal use of the language would help strengthen the nation. In reality, little was done or could be done to enforce French in provinces where it was so rarely spoken. Local governments and churches, particularly in Brittany and Alsace, continued to use dialects to communicate with the public.

In 1881, with the establishment of mandatory public schooling, the resources were finally available to enforce the revolutionary ideal of a single, universally understood French language. Ferry made this among his top priorities in education reform, as did virtually every subsequent Minister of Education in the Third Republic. Drawing on the legacy of the Revolution, Georges Leygue, Minister of Education in 1902, argued "French, the national language, must come before the others. It was and is the vehicle for all ideas of liberty and must be spread as much as possible."<sup>28</sup> Although virtually all republicans agreed on the necessity of establishing French as the universal language of communication, there was some debate as to whether or not this had to come at the expense of local dialects. Some felt that allowing regional languages to co-exist with French was a sign of national weakness, while others argued that multi-lingualism

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<sup>27</sup> Ager, 30.

<sup>28</sup> Georges Leygue, quoted in Ager, 29.

enriched French culture. In 1903, with the passing of a law officially banning the use of any dialects in public schools, it appeared the former group had won the day.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the renewed interest in linguistic uniformity among the politicians of the early Third Republic, Caroline Ford maintains that this era remained relatively tolerant of regional language and culture. Republican politicians, more focussed on wresting control over education from the grip of the Catholic Church, worried about regionalism only to the extent that it supported this adversary. This generation of republicans was deeply influenced by philosopher and theorist Ernest Renan,<sup>30</sup> who emphasized that nationality was contractual and not based on either race or language. A committed republican, Renan nonetheless argued that France was constructed from many regional traditions and that this multiculturalism was the key to its strength as a nation.<sup>31</sup>

Mona Ozouf has also argued that Renan exerted a powerful influence over Jules Ferry and his contemporaries, but she maintains that this period was marked by inconsistencies in terms of official policy toward regional language. Often extolling the virtues of local culture, Ferry and his political allies remained silent about how to incorporate regional differences into a universalized education system.<sup>32</sup> This silence translated into open hostility toward regional languages in the following decades, particularly in the years after World War One when perceived national weakness was associated with the tenacity of local language and culture.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ford, 27.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 17-18.

<sup>31</sup> Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?", in Homi K. Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), 8-22.

<sup>32</sup> Mona Ozouf, "Unité Nationale et Unité Dans la Pensée de Jules Ferry", in F. Furet, ed., *Jules Ferry: Fondateur de la République* (Paris: 1985), 65.

<sup>33</sup> Ager, 29-30.

Political and social problems in interwar France were not confined to the continent. Many thousands of colonial subjects had served as soldiers or workers during the war and there was a widespread belief among these veterans that their loyalty should be rewarded through citizenship and greater political independence. This hope appeared to have official backing in the form of Woodrow Wilson's "Fourteen Points", the fifth of which stated that colonial claims had to be adjusted, and that "the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined."<sup>34</sup> By the close of the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, it was clear that demands for self-determination in the colonies would not be heeded. Unrest erupted in virtually every colony from Senegal to Indochina. Most active were the young intelligentsia, who argued that their political inferiority was contrary to republican ideals of equality and fraternity. These youth had been educated as French citizens but remained colonial subjects, a situation most found intolerable. Authorities were quick to condemn the education system for giving African and Asian students a feeling of entitlement while somehow failing to instil among them a sense of loyalty to France. Debates about the theories, aims and methods of the colonial relationship in general, and education in particular, were discussed in French policy-making circles. An analysis of these debates and how they evolved throughout the colonial period will provide the necessary background for later discussions of education in the interwar period.

French colonialism in Africa and Asia had the dual aims of making the territories economically profitable for France and carrying out the *mission civilisatrice* - a mission

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<sup>34</sup> Woodrow Wilson, "Fourteen Points", reprinted in Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2001), 495-496.

to improve the lives of the colonized through exposure to, and imposition of, French institutions and culture. Education was the primary means of realizing this second goal. Many Governors-General, from Sarraut in Indochina<sup>35</sup>, to Charton in West Africa<sup>36</sup> and Jonnart in Algeria<sup>37</sup>, emphasized in speeches and writing that education was bound to every aspect of colonial policy. Although the French acquisition of Algeria began in 1830, the European “scramble” for overseas territory began in earnest in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Thus for France, the extension of empire was primarily the work of the Third Republic. It is perhaps an interesting coincidence that Jules Ferry, the architect of the republican education system, was also a leading proponent of colonial expansion. His commitment to the civilizing mission was clearly part of his overall project to strengthen the French Republic:

Mais aujourd’hui la France est forte, et sa défense est invincible...  
C’est parce que la France est forte qu’elle ne doit abdiquer ni dans la Méditerranée ni dans l’Océan indien son rôle et ses droits de grande puissance. On n’est pas une grande puissance en restant terré chez soi.<sup>38</sup>

The most pressing question, and one that was continually debated throughout the colonial period, was what sort of relationship should be fostered between the French and the populations in conquered territories. Two schools of thought emerged on this topic: one favouring “assimilation” and the other promoting “association”.

Assimilation predates association as a theory advanced on the relationship between colonizer and colonized in the French overseas territories. It was officially

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<sup>35</sup> Albert Sarraut, *La Mise en Valeur des Colonies Françaises* (Paris: Payot, 1923), 93-98.

<sup>36</sup> Albert Charton, “The Social Function of Education in French West Africa”, reprinted in W. Bryant Mumford, *Africans Learn to be French: A Review of Educational Activities in the Seven Federated Colonies of French West Africa* (London: Evans Brothers Limited, 1935), 100.

<sup>37</sup> Donald Schilling and Elsa Marston, *The Politics of Education in Colonial Algeria and Kenya* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1984), 35.

<sup>38</sup> Jules Ferry, *Le Tonkin et la Mère-Patrie; Témoignages et Documents* (Paris: Victor Harvad, 1890), 47-48.

defined as “that system which tends to efface all difference between the colonies and the motherland, and views the colonies simply as a prolongation of the mother country beyond the seas.”<sup>39</sup> Like so many philosophies of the Third Republic, the history of assimilation can be traced to the French Revolution. A belief in the equality of all men and in the universal power of reason dictated that the colonies must be treated as an extension of the metropole. The Constitution of the Year III confirmed this in its sixth article, which stated, “The colonies are an integral part of the Republic and are subject to the same constitutional law.”<sup>40</sup> In the field of education, the assimilation theory found philosophical backing from Claude Adrien Helvétius. He argued that mental inequalities were no more than the result of inequality in education, and that through schooling the natural equality of all men could be realized. His thoughts were tremendously influential in colonial circles,<sup>41</sup> but one could argue that assimilationist theory guided education policy toward the French provinces as well.

Colonial policy vacillated considerably throughout the nineteenth century. Napoleon rejected assimilation as a practice of colonial administration. Arguing that such a policy would allow local control of the machines of government and finance, he passed a law stating that two separate bodies of law would govern France and the colonies. This was overturned in 1833 under the July Monarchy, when a new edict stated that free persons in the colonies would be accorded the same rights as those in France. A return to Bonapartism in 1852 led once again to separate administration for France and the

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<sup>39</sup> “Isaac Report to Congress of 1889”, quoted in Stephen H. Roberts, *The History of French Colonial Policy 1870-1925* (Frank Cass & Co Ltd., 1963), 67.

<sup>40</sup> Titre Premier, Division du Territoire, Constitution du 5 Fructidor, An III, reprinted in Raymond F Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890-1914* (Columbia University Press, 1961), 13.

<sup>41</sup> Betts, 3.

overseas empire, although the emperor declared special status for Algeria as a “French Arab Kingdom.”<sup>42</sup> In a letter to the Governor General of Algeria, Napoleon III stated that “il faut faire davantage, convaincre les Arabes que nous ne sommes pas venus en Algérie pour les opprimer et les spoiler, mais pour leur apporter les bienfaits de la civilization.”<sup>43</sup> This was a strong reaffirmation of the assimilationist doctrine in Algeria, and it remained the dominant policy in education throughout much of the following century.

The prevalence of assimilation as a colonial policy in the early Third Republic is closely associated with the idea of the *mission civilisatrice*. Adherents to this doctrine were inspired by the ideas of *Volkpsychologie* and believed that France’s natural spirit was one of enlightenment and expansion.<sup>44</sup> A paternalistic France, it was argued, had both a right and a duty to try to improve indigenous populations by assimilating them to French civilization. This was a highly racialized philosophy that assumed European superiority over other races and cultures. Politicians like Jules Ferry tried to promote imperialism to hesitant members of parliament through assurances that it was a commitment to progress that guided colonial policy:

I repeat, that the superior races have a right because they have a duty. They have the duty to civilize the inferior races ... In the history of earlier centuries these duties, gentlemen, have often been misunderstood; and certainly when the Spanish soldiers and explorers introduced slavery into Central America, they did not fulfill their duty as men of a higher race ... But, in our time, I maintain that European nations acquit themselves with generosity, with grandeur, and with sincerity of this superior civilizing duty.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Hubert Deschamps, *Méthodes et Doctrines Coloniales de la France* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1953), 112.

<sup>43</sup> Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte III quoted in Deschamps, 112.

<sup>44</sup> Betts, 24.

<sup>45</sup> Jules Ferry, "Speech Before the French Chamber of Deputies, March 28, 1884", in Paul Robiquet, ed., *Discours et Opinions de Jules Ferry* (Paris: Armand Colin & Cie., 1897), trans. J. S. Arkenberg, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1884ferry.html> <1 December 2005>.

Under assimilationist education policy, only French was to be taught in all colonial schools, just like in schools across continental France. Increasing the number of people who spoke French, who were loyal to France and its institutions, was certainly an important aspect of assimilationist education policy. This was in essence the same argument used to promote the spread of French language and culture in the rural French departments during this period. In the colonies, there were the twin enemies of local tradition and competition from other European powers vying for control in Africa and Asia. Educating loyalty among the elite native population would help safeguard the colony against incursion by other western imperialists.<sup>46</sup> A similar situation existed in Alsace, where German cultural influence was viewed as a serious threat to French authority in the region.

Alice Conklin has argued that universalizing the French language through colonial schools had both philosophical and practical incentives.<sup>47</sup> Creating a common language for all would, in theory, break down barriers to social and economic advancement between different classes within the colonies. This, again, is similar to arguments used to promote French education in the rural departments. Furthermore, the numerous dialects used within the colonies of Algeria, West Africa and Indochina were an impediment to communication and considered a major barrier to French economic and political encroachment. Increasing the number of French-speaking colonial subjects was therefore necessary for both economic development and for the promotion of the civilizing mission.

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<sup>46</sup> Gabriel Hanotaux, *L'Energie Française* (Paris: Flammarion, 1902), 365.

<sup>47</sup> Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 84.

Education policy in the colonies was not based on the strict separation of church and state that characterized the metropolitan school system. Léon Gambetta, a prominent republican known for his commitment to the colonial mission and to the cause of secularism in France, famously argued that “L’anticléricisme n’est pas un article d’exportation”.<sup>48</sup> This comment was directed at Catholic missionary schools, which were felt to be an essential instrument for propagating French culture and language in the colonies. Interestingly, politicians on both the Left and Right agreed that spreading the French language across the colonies was the central goal of the *mission civilisatrice*. It was not financially possible to convert all mission schools to secular state schools, so religious education remained in place in order to achieve the cultural mission of French colonialism. After the 1905 separation of church and state, the French government began to subsidize secular colonial schools more heavily than Catholic mission schools. The latter, however, remained a significant presence across the empire.<sup>49</sup>

Local religious institutions in the colonies did not receive the same respect as the Catholic Church. In Indochina, for example, the French carried out a systematic attack on Confucian education. In pre-colonial Indochina, education had centred on learning the Confucian classics and was often run out of Buddhist temples. The French government saw both Buddhism and Confucianism as highly threatening to French interests. Confucian scholars were the major anti-French force operating in Vietnam and they could therefore not be trusted to teach the new generation of colonial subjects. In addition, both traditions were associated with China and the French wanted to avoid the emergence of a pan-Asian consciousness. The colonial government in Indochina slowly replaced

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<sup>48</sup> Gambetta quoted in Mathew Burrows, “‘*Mission Civilisatrice*’: French Cultural Policy in the Middle East, 1860-1914”, *The Historical Journal*, vol 29, no. 1 (1986), 130.

<sup>49</sup> Burrows, 130.

Confucian learning with French-run schools, and in 1917 all temple schools were formally abolished.<sup>50</sup>

In North Africa, and to a lesser extent in West Africa, Koranic schools were well-established before the colonial period. In the early years of the Third Republic, the campaign against these religious schools was not as overt as that carried out in Indochina. French colonists appropriated significant tracts of communal land, and since this land was often used to fund religious establishments, Islamic schools suffered tremendous financial setbacks in the colonial period. An open attack on Islamic education, however, would have inspired considerable hostility in virtually every African colony, and fear of such antipathy probably persuaded the French to leave this school system intact. Instead, the colonial governments in North and West Africa adopted a policy of monitoring, and later directly controlling, Koranic schools ostensibly to ensure quality of education but primarily to check that teachers were not instilling anti-French sentiment among their students. These teachers were to be certified by the French government and financial rewards were given to those seen as “least hostile” to French interests.<sup>51</sup>

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, a system of French secular schooling, known as the *école franco-indigène* or *école arabe-française*, sought to recruit students from the Koranic schools. These schools were designed with assimilation in mind: only French was to be spoken and lessons centred on French history and geography. No religious instruction was permitted despite the fact that the vast majority of students were observant Muslims. Most Algerians were reluctant to send their children to the French-run schools, not just because of their secular nature and exclusive use of

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<sup>50</sup> Trinh Van Thao, *L'École Française en Indochine* (Paris: Karthala, 1995).

<sup>51</sup> Schilling and Harik, 6-7.

French, but also because the quality of education was thought to be very low, particularly in comparison to the schools for European settlers.<sup>52</sup> The colonial government, however, only recognized diplomas given out at the *école franco-indigène*, thus ensuring that those who chose to study at Muslim schools could not easily secure employment in European businesses or administration.<sup>53</sup> It was not until after World War One, however, that any significant number of Algerians began attending the French-run schools. The apparent failure of the *franco-indigène* system led some French administrators to question the theoretical and practical basis of colonial education.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the policy of assimilation was beginning to come under fire. Many republicans hailed a new concept, "association", as a more effective means to educate colonial subjects. Association rested on the idea that native populations simply never could be French and to attempt to make them so was both futile and morally questionable. Colonial policy, argued the adherents of association, should be flexible and adapt to local needs and realities. Whenever possible, local institutions, under the tutelage of French administration, should serve as the vehicles of reform. This was not a move toward relinquishing authority in the colonies, but an attempt to minimize unrest by creating the appearance that power was shared. Jules Harmand, considered one of the most influential theorists of colonial policy, argued in *Domination et Colonisation* that association would result in greater control and greater productivity in the colonies:

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<sup>52</sup> John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria: The Origins and Development of a Nation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 126, and Alf Andrew Heggoy and Paul J. Zingg, "French Education in Revolutionary North Africa", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* vol. 7, no. 4. (Oct., 1976), 573.

<sup>53</sup> Ruedy, 99.

The policy of association...does not at all attempt to prepare and achieve an equality forever impossible, but rather it attempts to establish a certain equivalence or compensation of reciprocal services. Far from letting the domination weaken, this policy wants to reinforce it by making it less offensive and repugnant.<sup>54</sup>

Harmand touched on the fact that under association the republican concept of “fraternity” between colonizer and colonized was emphasized, but the idea that this relationship was based on equality was abandoned. Here the influence of new scientific thought, particularly social Darwinism, can be keenly felt. The belief that there were incompatible differences between the races became an effective explanation for the difficulties of colonial governance. The failures of the civilizing mission and the colonial education system were due, therefore, to the natural inequalities between peoples. Assimilation, Harmand argued, could not be achieved, but the French could gradually improve the intellectual, material and economic status of the colonized through exposure to French institutions.<sup>55</sup>

The influence of associationist doctrine on colonial education policy in the early Third Republic was somewhat mixed. The new philosophy certainly had the immediate effect of convincing many republican politicians that assimilation through education was an unachievable goal. Alfred Fouillée, a philosopher and psychologist who wrote widely on the assimilation-association debate, contributed significantly to the pro-association faction of colonial theorists. He argued that the European races were so far ahead of all others intellectually that it would take many generations to force social change through education. Simply having students memorize French passages and French battles would not develop their mental capacity in a way that would be useful for either French or

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<sup>54</sup> Jules Harmand, *Domination et Colonisation* (Paris: Ernest Flammarion, 1910), 160.

<sup>55</sup> Harmand, 161-163.

native populations. It was far better to adopt an education program that would be in keeping with the traditional needs of the local society.<sup>56</sup> Although Fouillée's work was highly praised by colonial officials, it was not until the 1920s that his call for adaptive education was heeded. At this point, the colonial education system began to focus more thought and money on expanding and reforming the *école franco-indigène* system across the colonies.<sup>57</sup> Curricula at these schools were reworked to include a heavy emphasis on agriculture and manual labour because it was believed that this would better serve the needs of local populations.<sup>58</sup>

In terms of language policy in colonial education, the associationist theory may have had some influence. In Algeria, the law requiring that only French be used in schools was overturned in 1898. Instead, a minimal amount of native language was permitted - Arabic for the majority of Algerians, and Berber for the Kabyle minority. This reform, however, had little practical effect. As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, virtually no indigenous language instruction was included in *franco-indigène* schools until the late 1920s. Furthermore, it is questionable to what extent language reform was the result of associationist theory. It may simply have been a reaction to popular protest against, and poor attendance rates at, French-only schools. In Indochina, French remained the sole language of instruction until the 1920s, at which point the Romanized Vietnamese script *quoc-ngu* was adopted for primary education. The use of Chinese characters remained forbidden in schools and all other public places throughout the colonial period. The adoption of *quoc-ngu* could be seen as a victory of association, although it was certainly not the traditional written language of the Vietnamese. Much

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<sup>56</sup> Betts, 63-64.

<sup>57</sup> Conklin, 133-134, and Trinh, 94-95.

<sup>58</sup> Heggoy and Zingg, 574.

like the earlier introduction of Arabic in North African schools, this reform in Indochina was probably more a reaction to educational failures than a philosophical change of heart.

The treatment of local religious tradition changed little with the advent of associationist thought. In North Africa, a series of laws extending throughout the entire colonial period sought to destroy religious bases of authority. Native criminal justice systems were abolished, tribal organizations were dismantled and religious foundations had their assets seized. As a secular power, the Third Republic was unable or unwilling to recognize the damage that was caused by certain actions seemingly outside the realm of religion. The appropriation of communal lands in Africa and Asia, which accelerated immensely in the early twentieth century, violated sacred traditions such as ancestor worship,<sup>59</sup> marriage and familial succession.<sup>60</sup> The rejection of assimilationist doctrine by such prominent colonial figures as Paul Bert and Albert Sarraut did not translate into a practice of acceptance and tolerance on the ground.

Assimilationist theory remained powerful in colonial education policy at least until World War One. In 1918, mostly in response to growing unrest in the colonies, education policy began to shift towards an association ideal. These specific reforms and the reasoning behind them will be discussed in detail in the following chapters. At this stage it will suffice to point out that many scholars have questioned the differences between assimilation and association in terms of actual education practice. Both Raymond Betts and Stephen Roberts, whose 1960s works on French colonial policy are considered cornerstones in the field, argued that assimilation remained a prominent

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<sup>59</sup> Alexander Woodside, *Community and Revolution in Modern Vietnam* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976), 112.

<sup>60</sup> Roberts, 97.

practice throughout the colonial period despite theoretical criticism against it.<sup>61</sup> Association as a theory, however, was encouraged, if not practiced, in the final years of French imperialism and continued to be celebrated in the post-colonial era. This is signalled by the fact that Betts and Roberts, perhaps in a reflection of the times in which they wrote, are firm supporters of the association philosophy and lament the fact that it rarely came to fruition.<sup>62</sup> Recent historians, most notably Gail Kelly and Alice Conklin, have rejected any distinction between assimilation and association. Both argue that colonized subjects were never considered equal and that the two schools of thought were fundamentally based on the idea of subordination and racism. The change in theoretical terminology was not designed to improve the lives of the colonized, but to win more support for the Third Republic and its imperial project.<sup>63</sup>

The early Third Republic was a time of consolidation, both within France and in the overseas colonies. The republican leaders recognized many threats to their tenuous hold on power – the influence of royalists and religious groups, the tenacity of regional traditions and loyalties, and the limited use of the French language in periphery provinces and colonial territories. Governments in both Paris and the colonies used mass education as a means to foster a sense of unity among fragmented populations. Through education, the political hierarchy sought to reform the identities of French citizens and subjects in order to create a population loyal to France and to the ideals of the Republic. The architects of the education system drew heavily on republican traditions dating to the time of the French Revolution, as well as contemporary scientific, philosophical and

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<sup>61</sup> Betts, 165-166, and Roberts, 64.

<sup>62</sup> Betts, 111, and Roberts, 444.

<sup>63</sup> Gail Kelly, "Introduction" *Education and the Colonial Experience* Philip Altbach and Gail Kelly, eds., (New Jersey: Transaction Inc., 1984), 1, and Conklin, 75.

sociological thought. These theories were not applied universally, however, but were employed at different times and places according to needs observed on the ground. As demonstrated in this chapter, education theory and policy were constantly debated, contested and reformed throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century. French education, and the discourse surrounding it, was never a monolithic or systematically implemented doctrine, but was the site of multiple and competing agendas. In the following chapters, the multifarious practice of education in Alsace and Algeria in the interwar period will be explored.

## Chapter Two Language and Identity, Imposed and Resisted

Interwar France was marked by a policy of intensified cultural control, both within the Republic and across the colonial empire. This policy was not structured as an unchanging edict from Paris. It was constantly being formed and reformed as a reaction to changing realities on the ground. In this way, education was a fluid concept, a contested terrain whose shape was negotiated not just by political leaders in the metropole, but by individuals and groups on all sides of the colonizing relationship. The limits of universalized education policy have been pointed out by both Jean-François Chanet, whose writing on education in the French provinces stresses that local adaptation was the norm rather than the exception, and by Alice Conklin, whose writing on colonialism in French West Africa similarly highlights regional variation.<sup>1</sup> Both scholars are writing against a tradition of characterizing French policy as uniform and centralized, a view that may at first seem supported by the compulsive standardization so rife in the education system of the Third Republic. To ignore how education was adopted and adapted on the ground, however, is to deny agency to local populations and suggests a neglect of the ways in which they shaped how policy was put into practice. Through resistance, reaction and accommodation, Algerians and Alsatians exercised considerable influence over their own schooling.

Taking a cue from the work of Chanet and Conklin, this chapter will examine how language education was enforced, resisted and reformed in Alsace and Algeria in order to show the commonalities of experience in these two regions. During and

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-Francois Chanet, *L'École Républicaine et les Petites Patries* (Paris: Aubier, 1996) and Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

immediately after World War One, French authorities sought to expand the French school system in both Algeria and Alsace as a means for pacifying these politically unstable regions. Local demands called for the establishment of bilingual education that would honour existing culture and language while instructing students in the acquisition of French. Initial promises to include Arabic and German in the school curriculum were soon overturned in favour of a unilingual approach to education. Resistance to French-only schooling, however, eventually led to a reforming of policy as a compromise between official ideals and local demands. Republicans, as illustrated in the preceding chapter, saw language as the defining characteristic of national belonging. To speak French was to be French, and those who lived within the borders of France and its empire and did not speak its language were considered a threat to unity. Language was equally important for local populations. The imposition of French profoundly affected the way individuals viewed themselves and the ruling power. Maintaining the mother tongue became for some a matter of cultural survival. This chapter will examine the process of language policy reform and adaptation and the role both of French officials and local resistance groups in the construction of linguistic identity in Alsace and Algeria.

The First World War convinced many within France and in the overseas colonies that the national consolidation project of the Third Republic was meeting with success. The “lost provinces” of Alsace and Lorraine had been returned to French control, and colonial subjects had revealed their allegiance to the *mère patrie* through four years of loyal military service. Over 200 000 Algerians served in the French Army during the war, and many more relocated to France to fill the places vacated by workers sent to the front. Soldiers and workers were recruited with assurances of reforms that would expand the

electorate and increase citizenship eligibility. These promises were designed to minimize unrest within the colony and among the army recruits. As the Great War drew to a close, the Algerian population looked to the French state to give them a greater voice in the political and economic life of their country.<sup>2</sup>

Georges Clemenceau, as Prime Minister of France at the end of the war, felt that Algeria should be rewarded for her loyalty and service to France. Philosophically an anti-colonialist, Clemenceau began his 1917 leadership term by recalling a widely disliked Governor General, Charles Lutaud, from Algeria and replacing him with the more sympathetic Charles Jonnart. Together Jonnart and Clemenceau drafted a proposal for a reform project that would see an expanded Muslim electorate and the creation of a Council of Algeria in the French parliament. Protestations among French conservatives and European settlers in Algeria meant that by the time it was implemented in 1919, Jonnart's reform program had become far more moderate in tone. The Council of Algeria was dropped completely and no changes to citizenship laws were made. This meant that Algerians who wished to be citizens would still have to meet a number of stringent qualifications and forgo their status as Muslims protected under Islamic law. The maximum number of native Algerian representatives permitted in municipal councils and general councils was still limited to one-third and one-fourth respectively, thus ensuring that the European minority would constantly frustrate their political goals. The only achievement of the reform law was that the number of eligible voters among the Algerian population did increase to roughly 40% of the adult male population. The Jonnart Law,

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<sup>2</sup> John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria: The Origins and Development of a Nation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 111.

conceived as a grand conciliatory gesture, satisfied neither Algerians demanding equality nor Europeans insisting on continuation of their privileged status.<sup>3</sup>

Although pressure in both colony and metropole did weaken the Clemenceau-Jonnart reform program, the increase made to the Algerian electorate had far reaching political and social effects. There was widespread resentment among the Algerian population who had worked or fought for the French during the war and then returned to find that promises of equality and citizenship were not met. These veterans made up a substantial portion of the newly enfranchised, and they were determined to use their vote to affect a more thorough-going reform. One of their chief concerns was education. Realizing that a secure and well-regarded job could only be found if one spoke French, those who now had a voice in politics demanded that their children be given this ticket to success. Prior to World War One, there had been a general disdain for French schooling among the Algerian population. After 1919, however, the demand for schools skyrocketed. In the 1919 municipal election in Algiers, the enfranchised Algerian population voted overwhelmingly for a candidate who made free, compulsory, bilingual education the centre of his campaign platform.<sup>4</sup> The inclusion of Arabic instruction was seen as essential because it would facilitate the teaching of all other subjects, including French, and because of the close association between language and cultural identity. This indicated to French colonial authorities that there was a powerful market for French education as long as this education allowed for instruction in the local language.

Increasing the number of colonial subjects in French schools was certainly agreeable to most politicians within France and in the Governor General's office, as it

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 112-113.

was recognized that mass education could be very beneficial to French interests. Although there had been a certain level of French schooling in the colonies prior to 1914, very little emphasis had been placed on mass education. The few French schools that did exist were predominantly for the children of settlers and a small number of chosen allies among the colonized populace. World War One had highlighted the fact that many Algerians lacked even a basic knowledge of the French language. Jonnart, claiming that “primary school is the foundation of our domination”<sup>5</sup>, argued that the colonies would be more loyal and easier to administer if the masses were taught rudimentary language skills. Furthermore, Algerians who were disappointed with the 1919 reform project would be appeased through increased education funding.

According to Algerian demands, education should be carried out in both Arabic and French in order to maintain the linguistic tradition of the masses while at the same time helping them secure jobs in French business or administration. Following the 1919 municipal elections, Jonnart promised a substantial increase in the education budget to fund an expanded *franco-indigène* school system. Although officially this system was to include some Arabic language instruction, no provisions were made to hire teachers qualified in this area and the teaching of Arabic was not made a legal requirement until 1947.<sup>6</sup> As will be discussed later in this chapter, the *franco-indigène* system focussed overwhelmingly on French language acquisition. Although Prime Minister Clemenceau and Governor General Jonnart argued that education reform was both politically

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<sup>5</sup> Charles Jonnart, quoted in Donald Schilling and Elsa Harik, *The Politics of Education in Colonial Algeria and Kenya* (Ohio University Press, 1984), 35.

<sup>6</sup> Alf Andrew Heggoy, “Arab Education in Colonial Algeria”, *Journal of African Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2 (Summer, 1975), 153.

expedient and a great step towards equality<sup>7</sup>, they encountered a great obstacle in the European settler, or *colon*, population.

Roughly 10% of the population, the European settlers in Algeria had immigrated from Spain, Italy and, most commonly, France during the late nineteenth century. A large number of *colons* were exiles from Alsace-Lorraine who had fled to the colony after 1871. Regardless of national origin, the settlers were united in their fear of an often-hostile Algerian majority. They fiercely defended their privileged status in the colony and resisted any change that would grant the Arabs or Berbers a greater share of political or economic power. Particularly important to the settlers was that they would have exclusive access to the metropolitan education system. They feared that if an Algerian were able to obtain the same school credentials as a European, the former would be more desirable in government and business because a far lower wage could be paid to a non-European worker. Furthermore, they feared that French education would expose the thin veneer separating colonizer and colonized and result in the crumbling of the entire colonial system. In response to the growing number of Algerians calling for access to French education, the *colon* population became ever more determined to limit the extent to which this goal would be realized. Since it was these Europeans who controlled most of the day-to-day business of the colony, the government in Paris was loathe to carry out reforms that might anger the settlers. In order to quell their fears while satisfying Algerian demands for education, it was agreed that Algerian schools would be kept separate from those for European children and that funding for the former would be capped at 20% of the colonial education budget.<sup>8</sup> Thus education became an uneasy compromise that

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<sup>7</sup> Ruedy, 110-112.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

demonstrated the political and social fragility of post-war Algeria. Attention will now turn to the establishment of French education in World War One era Alsace.

The onset of war with Germany in 1914 allowed France to sweep into southern Alsace and “liberate” the territory from German rule. The local population was appropriately wary about being the battlefield for German-French aggression once again, which made appeasement essential in order to secure Alsatian loyalty to France. It was difficult to avoid the impression that France was engaging in a military occupation of Alsace. The army, and not any civilian government, controlled the region and filled the ranks of local administration. Young Alsatian men were being evacuated or imprisoned if their patriotism to France was in any way doubtful. Yet the French were careful to demonstrate their goodwill to the loyal Alsatian population and to promise that the post-war transition would be negotiated fairly and equally with respect for local tradition and self-determination. In a speech to crowds in Mulhouse in November of 1914, Field Marshal Joseph Joffre emphasized that France was not a conqueror but a liberator who would safeguard local language and culture:

Your return is definitive. You will forever be French. France brings you, in addition to the liberties that she has always represented, the respect of your traditions, of your convictions, of your values. I am France and you are Alsace. I embrace you in the name of France.<sup>9</sup>

This passage illustrates France’s awareness that Alsations feared re-incorporation with France would come at the expense of local culture. Language and education were particularly sensitive issues. France wanted to promote the national language but at the same time feared alienating the local population during wartime. From the earliest moments of the occupation, education was seen as a second front in the war against

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<sup>9</sup> Joseph Joffre quoted in Stephen. L. Harp, *Learning to be Loyal: Primary Schooling as Nation Building in Alsace and Lorraine, 1850-1940* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1998), 161.

Germany. Joffre, responding to directives sent from the government in Paris, ordered any soldiers who had been employed as teachers prior to the war to take up posts in the classrooms of Alsace.<sup>10</sup> Conversation courses were set up for military teachers in the occupied territories in order to aid them in their teaching and to illustrate France's commitment to honouring local language. A memo issued by army headquarters in 1916 emphasized the role of these teachers as liaisons between France and Alsace:

The military teacher represents France and the army. Equipped with this investiture, he is a privileged soldier who has the right to only one thought: to make France familiar, loved and respected by his pupils and their parents... He will not act among them like a conqueror, but as a friend, a liberator. He will gain their confidence with his kindness, his courtesy, his good humour and his tolerance.<sup>11</sup>

It was essential for the French national image that the "lost province" should be incorporated smoothly and its return to the *mère patrie* be a cause for celebration within Alsace and across France. In a 1910 census, however, over 95% of the Alsatian population identified themselves as German speakers. The vast majority neither spoke nor understood the French language.<sup>12</sup> How, then, could France claim that the area was rightfully part of the hexagon and not German territory? Helping to prop up this national myth was the publication of a number of popular history books, often used as school texts in Alsatian and French secondary schools, which discussed the historic ties between France and the Alsace-Lorraine region. In each of these books, language was downplayed as a determinant of national identity,<sup>13</sup> rather surprising considering the ongoing efforts of the Third Republic to replace regional languages with universal French. Instead,

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<sup>10</sup> Harp, 167.

<sup>11</sup> Staff of the 7<sup>th</sup> Army in a Report to the Commander, 31 March 1916, reprinted in Harp, 167-168.

<sup>12</sup> Harp, 196.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Roger Dumon, *L'Intelligence en Face de la Race: L'Expérience de l'Alsace* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1926).

history and culture were given an esteemed place as the origins of national character. According to this genre of literature, archaeological and scientific evidence proved that Alsatians were a Celtic race who spoke German only because of repeated German conquests. The brutality of these conquests was, of course, contrasted with the liberating impulses of France.<sup>14</sup>

A popular story circulating after the war told of French troops entering the cathedral at Aix-la-Chapelle in order to pay homage at the tomb of Charlemagne and to drape it with the tricolour.<sup>15</sup> This anecdote, regardless of its veracity, served to solidify the sense that Alsace was historically French despite the linguistic divide between the province and the *mère patrie*. Since 1871, the French education system had cultivated an image of Alsace as the homeland of French nationalism. Alsatian villages were depicted as the archetype of French rural life, and classroom maps showed the province coloured purple or black in mourning over its separation from France. As Laird Boswell has argued, post-war tensions between Alsace and France can be traced to “the paradoxical situation of a non-francophone and culturally distinct region being invested with a degree of patriotic symbolism on a scale known to no other French province.”<sup>16</sup>

With the defeat of Germany in 1918, Alsace and Lorraine were officially part of France once again. In the immediate post-war period, respect for local language was still emphasized by most French political leaders and education officials. Alexandre Millerand, known to be sympathetic to the cause of regionalism in France, was named *commissaire général* of Alsace in March of 1919. In a speech to parliament that year,

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<sup>14</sup> Louis Batiffol, *L'Alsace est Française par Ses Origins, Sa Race, Son Passé* (Paris: Ernest Flammarion, 1919), 178, 230, 239.

<sup>15</sup> Jean de Pange, *Les Libertés Rhénanes* (Paris: Perrin et Compagnie, 1922), 6.

<sup>16</sup> Laird Boswell, “From Liberation to Purge Trials in the ‘Mythic Provinces’: Recasting French Identities in Alsace and Lorraine, 1918–1920”, *French Historical Studies*, vol. 23, no. 1 (2000), 132.

Millerand emphasized that the incorporation of Alsace would have to move very slowly and with constant vigilance on the part of French officials to ensure that local needs were being respected. He was particularly adamant that German should be used as the language of instruction in schools until students were capable enough in French to be taught exclusively in the national language. Although assimilation was the end goal, it should not be rushed: “Amener les Alsaciens et les Lorrains à marcher d’eux-mêmes vers l’assimilation de plus en plus complète”.<sup>17</sup> A government-commissioned report on secondary education in Alsace similarly emphasized the need for a slow transition to the French education system. The author of the report warned that education must not be imposed from Paris, but instead develop as a compromise between German and French pedagogy in order to encourage in the students loyalty to France and a desire to achieve academic success.<sup>18</sup>

Although official rhetoric during and immediately after World War One claimed that local languages in both Algeria and Alsace would be preserved in French education systems, reality on the ground revealed that this was generally not the case. Education directors and theorists throughout the interwar period argued that complete immersion in the French language was necessary in both provinces and colonies in order to foster unity and loyalty.<sup>19</sup> Benedict Anderson has argued that shared language is the primary vehicle for realizing the “imagined community” of nation. In colonial schools, youth read from the same textbooks in the same language, overcoming barriers of culture, dialect and geography through shared experience. This was an intentional program designed by the

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<sup>17</sup> A. Millerand quoted in Genevieve Baas, *La Malaise Alsacien – 1919-1924* (Strasbourg: Développement et Communauté, 1972), 50-51.

<sup>18</sup> V-H Friedel, *Raport sur L’Enseignement Sécondaire en Alsace et en Lorraine* (Paris: Imprimerie Marcéchal, 1918), 4-5.

<sup>19</sup> Chanet, 212.

French to foster a sense of unity among the colonized and an attachment to the “mother country”. This policy also served to sever ties between French colonies and surrounding nations that might otherwise provide a more compelling cultural and linguistic partnership.<sup>20</sup> Although here Anderson was pointing to the threat of Chinese culture and language in French Indochina, the same statement could be applied to a fear of pan-Arab identity in Algeria and Germanic identity in Alsace.

French officials in Algeria favoured an immersion language policy and were generally unwilling to allow the use of a secondary language in the classroom. The inspector of indigenous education in Oran, a department of Algeria, published a report for the 1931 inter-colonial congress on education. He was explicit on the importance of French instruction: every lesson, regardless of subject, must be focussed on improving the students’ understanding of French. Communication between ruler and subject was essential to the realization of the *mission civilisatrice*:

L’enseignement primaire élémentaire semble avoir, dès le début, poursuivi ce double dessein: enseigner aux indigènes la langue française; les mettre en possession des connaissances élémentaires nécessaires... à l’adaptation la plus heureuse possible des indigènes à la vie moderne.<sup>21</sup>

Throughout the thirty-three-page report, the association between speaking French and being equipped for “la vie moderne” was constantly emphasized. Arabic, according to the author and most other French educators, was unable to convey abstract thought or discuss

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<sup>20</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 122-124.

<sup>21</sup> M.F. de Paemelaere, “Rapport sur l’Algérie”, *L’Adaptation de l’Enseignement dans les Colonies: Rapports et Compte-Rendu du Congrès Intercolonial de l’Enseignement dans les Colonies et les Pays d’Outre-Mer, 25-27 Septembre 1931* (Paris: Henri Didier, 1932), 18.

technical matters relevant in industrial society. French was the only medium by which this sort of learning could take place.<sup>22</sup>

This sentiment had been articulated earlier by Georges Hardy, who served as director of education in French Morocco and West Africa, and whose writings on colonial education were influential throughout the empire. He strongly advised against attempting to teach “French concepts” in any language other than French, not only because of linguistic limitations, but because students would not be able to grasp deep meaning until they had been trained to think as Frenchmen. According to Hardy, “The words solidarity and co-operation can be translated into Moroccan or Arabic or Berber because all the words translate, but the concepts these words evoke in our minds are radically inaccessible to a Moroccan brain.”<sup>23</sup> French language education was clearly about more than facilitating communication in the colonies. Arabic and other indigenous languages were assumed to be inferior to French – an extension of the racism that assumed Algerians themselves were inferior to Frenchmen. Teaching the youth to speak and think in French was seen as the essential first step in the civilizing process.

Textbooks used in Algeria demonstrate that commitment to teaching French was not simply a matter for discussion among colonial politicians and theorists, but was actively promoted in school curricula. Until the late 1920s, most schoolbooks available in the colonies were identical to those used in the metropole. As argued by Anderson, a centralized education system was an essential part of fostering a French identity across the empire.<sup>24</sup> Providing identical textbooks and identical lesson plans facilitated this goal.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>23</sup> Georges Hardy quoted in Spencer D. Segalla “Georges Hardy and Educational Ethnology in French Morocco, 1920-26”, *French Colonial History*, vol. 4 (2003), 178.

<sup>24</sup> Benedict Anderson, 122.

Memoirs written by those who attended colonial schools often recall reciting with their classmates the opening verse of the standard history text: “Nos ancêtres les Gaulois...”<sup>25</sup> No allowances were made for the differing cultural, historical and linguistic identities in the colonial classroom: all were glossed over in favour of promoting a distinctly French character.

By the late 1920s, more and more voices in French colonial circles were calling for an “associationist” relationship between France and the overseas colonies. The logic behind this philosophy, as discussed in the previous chapter, was that colonial subjects could not be expected to assimilate to French standards and should therefore be educated “in their own realm”. This era saw a number of textbooks published specifically for use in colonial classrooms that were based loosely on the curriculum of France but with lessons geared towards local contexts. The language of instruction, however, remained French and great emphasis was placed on its use. Edgar Colin’s *L’Algérie: Histoire et Géographie*, a textbook for the oldest grades in Algerian primary school, contains many lessons which describe the benefits brought to Algeria by the French colonists. Language, claims the author, is the most beneficial of all France’s gifts. Thanks to urban education, he explains, it is difficult to tell the difference between the speech of an Algerian and a European.<sup>26</sup> Younger students were also taught to be thankful for the spread of French language in their community. The introduction to *Bonjour Ali! Bonjour Fatima!*, a primary-level reader designed specifically for Algerian students, explains that the intent

<sup>25</sup> See for example, Marie-Paule Ha, “From ‘Nos Ancêtres les Gaulois’ to ‘Leur Culture Ancestrale’: Symbolic Violence and the Politics of Colonial Schooling in Indochina”, *French Colonial History*, vol. 3, (2003), 101-118, and Abdou Moumouni, *Education in Africa* (London: Andre Deutsch Ltd., 1968).

<sup>26</sup> Edgar Colin et al, *L’Algérie: Histoire et Géographie a l’Usage des Cours Moyens et des Classes de Fin d’Études* (Alger: Baconnier Frères, 1949), 121.

of the textbook is to give students a taste for the joys of reading and speaking in French and to help the teacher realize this laudable goal.<sup>27</sup>

In Alsace, language policy was perhaps even more critical than in Algeria. Once the war was over and the annexed provinces were secured under French control, the French government was less concerned about appeasing the local population through promises of linguistic protection. More important, in the minds of the post-war government, was determining who were loyal French citizens and who still harboured pro-German sympathies. Alsatians were categorized according to their ethnic backgrounds, and those who were not of pure French blood or had collaborated with Germany during the war were “purged” by the *commissions de triage*. By 1920, over 100 000 Alsatians were forced to leave or voluntarily left their homes to re-establish themselves in Germany.<sup>28</sup> These purges were not simply a matter of military and political security in the reincorporated province. The French were attempting to recast a sense of nationality in Alsace along racial, ethnic and cultural lines. According to Boswell, “different understandings of what it meant to be French crystallized around the *épuration* in Alsace-Lorraine.”<sup>29</sup>

Although Millerand, as *commissaire général*, appeared to be genuinely committed to bilingual education, he encountered strong opposition from those who supported the post-war ethnic purges. Many education officials argued that allowing German equal status in Alsatian schools was tantamount to admitting that Alsatians were as German as they were French. Their loyalty to France could not be guaranteed under such a system. Furthermore, it was argued, having Alsatians learn the same French curriculum as their

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<sup>27</sup> P. Bourgeois and L. Basset, *Bonjour Ali! Bonjour Fatima!* (Paris: Fernand Nathan, 1939), preface.

<sup>28</sup> Boswell, 141.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

counterparts in the interior would equalize social and economic differences between the two groups.<sup>30</sup>

In January of 1920, a directive concerning primary schooling in Alsace stated that German had to be restricted to only three hours per week beginning in the fourth year of school. Students from grade one to three were not to speak any language but French, even for religious instruction.<sup>31</sup> Considerable resistance flared among Alsatian parents who worried that their children would learn nothing in classes where the teacher spoke a foreign language. Across the province there was a feeling of betrayal and demands were made that the 1918 promise of linguistic protection be honoured.

Many education experts considered the German spoken in Alsace, much like the Arabic of Algeria, to be a language inferior to French. Countless reports on education and French newspaper opinion pieces described the Alsatian tongue as ill-adapted to modern ideas. This charge stemmed in part from the fact that most Alsatians were practicing members of a religious group and, regardless of whether this religion was Catholic, Protestant or Jewish, observance was carried out in the German language. The close association between Alsatian German and religion made the language a target for accusations of being anti-modern, anti-progress and generally anti-republican. An article appearing in the 1919 issue of the *Revue de l'Enseignement Primaire* was not unusual in its attack on regional language use in Alsace:

Le dialecte régionale est le véhicule des idées de réaction, le truchement d'une propagande qui non seulement s'exerce contre la République, mais va jusqu' à l'expression même du séparatisme, en haine de l'esprit laïque de la France moderne.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Chanet, 212.

<sup>31</sup> Harp, 196.

<sup>32</sup> A. Tabarant, "Le Pays" reprinted in Chanet, 211.

The effort of French educators to eradicate Alsatian German, and regional languages in general, is best illustrated through the most popular textbook of the Third Republic: *Le Tour de France par Deux Enfants*. Described by Jacques and Mona Ozouf as “le petit livre rouge de la République”,<sup>33</sup> *Tour de France* was the standard reader in all French primary schools until the 1920s. The text followed the adventures of two brothers who, according to the dying wish of their father, fled their native Lorraine after its annexation by Germany in 1871. The orphaned André and Julien, obvious symbols of the two lost provinces, travel around France in search of a home, all the while teaching young readers of its wonders and heroes. The boys often praise the French language that unifies their nation and allows them to communicate with their fellow Frenchmen. They enjoy the regional variety of costume and food, but constantly remind the reader that in terms of language, there is only one France. A memorable scene along this vein occurs when André and Julien are in the Drôme and unable to communicate with their old, rural landlady. Julien, frustrated by this linguistic obstacle, asks his brother why some people do not speak French. André, always the fervent patriot and republican, offers reassuring words: “C’est que tous n’ont pas pu aller a l’école. Mais, dans un certain nombre d’années il n’en sera plus ainsi, et par toute la France on saura parler la langue de la patrie.” As if on cue, the children of the house return from school to the relief of our protagonists. Young, modern and educated in the French language, the chattering youth contrast sharply with the silent, old-fashioned woman.<sup>34</sup>

The teacher’s version of *La Tour de France* is explicit about the purpose of language lessons in the textbook. In this instructor’s manual, the presence of regional

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<sup>33</sup> J. and M. Ozouf, “Le Tour de France par Deux Enfants” in P. Nora, ed., *Les lieux de mémoire vol 1: La République* (Paris:Gallimard, 1984).

<sup>34</sup> G. Bruno, *La Tour de France Par Deux Enfants* (Paris: Librairie Belin, 1877), 164-165.

dialects is described as a threat to national unity. Bilingualism, the author explains, is of little practical use in France because everything is carried out in a single language – the language of the *patrie*. It is therefore imperative that students concentrate their energies on speaking one language only. A citizen who cannot speak French cannot contribute to the greatness of their country. Furthermore, the manual argues, if all French people were to speak the same language, barriers of geography and class would be destroyed and the public school would be celebrated as the great social leveller. Teachers were encouraged to take their places as the leaders of the campaign against *patois*.<sup>35</sup>

The method for teaching French favoured by the Third Republic in both Algeria and Alsace was known as the “direct method”. This method relied on complete immersion in French without the use of an intermediary language to translate unknown terms to non-francophone students. Teaching was based on “*leçons des choses*”, where an object was shown by the teacher or textbook and the appropriate French term was written and spoken aloud for students to repeat and copy in their notebooks. In Algerian and Alsatian primary schools, these lessons were to take up to half of the school day, emphasising the importance placed on acquisition of French. According to educators, the lessons should revolve around the everyday objects and lifestyle of the population concerned in order to make French both easier to learn and relevant to the reality of the students’ lives. The topics covered were the same everywhere and followed a set programme throughout the academic year: “school”, “the human body”, “clothing”, “family”, “animals” and so on.<sup>36</sup> In this way, the republican preference for standardized

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<sup>35</sup> J. and M. Ozouf, “La Tour de France Par Deux Enfants”, 297.

<sup>36</sup> S. Faci, “Plan d’Études et Programmes de l’Enseignement Primaire des Indigènes en Algérie”, *La Voix des Humbles* vol. 27 (juil. 1924), 4-8, and Chanet, 219-222.

education was still maintained, although the specifics of each lesson varied according to region.

*Mamadou et Bineta*, a series of books written specifically for use in North and West African schools<sup>37</sup>, provides an excellent example of the direct method in colonial school textbooks. In *Les Premières Lectures de Mamadou et Bineta*, designed for the second year of primary school, the first lesson is entitled “Maître et élève”. The image in this section shows a dark-skinned boy walking past a straw hut with a large sun hanging in the sky above him. His feet are bare and in his hand is a single book. A short paragraph of text is followed by a series of terms for the student to practice saying aloud and writing: “élève”, “Monsieur” and “je m’appelle”.<sup>38</sup> A later chapter on food begins with the lesson “Le couscous” and is illustrated with a small girl leaning over a pot on an open fire. Terms to learn from this section include “ma soeur”, “le mortier” and “elle écrase”.<sup>39</sup> Students in Alsace would have followed the same loose lesson plan, discussing their school and their local cuisine and acquiring similar French vocabulary. In colony and metropole, French language was taught through familiar stories and images and never through translation. This pedagogical method met with both praise and condemnation from educators in Alsace and Algeria.

The theory behind the direct method was that it would force students to learn French by not allowing reliance on translation in the mother tongue. All subjects, from history to mathematics, would be taught exclusively in French so that students would know no other way to communicate advanced concepts and ideas. Proponents of the

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<sup>37</sup> Jonathan Gosnell, *The Politics of Frenchness in Colonial Algeria, 1930-1954* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2002).

<sup>38</sup> A. Davense, *Les Premières Lectures de Mamadou et Bineta* (Paris: Librairie Istra, 1930), 5-6.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 94-95.

method argued that, although difficult at first, it resulted in greater proficiency in French than bilingual teaching. A 1920 report on education in Alsace explained that the direct method would “create a French atmosphere that would make students entering the classroom feel taken in and taken over by the milieu and offer pupils a first initiation into things French.”<sup>40</sup>

Some even argued that permitting bilingualism in education would allow for anti-French sentiments to diffuse among students. This was particularly a concern in Alsace, where a significant autonomist movement was sparked by the imposition of French-only schooling. Marcel Nast, writing in the popular French journal *l'Opinion* argued “la lutte pour le bilinguisme n'est qu'une manifestation particulière de la lutte et de la propagande pour l'autonomie.”<sup>41</sup> In Algeria, too, there was a fear that classes in Arabic would serve to undermine French authority in the colony. A feeling of Arab solidarity would compromise the French identity that officials were trying to instill among students. Even worse, Algerian teachers could use the language to secretly propagate anti-French feeling among the youth.<sup>42</sup> This fear appeared to be legitimated by the fact that Algerian students led the most active and militant nationalist organizations.<sup>43</sup> Education officials argued that Algerian youth would be more loyal to France if they were taught exclusively in the French language.<sup>44</sup>

There were many parents and teachers who did not feel that the direct method was the best means of French education. The most common argument against the method was

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<sup>40</sup> Harp, 180.

<sup>41</sup> Marcel Nast, “La Question du Bilinguisme en Alsace”, *L'Opinion*, 26 Février 1921, reprinted in Bass, 93.

<sup>42</sup> Alf Andrew Heggoy and Paul Zingg, “French Education in Revolutionary North Africa”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 7, no. 4 (Oct., 1976), 574.

<sup>43</sup> Guy Pervillé, “Le Sentiment National des Étudiants Algériens de Culture Française de 1912 à 1962”, *Relations Internationales*, vol. 2 (1974), 240-241.

<sup>44</sup> De Paemelaere, 20-22.

that students were not learning either French or their mother tongue well. Many students found the transition to having only French spoken in the classroom impossible to manage. Inability to understand and speak the language led to poor results in all other subjects. The interwar literacy rate in Alsace dropped considerably from that of the pre-war era. Even as late as 1932, graduates who had begun school after 1918 were performing worse on examinations than their counterparts had twenty years earlier. In 1926, the Association of Artisans in Alsace and Moselle wrote a report outlining the decline in scholastic aptitude among recruits. According to the association, although French had made inroads in urban areas, it remained a foreign language to those in rural areas. Even more problematic, proficiency in German had weakened considerably among the youth and in all other subject areas they were performing far below the pre-war average.<sup>45</sup>

The direct method required that native French speakers be used as teachers wherever possible. Ability to speak fluently in French was the single most important qualification for teaching in non-Francophone areas. In Algeria, the experience of implanting teachers from the metropole created an atmosphere of inequality and discrimination. Algerian teachers trained at local normal schools were paid far less than those who were sent from France. This, of course, was standard practice across all job sectors in the colony. The issue of language, however, meant that Algerians were competing with francophones for jobs as French teachers. Those from France were preferred by the colonial administration, which meant that Algerian teachers could be relocated or fired with little notice and no benefits if a teacher from France became available to take up the post. Furthermore, non-francophone teachers complained of racism in the workplace. One woman recalled that her colleagues from the metropole

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<sup>45</sup> Baas, 87-89.

constantly mocked her accent and her clothing, sometimes in front of the students.<sup>46</sup> This discrimination, coupled with the fact that Algerian teachers often had to work under more difficult conditions in crowded and under-funded classrooms, caused a great deal of resentment among Algerian instructors, students and the wider community.

After the armistice, many German administrators and teachers left their posts in the now French-controlled Alsace. Those who did not often lost their jobs anyway, particularly if they were high-ranking administrators or secondary school teachers who were suspected of harbouring anti-French sentiment. Young Alsatian teachers were told that their only chance of employment would be to accept a position in a French-speaking department so that they could learn the language and then return to their home province to teach. They were replaced by school personnel from the interior whose loyalty was assured and whose French was flawless. The goal was to have 3000 French-speaking teachers relocated to Alsace and Lorraine by 1921. To persuade those from the interior to make the move, the French government offered lucrative bonuses and a salary considerably higher than the standard in both the interior and Alsace. This meant that many young, inexperienced teachers who moved to Alsace in pursuit of financial advantage were making more money than local teachers with decades of experience.<sup>47</sup> Needless to say, very few teachers sent from the interior to Alsace could speak the local language. French officials did not perceive this as a problem because the direct method insisted that no German should be spoken in the classroom. The language barrier meant that teachers had little connection with the students, their parents, or the wider community.

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<sup>46</sup> Mohan Lechani, quoted in Louis Rigaud *et al.*, *L'École en Algérie: 1830-1962: De la Régence aux Centres Sociaux Éducatifs* (Paris: Publisud, 2001), 41.

<sup>47</sup> Harp, 190.

The removal of high-ranking teaching personnel, the relocation of young instructors and the migration of over-paid teachers from the interior caused considerable resentment in Alsatian communities. Parents worried about their child's performance at school and could not communicate these fears to a unilingual French teacher. Local teachers shared these concerns: a number of complaints were filed with school inspectors that stated students' performance suffered if their teacher did not speak their language.<sup>48</sup> Alsatian teachers deeply resented what they perceived as lower-quality instructors replacing their friends and colleagues who were deemed "politically unacceptable" by the *commissions de triage*.<sup>49</sup> Hostility was exacerbated by the knowledge that these French teachers were paid considerably more money. In 1920, teachers were warned that if they did not learn French adequately enough to remain as teachers, they would lose their pension and seniority rights.<sup>50</sup> Outrage spread beyond the schools themselves and many Alsatians campaigned for equalization of teachers' rights. In 1925, the *Parti Radical* under Prime Minister Edouard Herriot granted equal salary and benefits to all teachers, regardless of language.<sup>51</sup> Most Alsatians fiercely opposed Herriot, however, because of his commitment to secularization, which will be discussed in the following chapter. This conciliatory gesture can therefore be seen as a method to minimize popular protest against his leadership.

In both Algeria and Alsace, resistance to French-only education became highly political. Language became more than a matter of pedagogy. It was a battle over culture

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<sup>48</sup> Chanet, 262.

<sup>49</sup> Harp, 190.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

and the right to define one's own identity. René Gillouin, a vocal opponent of the direct method, condemned its use in Alsace through a series of letters in *La Liberté*:

(la méthode directe), c'est une méthode technique absurde, qui surcharge et brouille l'esprit des enfants, et n'arrive qu'à leur faire oublier la première langue sans leur faire apprendre le seconde, mais en outre est, moralement et spirituellement, une entreprise coupable, directement contraire aux conditions de toute véritable culture, car elle consiste à déraciner de jeunes plantes de leur sol natal...<sup>52</sup>

Recent historians studying education in French provinces and colonies have supported Gillouin's argument. Among the most notable of these is Mona Ozouf, who has described the direct method as a cruel manifestation of the universalizing and standardizing policy adopted by the Third Republic's education system. She argues that "la conséquence de cette arrogante entreprise d'uniformité est le déracinement."<sup>53</sup> The policy of *déracinement* in Alsace had clear political objectives: to draw the population away from Germany's sphere of influence by making the region linguistically French and therefore, it was hoped, culturally and politically French as well. The previously-discussed failures of French education in rural Alsace seem to contradict Ozouf's assertion that regional culture was destroyed through universalizing policies. Despite the importance placed on French fluency, it appears that Alsatian students were not abandoning their mother tongue in favour of the national language. This indicates that regional identities remained strong during the interwar period in spite of the apparent centralization.

Fanny Colonna has been similarly critical of the imposition of the direct method in Algerian schools. Colonna, however, emphasizes that this pedagogical theory failed to

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<sup>52</sup> René Gillouin, "La Question d'Alsace", reprinted in Oscar de Férenzy, *La Vérité sur L'Alsace* (Paris: Librairie Bloud & Gay, 1930), 322.

<sup>53</sup> Ozouf, "Introduction", in Chanet, 7.

teach Algerian students adequately in either Arabic or French. For evidence she cites the fact that after a century of the French “civilizing mission” in Algeria, the 1938 census found that 78.4% of Algerians were illiterate.<sup>54</sup> Some historians have argued that this was in fact a higher illiteracy rate than before the French conquest, when Koranic schools dotted the countryside and taught young Algerians the rudiments of Arabic.<sup>55</sup> Colonna argues that the French education system was never intended to make the Algerian population fluent in French, but to cut them off from their own language and history in order to better control them. A deliberately low-quality education system was a means to prevent Algerians from demanding social and political equality or aspiring to become French citizens.<sup>56</sup>

It is difficult to determine to what extent the failure of French language instruction was a conscious policy on the part of colonial officials rather than an unfortunate by-product of direct method education. The French government certainly feared the existence of pan-Arabism just as they feared loyalty to Germany in Alsace, and were likely dismayed by the continued dominance of regional language in both locations. Although the means and method of language instruction in both Alsace and Algeria have been widely criticized, the fact that French usage remained superficial at best is due in large part to local resistance. Populations in both regions understood the link between language, culture and political control and clung tenaciously to their own mother tongue. Focus will now move to political resistance against French education and the effect this had on the application of language policy.

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<sup>54</sup> Fanny Colonna, *Instituteurs Algériens 1883-1939* (Alger: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1975), 50.

<sup>55</sup> Ruedy, 103.

<sup>56</sup> Colonna, 50, 58.

Autonomism loomed over the Alsatian population after World War One and reached a peak in the mid 1920s. François Dreyfus has identified three strains of autonomism in interwar Alsace: one Catholic and opposed to the secularism of republican France, one that sought to remain part of France but retain control over local institutions such as education, and finally the most extreme wing which sought to create a fully independent Alsatian nation.<sup>57</sup> Autonomist parties varied in political orientation, but shared a common concept of France as an imperialist power engaged in a process of *déracinement*. Karl Roos, leader of the separatist *Landespartei*, explained “I did not become an autonomist out of dissatisfaction with my well-being. I am an autonomist for cultural reasons.”<sup>58</sup> The *Landespartei* was one of the few political organizations in Alsace calling for complete independence of the province from either French or German rule. Its manifesto called for national self-determination, and argued that France was attempting to destroy Alsatian culture through the imposition of the French language and control of education.<sup>59</sup>

The *Union Populaire Républicaine d'Alsace*, or UPR, was formed in 1919 to oppose the manner by which Alsace was reincorporated into France. The program of the UPR stated a desire to be part of France while still exercising control over religion and education. Praising the intellectual culture of France, the program articulated a desire to learn French as a foreign language beginning in the first year of primary school. The end goal should be bilingualism, but the method of teaching should remain German.<sup>60</sup> The

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<sup>57</sup> François Dreyfus, *La Vie Politique en Alsace, 1919-1936* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1969).

<sup>58</sup> Karl Roos quoted in Samuel Goodfellow, *Between the Swastika and the Cross of Lorraine: Fascisms in Interwar Alsace* (DeKalb, Northern Illinois University Press, 1999), 17.

<sup>59</sup> Malcolm Anderson, “Regional Identity and Political Change: The Case of Alsace from the Third to Fifth Republic”, *Political Studies*, vol. 20, no 1, 22.

<sup>60</sup> “Programme de l’Union Populaire Républicaine d’Alsace, 9 avril 1919”, reprinted in de Férenzy, 423-432.

UPR, although not as extreme as the *Landespartei*, shared with this organization a desire to promote the regional language in order to protect Alsatian culture from French assimilation. This platform met with considerable success and many Alsatians joined the UPR and similar political groups in the interwar period. The relationship between education policy and autonomism was quite clear: whenever a political leader in Paris carried out reforms to minimize the presence of German or religion in Alsatians schools, the membership in parties like UPR skyrocketed.<sup>61</sup>

In 1926, Prime Minister Raymond Poincaré decided to make an official visit to Alsace and tour local schools in an effort to placate the population. Autonomist agitation had reached a peak during the leadership of the *Cartel des Gauches* the previous year. Poincaré made a statement about the need to protect the Alsatian language, and encouraged the school authorities in the province to introduce more German in the curriculum as a show of goodwill to the local population. Rector of Education Christian Pfister followed this advice, and German was permitted two hours weekly beginning at the second year of primary school with an extra hour added in the fourth grade. Autonomists found the measure insufficient and continued to call for bilingual education. Despite dissatisfaction with the language reforms within Alsace, French authorities were not willing to concede any more time for German instruction. Pfister's directives remained in place until Germany invaded the region in 1940.<sup>62</sup>

Several independence groups with differing political agendas emerged in interwar Algeria. The *Etoile Nord-Africaine* was an urban movement closely associated with the French Communist party. Comprised of Algerian workers in France as well as members

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<sup>61</sup> Goodfellow, 15.

<sup>62</sup> Harp, 197.

of the elite who had received French schooling, this organization campaigned for the extension of French social legislation to Algeria.<sup>63</sup> On the other side of the political spectrum was the Association of Reform Ulama, a group of religious leaders who believed Algeria should exist as an independent Islamic state. The program of the reform ulama is well articulated in their motto, "Islam is my religion, Arabic is my language, Algeria is my fatherland." Interestingly, the one issue that all nationalist groups in Algeria agreed on was the need for Arabic education. For the *Etoile Nord-Africaine* and similar groups, this was a matter of academic excellence: Arabic should be used to teach French and other subjects to a largely uneducated Arabic speaking populace.<sup>64</sup> For the reform ulama, Arabic education was a means to forge a strong sense of cultural pride. The creation of a free, Arabic and Muslim education system was the first article of their original program.<sup>65</sup> In fact, their primary activity was the administering of reformed Koranic schools that taught Arabic and religion as well as "modern" courses adapted from French schools. Algerians, particularly the rural poor who had no access to French education, supported the Islamic reform movement by sending their children to these Arabic schools. By 1940, tens of thousands of students were in attendance.<sup>66</sup>

Due to increased demand for Arabic language instruction in *franco-indigène* schools, a number of metropolitan and colonial government circulars dating from the late 1920s began to encourage the introduction of local languages in classroom lessons. This move can be seen as part of the "associationist" drive to educate Algerians in their own

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<sup>63</sup> Ruedy, 137.

<sup>64</sup> "Plan de Revendications Immédiates Pour l'Afrique du Nord Présenté au Front Populaire par l'Etoile Nord-Africaine, (Février 1936)", reprinted in Claude Collot, *Le Mouvement National Algérien: Textes 1912-1954* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1978), 80, and "Les texts votés par le Premier Congrès Musulman Algérien, (Alger: 7 Juin 1936)", reprinted in Collot, 71.

<sup>65</sup> "Statuts d l'Association des Oulémas d'Algérie, (5 mai 1931)", reprinted in Collot, 44-47.

<sup>66</sup> Heggoy, "Arab Education in Colonial Algeria", 155.

milieu. Arabic instruction, however, was not to exceed half an hour per day and Berber remained virtually absent in schools with a significant Kabyle population.<sup>67</sup> A 1931 education report by the inspector of education in Oran articulated that a concerted effort was being made to include some Arabic instruction in French-run primary schools across the colony. The inspector did comment that progress was moving slowly due to a lack of teachers qualified to teach either indigenous language,<sup>68</sup> a claim that seems somewhat dubious in a country where the vast majority of people spoke Arabic as a mother tongue. The report goes on to state that instruction should be limited to oral and colloquial language only. Classical Arabic, and the written literature attached to it, was not to be part of the curriculum. According to the author, “l’arabe littéraire, la seule langue écrite, la langue des livres, il est aussi *étranger* au jeune indigène algérien que la langue romane peut l’être au petit Parisien.”<sup>69</sup>

Including only spoken, dialectical Arabic in primary school curricula had a clear political objective. The French authorities wanted to satisfy demands for Arabic education without actually compromising their ability to control the linguistic and cultural identity of the Algerian students. Colloquial Arabic varied between regions, and thus teaching it would not serve to foster a pan-Arabic or pan-Algerian identity. Furthermore, by learning only the oral tradition, students were not able to access a body of classical literature that might have given them a sense of shared history and heritage. Heggoy and Zingg have argued that the emphasis on oral Arabic was also a means to

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<sup>67</sup> Spencer Segalla, “Georges Hardy and Educational Ethnology in French Morocco, 1920-26”, *French Colonial History*, vol. 4 (2003), 180.

<sup>68</sup> De Paemelaere, 18-19.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

shelter Algerian students from subversive anti-French and nationalist texts that were becoming prevalent across Algeria in the 1930s.<sup>70</sup>

Despite French attempts to foster a sense of loyalty among the colonized, Algerian nationalism grew throughout the 1930s. Algerian student groups, who felt the oppression of the colonial situation all the more keenly because of their exposure to French schooling, were the most active nationalist organizations.<sup>71</sup> Tony Chafer and Amanda Sackur have argued that the growth of nationalist sentiment in Algeria stemmed from a series of failed liberal reforms proposed in Paris. Beginning in 1930, a number of proposals were made to increase citizenship eligibility among Algerians. These reforms were greeted with enthusiasm by the Algerian population, but when they failed to come to fruition the result was open hostility. Algerians realized that they could not rely on the French government to bring about the independence they sought. Nationalist groups turned inwards and focussed on changing the colonial situation from “the bottom-up.”<sup>72</sup>

An enthusiasm for learning classical Arabic language and literature grew alongside this increase in nationalism. As previously discussed, virtually all nationalist groups promoted teaching Arabic as the national language in schools. In 1938, the French government outlawed its teaching in any school other than those run by the state.<sup>73</sup> This reform was a deliberate attempt to separate Algerian youth from their linguistic and cultural tradition in order to quell the growing sense of national identity in the colony. The reform ulama and other Algerian nationalist organizations refused to follow this law.

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<sup>70</sup> Heggoy and Zingg, 574.

<sup>71</sup> Pervillé, 240-241.

<sup>72</sup> Tony Chafer and Amanda Sackur, *French Colonial Empire and the Popular Front: Hope and Disillusion* (London: MacMillan Press, 1999), 11-12.

<sup>73</sup> Said Ali Alghailani, *Islam and the French Decolonisation of Algeria: The Role of the Algerian Ulama 1919-1940* (PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 2002), 176.

They argued that, as part of Algerian culture, the Arabic language could not be the target of French legislation.<sup>74</sup> On the eve of the Second World War, agitation for independence was reaching a fever-pitch.

The imposition of the French language in education was a powerful tool of social control across France and its colonies. Bilingualism was considered a political and social threat in both Algeria and Alsace because it undermined the cultivation of a distinctly French cultural identity. French authorities in colony and metropole believed that by enforcing the dominant language on non-Francophone populations and by directing how this language was taught, they would be able to supplant pre-existing loyalties among citizens and subjects. This identity-construction manifested itself in a variety of ways. French was depicted as the language of modernization. Textbooks were clear that those who did not speak French remained in darkness, and that the language was the greatest “gift” the colonizing power had given to its population. The relationship between language and the civilizing mission was closely associated with employment. In both Alsace and Algeria, it was difficult to secure work in urban areas if one did not speak French. This was a very useful recruitment tool, as parents who may not have otherwise sent their children to French schools did so because of career aspirations. French was also described as the language of loyalty. For reasons of national security, the government formed a strong connection between foreign language and insurgency. Students were well aware that not speaking in French would leave their patriotism in doubt and lead to chastisement from the teacher.

Local populations in Alsace and Algeria resisted the imposition of French-only education. In both areas, individuals and groups asserted an unwillingness to accept

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

French definitions of modernity, loyalty and success. They inverted French aims by celebrating the achievements of their own language and using this as a magnet to attract support for autonomism and independence. Borrowing from the French the idea that language defines national belonging, many independence groups nurtured a sense of exclusive identity shared by those who shared a mother tongue. The more the central government tried to curb the popularity of these groups, the more members they attracted. The government was forced to make a number of reforms in an attempt to quell the resistance against its language policy. Although these concessions did not necessarily match the demands of local populations, the fact that the central government had to alter its universalizing principles indicates that resistance movements were able to force changes in policy. In this way, colonial education was a fluid, multi-sided affair shaped both by local realities and by parliamentary debates.

### Chapter Three Religious Conflict in the Classroom

The classroom of the Third Republic was a highly contested cultural terrain. The previous chapter outlined how French language instruction was employed as a means to transform Alsatian and Algerian youths. Language policy, however, was not simply imposed from Paris; it was negotiated and renegotiated to suit local needs and answer local demands. This chapter will explore the intersections of religion and education in Alsace and Algeria in order to demonstrate how policy conformed to fit competing concepts of education. The bulk of academic literature on French education has concentrated on the destruction of religious customs by the central government through assimilationist cultural policies.<sup>1</sup> This chapter will reveal, however, that religious custom in Algeria and Alsace influenced and modified the realization of these policies. Far from imposing a uniform secularism on these two regions, the French government had little choice but to reconcile its resolute *laïcité* with the tenacity of local religious faith.

The Third Republic, as a firmly secular government, sought to distance itself from the religious affiliations of previous French regimes. The early imperial incursion into Algeria, however, had a distinctly religious flavour. Colonial apologetics had justified military action in 1830 as a mission to liberate the natives from the oppressive Ottoman regime and to offer them the benefits of Christian civilization. Charles X, in declaring his desire to carry out a campaign against Algeria, explained to parliament “the resounding redress which I hope to obtain in satisfying the honour of France will, with the

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<sup>1</sup> This is a criticism recently levelled by James McDougall in “The Shabiba Islamiyya of Algiers: Education, Authority, and Colonial Control, 1921-57”, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol. 24, no. 1 (2004), 147-154.

Almighty's help, turn to the profit of Christendom."<sup>2</sup> The King's religious zeal seems to contrast with the official rhetoric that promised to respect the Islamic tradition of Algeria. Written evidence of France's goodwill came in the form of a "convention of capitulation" signed by French General Bourmont and the Turkish Pasha on 5 July 1830. This document stated that "the exercise of the Muslim religion shall be free. The liberty of the inhabitants of all classes, their religion, their property, their business and industry shall remain inviolable."<sup>3</sup> The very day the document was signed, French soldiers in Algiers managed to contradict each of these liberties and attacked Algerian people, property, businesses and holy sites with an unchecked eagerness.

From the earliest days of imperialism in Algeria, the French carried out a systematic assault on religious institutions. Mosques in both urban and rural areas were closed on suspicion of harbouring anti-French attitudes. Even more destructive for Islamic institutions was the steady transfer of lands from Algerians to European settlers and the resulting destruction of local religious authority. The French government confiscated communal lands, or *hubus*, which, in addition to providing financial support for religious leaders, funded Koranic education for Algerian youth and paid for the upkeep of schools. Left with no source of income, Muslim schools had to rely on private funding in order to stay open. This was not easy to come by, and many Koranic schools closed permanently in the first decades of the colonial era. The dismantling of Muslim schools led to a sharp increase in illiteracy, which worsened with time as one generation disabled the next. Several historians of Algeria have argued that Koranic schools were traditionally well-attended and that their focus on scriptural readings meant that Algeria

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<sup>2</sup> Charles X, quoted in John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria: The Origins and Development of a Nation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 48.

<sup>3</sup> "Collection des Actes du Gouvernement Depuis l'Occupation d'Algèr", reprinted in Ruedy, 49.

in fact had a higher rate of literacy than France in 1830. Although this is difficult to prove or to contest, the confiscation of *hubus* and the closure of politically-suspect schools certainly left a large hole in Algerian education.<sup>4</sup>

At the outbreak of World War One, French armies entered southern Alsace and remained as an occupying force until 1918. Ever conscious of its image as liberator, the French government was careful not to carry out any reforms to local institutions that could inspire hostility from the local population. The issue of religious education was particularly sensitive. Alsatians were deeply concerned that a return to France would mean an end to the Concordat between church and state, and by extension, the dissolution of religious education in the province. Throughout the war, however, France assured Alsatians that the religious character of their schools was not open to reform. As in the pre-war period, Alsatian students were taught a minimum of four hours of religious instruction each week. Local teachers were, of course, already trained to teach biblical history and rudiments of the catechism. In classrooms run by French soldiers, a priest, pastor or rabbi was present to handle religious instruction. Although French authorities requested that, whenever possible, religious teaching should be carried out in French, this was rarely followed or enforced.<sup>5</sup>

Promises to respect local religious tradition in Alsace continued in the post-war period. Alexandre Millerand, first as *commissaire général* of Alsace and then as president of France in 1923, reiterated that Alsatian traditions would not only survive but also

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<sup>4</sup> Donald Schilling and Elsa Harik, *The Politics of Education in Colonial Algeria and Kenya* (Ohio University Press, 1984), 27 and Ruedy, 103.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Harp, *Learning to be Loyal: Primary Schooling as Nation Building in Alsace and Lorraine, 1850-1940* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1998), 181.

flourish under French leadership.<sup>6</sup> In the eyes of many Alsatians, however, France was a threat to local religious culture, particularly in the sphere of education. French public schools had been secularized since 1882, and the state had not provided financial support for religious orders in almost twenty years. Education was highly centralized, at least officially, and it was nearly impossible for French administrators and politicians to imagine how to maintain religious instruction without compromising the values of a republican education. For Alsatians, the concept of separating church and state was as foreign as it was for Algerians. Religion played a very visible role in public life. Moral instruction, by which was meant instruction by religious leaders, was seen as the essential purpose of education. Just as Koranic schools focussed on teaching the scripture of the Koran, schools in Alsace spent much of the day teaching biblical passages in preparation for the holy communion or confirmation. Two visions of education, one rooted in religious instruction, the other in republican citizenship<sup>7</sup>, appeared bound to clash as Alsace became more closely drawn into the French hexagon.

In the early 1920s, religious instruction remained officially untouched in Alsatian primary schools. Four hours weekly were spent on religious subjects, taught either by a qualified teacher or by an appointed clerical leader. French authorities did, however, manage to undermine religious influence in schools by replacing Alsatian teachers with instructors from the interior of France. Arguing that the loyalty of German-trained teachers could not be assured, the French fired 921 Alsatian teachers, roughly one in every six, at the end of the war. Most school inspectors were removed or demoted, leaving all positions of power within the education administration in the hands of

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.,183.

<sup>7</sup> Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 336.

implanted French officials. Teachers from France, trained as they were in the secular school of the republic, were often accused of being anti-religious. Members of the *Heimatbund*, a political league of Alsatian Catholics, wrote a letter to Pope Pius XI in 1927 asking for his assistance against the threat of secularism in Alsace. Particularly concerned with the dismantling of religious education, the *Heimatbund* claimed to speak for Protestant and Jewish religious groups as well as Catholics in its condemnation of French education. The letter writers argued that, although France claimed to leave religious instruction intact, its policies revealed a systematic attack on the Catholic faith. Teachers from the interior were chosen on the basis of their fervent secularism so that they would serve to undermine religious belief among their young and impressionable students. By indoctrinating the youth with *laïcise*, the French were covertly seeking to destroy the religious traditions of Alsace.<sup>8</sup> Although this might be an exaggerated accusation, the *Heimatbund* was not alone in fearing that French teachers posed a threat to the future of the religious establishment in Alsace. Local presses throughout the 1920s decried the influx of French teachers and administrators as an encroachment of secularism and illustrative of France's "colonial" attitude toward Alsace.<sup>9</sup>

Removing religious orders from the education system was far more difficult than firing regular teaching staff. Catholic priests and nuns in Alsace were still protected by the Concordat between church and state, and any attempt to take them off the government payroll would be interpreted as an imposition of France's 1905 secularizing laws. There was considerable reason to fear local uprising if confessional schools and teaching orders

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<sup>8</sup> Heimatbund, "Lettre des Member Catholiques de Comité Central de la Ligue des Alsaciens-Lorrains (Heimatbund) à Sa Sainteté le Pape Pie XI (Strasbourg, 24 janvier 1927)", reprinted in Oscar de Ferenzy, *La Vérité sur L'Alsace* (Paris: Librairie Bloud & Gay, 1930), 453.

<sup>9</sup> Samuel Goodfellow, *Between the Swastika and the Cross of Lorraine: Fascisms in Interwar Alsace* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1999), 23.

were banned outright. It was recognized that this sort of hostility would only breed disloyalty to France and therefore undermine the entire project of republicanizing education. Furthermore, religious teaching orders in Alsace, particularly the sisters of Ribeauvillé, were traditional allies of the French government. Secularism was still a relatively new phenomenon, and the French state had historically fostered a close relationship with the Catholic Church. Throughout the Franco-Prussian War and following half-century, Catholic nuns like the sisters of Ribeauvillé had been subject to accusations of anti-German sentiment. During World War One, these sisters were quick to side with the French and cooperated fully with the occupying administration. The French could not easily dismiss these loyal orders who had done so much to maintain a feeling of "Frenchness" during the German occupation of Alsace.<sup>10</sup>

Instead, teaching orders came under control of the French state, which could monitor their teaching and cap their numbers. Catholic orders were therefore recognized as an important link between France and the Alsatian population, and maintaining an amicable relationship with them was a powerful way to instill patriotism among the Catholic masses in the newly incorporated province. Furthermore, as Stephen Harp has argued, most French governments of the interwar period saw utility in state control of religious schools. In France, the secularization laws had led to the blossoming of a system of private religious schools completely out of the realm of state control. In Alsace, the French government continued to exercise authority over religious education.<sup>11</sup> This allowed the central government to emphasize lessons on French culture and nationalism that could offer a competing alternative to religious-based identity.

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<sup>10</sup> Harp, 172-3.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 195.

The seizure of *hubus* land in Algeria left religious establishments in the colony with no means of financial support. Much like in Alsace, the threat of popular resistance loomed large, particularly at times when the sanctity of local religious leaders seemed under threat. The French Ministry of the Interior, wishing to dissuade hostility and recognizing that French-friendly imams were powerful political allies, began funding mosques out of the colonial budget in 1843. This gave French authorities tremendous power over the religious establishment, enabling the French to decide who could act as spiritual leaders and teachers to the Algerian faithful. It also allowed them to determine how many religious leaders would serve the public, perhaps as a way to limit the role of religion in the day-to-day lives of the colonized. Although the population grew considerably over the next several decades, the amount of money allotted to religious leaders did not change until the First World War. In 1875 there were 100 imams and qadis, supported by 390 assistants, serving nearly three million Muslims. Despite the fact that Islamic institutions were chronically under-funded, many *colons* argued that money would be better spent on European institutions and culture. The 1905 laws led many French officials and settlers to question the validity of continuing to finance mosques. The decision to maintain support was purely pragmatic: the cost of funding, and therefore controlling, Muslim establishments was minimal in comparison to the cost of allowing them to operate freely.<sup>12</sup> Just as in Alsace fourteen years later, the separation of church and state so central to republican philosophy was not to be applied to Algerian society.

Of all the Islamic institutions supported and controlled by the French government, the *madrasas* were the most strategically important and their cooption by the French inspired considerable hostility among the Muslim population. *Madrasas*, of which there

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<sup>12</sup> Ruedy, 101.

were three in Algeria, were Islamic secondary schools that trained the elite for positions of leadership in the religious and political life of the country. They had existed long before the arrival of the French, but the face of education in these institutions was drastically changed by the colonial power. For every Algerian teacher there was a corresponding French instructor, thus allowing for a bilingual education and for constant surveillance of curriculum, students and teaching personnel. Students were accepted into *madrasas* based on the loyalty of their family, not necessarily for their intellect, piety or credibility among the Muslim population for whom they would be leaders.<sup>13</sup>

The creation of an elite cultured to be simultaneously French and Algerian, what the French termed the *évoulés*, was deemed essential to maintaining French authority in the colony. The *madrasa*-educated elite, because of their place in the religious hierarchy, would command respect from the local population while at the same time their French education would make them more docile to the suggestions of the ruling government. In reality, French support served to seriously erode the credibility of *madrasa* graduates in the eyes of the Algerian faithful. Many were disdainful of these imams and the general consensus was that religious leaders from Morocco and Tunisia, where *madrasas* remained free of direct French control, were superior in both faith and knowledge to those trained in Algeria. Islamic schools in these regions were therefore able to attract many of the best Algerian students who preferred exile to subservience.<sup>14</sup>

Prior to World War One, there was very little desire for French education among the Algerian masses. European schools were associated with Christian missionaries long after most mission schools had disappeared, and Algerians remained reluctant to send

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

their children into the arms of infidels. By the early 1920s, however, the economic benefits of French education were becoming well known and many Algerians demanded that schools make room for their youth. The *écoles franco-indigènes* maintained the French secular ideal – there was no religious instruction included in the primary school curriculum for Algerian students. This may seem somewhat surprising in light of the fact that the French government provided financial support to French-friendly mosques and effectively controlled the *madrasas*. Algerians themselves requested religion in school because, like many Alsatians, the majority of Algerians did not recognize the benefit of a secularized state. They remained dubious of French schools precisely because of their perceived anti-religious nature. There were suggestions made by prominent Muslims that French schools could attach themselves to pre-existing Koranic schools, thus attracting a broader range of students and allowing both systems to flourish. The proposal was, however, wholly rejected: the official line was that religious instruction in public schools was “une dérogation à un principe fondamental de la législation scolaire française: le principe de la laïcité.”<sup>15</sup>

The reason for omitting religion from primary schools was probably as pragmatic as it was ideological: it would be difficult to find suitable teachers and to make time in the daily routine for Islamic teachings. Much of the school day in the *écoles franco-indigènes* was taken up with French language acquisition and the rest of the academic schedule contained some basic lessons in math, history and geography. By 1930, in addition to these scholastic pursuits, students spent a number of hours each day engaged

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<sup>15</sup> M.F. de Paemelaere, “Rapport sur l’Algérie”, *L’Adaptation de l’Enseignement dans les Colonies: Rapports et Compte-Rendu du Congrès Intercolonial de l’Enseignement dans les Colonies et les pays d’Outre-Mer, 25-27 Septembre 1931* (Paris: Henri Didier, 1932), 25.

in manual work – often the cultivation of a school garden.<sup>16</sup> The emphasis on language and labour meant that Algerian students were already learning much less of the “core” academic subjects than were their counterparts in France. School officials were hesitant to shorten this day even further to allow for religious lessons. The Inspector of Education for Oran argued that the presence of a Koranic teacher would not make French schools more popular with local populations but would, in fact, achieve the opposite effect. French authorities could not choose *talebs* that would be acceptable to all families in a given region. Many fathers would disagree with the choice of Muslim instructor, the inspector argued, and would refuse to send their children to the French school. Far better, then, to teach a secular curriculum and let families concern themselves with the religious instruction of their offspring.<sup>17</sup>

In keeping with the secular nature of French education, the textbooks of the *écoles franco-indigènes* contained very little reference to religion, and what was mentioned was rarely positive. An examination of primary-level readers, which were more or less based on superficial descriptions of the Algerian lifestyle, reveals that Islamic practices and institutions were not considered useful or appropriate material. Algerian culture is instead explained through clothing, food and typical occupations.<sup>18</sup> The standard history textbook used in the final year of Algerian public school contains a small section on Mohammed and the birth of Islam as its sole reference to the Muslim faith. A 150-word description provides a very basic understanding of the prophet, his teachings and the Koran. The text explains how the Arabs engaged in a holy war across Africa and into Europe, finally

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<sup>16</sup> S. Faci, “Plan d’Études et Programmes de l’Enseignement Primaire des Indigènes en Algérie”, *La Voix des Humbles*, vol. 27 (July 1924), 4-8.

<sup>17</sup> Paemelaere, 26-27.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example A. Davense, *Les Premières Lectures de Mamadou et Bineta* (Paris: Librairie Istra, 1930).

halted by the victorious Franks in 732. In what is now Algeria, the author elaborates, Arabs forced the indigenous Berber population to adopt Islam or face either death or exile. According to the text, “sous la domination arabe, l’Afrique du Nord ne connut pas la paix et l’ordre que les Romains lui avaient assurés pendant cinq cents ans.”<sup>19</sup>

It is telling that the only discussion of Islam in Colin’s history textbook is one of violence and oppression, providing historical legitimization for Arab-Berber tensions that haunted contemporary Algeria. Both France and Rome, the mythical ancestor of the French state, are depicted as peaceful and freedom-loving, in natural opposition to the Muslim Arabs. Recent work by Patricia Lorcin has emphasized the centrality of this “Roman legacy” to French colonialism in Algeria. French colonists, particularly during the Third Republic, looked to Rome as their political and cultural forbearer in North Africa. By the twentieth century, many immigrants to Algeria had arrived from Mediterranean countries outside of France, particularly Spain, Italy, and Sardinia. Lorcin argues that the emphasis on the Roman past in Algeria was a method of uniting these Europeans under the common banner of the Latin race.<sup>20</sup> Archaeology, anthropology and even Catholicism played a role in fostering this Roman identity in Algeria. The Rome-France connection also provided an endorsement for Western imperialism in North Africa and served to emphasize the political and cultural superiority of the West over the Arabic world.<sup>21</sup> Colin’s textbook, in teaching this version of history to Algerian youth, demonstrates France’s policy to undermine Islamic and Arabic identity in the colony.

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<sup>19</sup> Edgar Colin et al, *L’Algérie: Histoire et Géographie, A l’Usage des Cours Moyens et des Classes de fin d’Études* (Alger: Baconnier Frères, 1949), 56- 58.

<sup>20</sup> Patricia M. E. Lorcin, “Rome and France in Africa: Recovering Colonial Algeria’s Latin Past”, *French Historical Studies*, vol. 25, no. 2 (Spring 2002), 312.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 329.

Textbooks used in Alsatian schools generally avoided religious topics. This is not surprising as four hours per week were dedicated to religious education and officials probably saw little need for including it in the core subject areas. The textbook most frequently used for French instruction at the primary level was Bruno's *Le Tour de France par Deux Enfants*. By far the most popular reader of the Third Republic, the *Tour de France* had two editions: one which predated the 1905 law separating church and state, and one revised edition brought out in 1906. It was this second one, cleansed of any references to religious practices or heroes, that was shipped in large quantities to teach the young generation of Alsatisans about French language and culture. Interestingly, by this time the reader was declining in popularity elsewhere in France, replaced by more modern texts.<sup>22</sup> The book, featuring two orphans from Lorraine, was seen as ideal reading material for Alsatisans even while it was considered outdated for other French students. This is probably because *Tour de France* was written as part of the early-republican effort to create a sense of patriotism and to combat the cultural authority of the Catholic Church – goals very much at the forefront of education policy in Alsace. The message of the book is clearly articulated through the words of the young protagonist André, as he successfully stops an argument over whose province is the finest in France:

“Alors, pour nous mettre en accord, disons donc que la France entière, la patrie, est pour nous tous ce qu’il y a de plus cher au monde.” “Bravo! Vive la France! Vive la patrie Française!” Dit d’une même voix le petit équipage.<sup>23</sup>

Mona Ozouf and Hans Siepe have argued that in the 1906 edition of *Tour de France*, religious values were translated into republican values in order to create what has

<sup>22</sup> John Strachan, “Romance, Religion and the Republic: Bruno’s *Le Tour de France par Deux Enfants*”, *French History*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2004), 99.

<sup>23</sup> G Bruno, *Le Tour de France par Deux Enfants* (Paris: Librairie Belin, 1906), 194.

been termed a “church of the republic”.<sup>24</sup> Jean-Michel Bardos, who wrote the epilogue to the centennial edition in 1977, explained “Dieu expulse, la patrie peut occuper toute la place.”<sup>25</sup> This was of particular importance in Alsace, where the continuation of religious education was seen as potentially jeopardizing to the cultivation of “Frenchness” in the province. Where the earlier edition thanked God for certain accomplishments, such as the night the boys spend on Mont Blanc, the later edition praises France for the beauty of the mountain. The term *mère France* is often used as a substitution for *Dieu* as the boys give thanks for their safe journey and praise the wonders they see around them.<sup>26</sup> In this way, textbooks used in Alsatian schools served to quietly instil some of the goals of the republican education project while still allowing religious instruction in public schools.

For the first five years after the war, education in Alsace remained as an uneasy truce. French teachers were still streaming in from the interior and their lessons and textbooks were often criticized for their secularity, but religious instruction remained in the curriculum. Several different government commissions looking into the reintegration of Alsace concluded that secular schools should replace the province’s confessional system, but most of the republican hierarchy realized that this was far too ambitious a plan. Stephen Harp has argued that policy in these years was the result of a strong rightist element in the French government that tended to sympathize with the religious convictions of the Alsatian population.<sup>27</sup> Samuel Goodfellow places more importance on local initiative, and emphasizes that Alsatians themselves created a climate of

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<sup>24</sup> Robert Gildea, *Education in Provincial France, 1800-1914: A Study of Three Departments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 254.

<sup>25</sup> Jean-Michel Bardos, “Epilogue”, in G. Bruno, *Le Tour de France Par Deux Enfants* (Paris: Librarie Belin, 1977), 317.

<sup>26</sup> Hans Siepe, “L’Imaginaire Histoire dans *Le Tour de France par Deux Enfants*”, *Storia della Storiografia*, vol. 14 (1988), 160-180.

<sup>27</sup> Harp, 193.

reconciliation that made the French government more willing to compromise on the issue of religious education. He argues that feelings of goodwill toward France were a result both of French promises to protect local culture and dire economic conditions in Germany.<sup>28</sup> The establishment of French education in Alsace was certainly negotiated on both sides, and immediately after the war there was a general willingness to compromise in order to ease the transition from one nation to another. In 1924, however, the climate of negotiation came to an abrupt end with the national electoral victory of the *cartel des gauches* under the leadership of Edouard Herriot.

Soon after assuming the role of Prime Minister, Herriot gave a speech to the Chamber of Deputies articulating his plans for the full reincorporation of Alsace into the French state:

Le gouvernement est persuadé qu'il interprétera fidèlement le voeu des chères provinces enfin rendues à la France en hâtant la venue du jour où seront effacées les dernières différences de la législation entre les départements recouverts et l'ensemble du territoire de la République. Dans cette vue...en ménageant le intérêts matériels et moraux des populations, d'introduire en Alsace et en Lorraine l'ensemble de la législation républicaine.<sup>29</sup>

The introduction of "l'ensemble de la législation républicaine" was a clear attack on the religious culture of Alsace. Napoleon's Concordat between church and state, which had been abolished in France in 1905, was no longer to apply to the two reclaimed provinces. Although these laws were to have broad effect, including the cessation of state salaries for religious orders, the focus of discontent among both clergy and the general public was on the defence of religious education.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Goodfellow, 23.

<sup>29</sup> Edouard Herriot, quoted in Jean-François Chanet, *L'École Républicaine et les Petites Patries* (Paris: Aubier, 1996), 266.

<sup>30</sup> Harp, 193.

On 12 March 1925, a heated debate flared in the French parliament over the application of republican legislation in Alsatian schools. Twenty-one out of the twenty-four Alsations in the Chamber of Deputies signed a letter of protest against Herriot's legislation. Jacques Peirottes, a deputy from the Bas-Rhin and a member of the Socialist Party, was among those who supported Herriot. He argued that most of his constituents desired secular education and that the three dissenting Alsation deputies represented the majority of urban Alsations. These loyal republicans, he claimed, should not be subject to the tyranny of the religious rural population. Drawing on speeches of Jules Ferry and other prominent early republicans, Peirottes argued that while education remained in the hands of religious orders, "il n'existe pas de liberté en Alsace et en Lorraine."<sup>31</sup> In response, several Alsatian deputies accused Peirottes of sacrificing republican liberties through his fanatical anti-clericalism, and charged that he had in fact joined ranks with the Germans in opposing Catholic education in 1911.<sup>32</sup> Debate surrounding the application of republican legislation to Alsace was not uncommon in the Chamber of Deputies, and had in fact been an ongoing discussion since the end of the First World War. Both those who supported Herriot's legislation and those who opposed it drew heavily on the republican concept of liberty to defend their cause.

Within Alsace, particularly rural areas of the province, Herriot's legislation was bitterly contested. The application of anticlerical laws triggered a wave of protest, with 50 000 demonstrators arriving in Strasbourg to demand the preservation of confessional schools and teaching orders. Priests across Alsace urged their congregations to actively oppose the laicisation of education even if it meant keeping their children home from

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<sup>31</sup> Chambre des Députés, *Journal Officiel des Débats Parlementaires*, 13<sup>th</sup> Legislature (1925), 1585.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 1583.

school. Jewish and Protestant orders remained somewhat quiet during the interwar struggle between regional culture and French centralization. Goodfellow, whose work on Alsatian identity emphasizes the class basis of autonomism, argues that Protestant and Jewish Alsatians tended to be urban and middle class and therefore were often Francophone and Francophile.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the Herriot legislation, both minority religious groups joined ranks with the Catholics in their support for religious education.<sup>34</sup>

The protestations against Herriot's reform reached a peak in early 1925. Bishop Ruch, a fierce defender of confessional schools, organized a province-wide school strike in March of that year. He urged parents to keep their children home from school until the government in Paris recognized their rights to control the education of Alsatian youth. Many local priests assumed leadership roles in the strike, encouraging young members of their congregations to remain at home and reassuring their parents that such a move was for the benefit of their children's moral education. Across Alsace, particularly in the rural areas, classrooms were left almost empty on strike day.<sup>35</sup> Within a month, due in part to this intense public pressure from Alsace, Herriot's government fell from power. The new Prime Minister, Paul Painlevé, recognized that the sensitivity of the education question was such that imposing secular schooling ran the risk of alienating Alsace from France. Favouring long-term integration over ideological uniformity, the Painlevé government abandoned the secularizing legislation and allowed the Concordat to remain in place in Alsace.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Goodfellow, 18-19.

<sup>34</sup> Harp, 193.

<sup>35</sup> Goodfellow, 24.

<sup>36</sup> Harp, 194.

Only for a brief period under the Popular Front government of 1936 was the question of religious education revisited. Like the *cartel des gauches*, the Popular Front, as a Radical-Socialist-Communist coalition, found it difficult to reconcile the idea of Alsace being part of the French Republic while still allowing its children to be indoctrinated with religious education. In July of 1936, Léon Blum and his education minister Jean Zay introduced an additional year of primary education across France, requiring students to attend school until age fifteen. In Alsace and Lorraine, however, a further mandatory year was added three months later in order to compensate for time lost to religious and German instruction. Although state schools across the country were to receive additional funding to offset the cost of the extra year, the Chamber of Deputies voted 382 to 200 to withhold any financial support for religious schools in Alsace or elsewhere. As a further attack on confessional schools, the Blum government decreed that any schools willing to phase out religious instruction would not have to add the additional year. One outspoken critic of religious education argued that such a move would provide the necessary incentive to draw students away from confessional schools and into the public system.<sup>37</sup>

To enforce this new law, the government imposed fines on Alsatian parents who took their children out of school before age sixteen. Hardest hit were agricultural and working-class families, who were predominantly Catholic, and who relied on their adolescents to share in the family's work. They were neither willing to lose another year of labour nor to give up on religious instruction. Many departments subsidized parents for not following the law, thus negating the incentive of the levied fines. When the Blum government fell from power in 1937, its successor realized that the extra year of

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<sup>37</sup> Chambre des Députés, *Journal Officiel des Débats Parlementaires*, 16<sup>th</sup> Legislature (1936), 1683-84.

schooling was impossible to coordinate or enforce, and it was quickly dropped as legislation.<sup>38</sup> Subsequent French governments have continued to uphold the Concordat between church and state in Alsace and to provide funding for the confessional school system.

The post-war period in Algeria offers a complementary illustration of how classrooms became the focal point for political and cultural negotiation in the Third Republic. The French began an ambitious school-building program in 1920 that continued in the following decades. Officially, all Algerian youth were to be incorporated into French schools, but in reality there was never enough financing to realize this goal. In 1917, as part of the Clemenceau-Jonnart reform program, a law was introduced that required mandatory education for all Algerian boys living within three kilometres of a French public school. Even by World War Two, there were nowhere near enough schools to fulfill this requirement. Although the number of Algerian students in the French education system rose considerably in the decades after World War One, from 33 000 before the war to 104 000 in 1938, this was still only a small fraction of the school-age population.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, this education was limited to Algerian boys: there were very few options for girls in either Koranic or French school systems.<sup>40</sup>

Since the French could not meet demands for education, they had little choice but to allow Koranic schools to fill this gap. In order to exert some control over these schools, a number of regulations were introduced in the interwar period to restrict the influence of religious education in the colony. Koranic schools were supposed to operate

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<sup>38</sup> Harp, 195.

<sup>39</sup> Alf Andrew Heggoy, "Education in French Algeria: An Essay on Cultural Conflict", *Comparative Education Review*, vol. 17, no. 2 (June 1973), 185-86.

<sup>40</sup> Ruedy, 105.

only in the evenings and on weekends, so that they were not in direct competition with French schools for the recruitment of students. In much of rural Algeria there was no French school with which to compete, so Koranic schools remained open throughout the day. Despite the shortage of schools serving Algerian students, the French routinely shut down any Koranic school that attempted to teach during school hours and within the three-kilometre limit of an *école franco-indigène*. These closures predominantly affected urban and semi-urban areas where French schools were more numerous, forcing families to choose between a French education or none at all.<sup>41</sup> The education in public schools, with its heavy emphasis on speaking French and gaining labour skills, was intended to secure the loyalty of the students by teaching them the language and history of the *mère patrie* and by offering skills that would guarantee some form of employment. By allotting Koranic schools a secondary role in education, French educators were deliberately minimizing the cultivation of a Muslim identity among urban Algerian youth. The influence of Islam on this segment of the population became a central concern of the French administration in the 1920s, as Algerians grew increasingly restless under colonial rule.<sup>42</sup>

Despite the efforts of the French Ministry of Public Instruction, Islamic education continued and thrived during the interwar period. While there is little doubt that the civilizing mission aimed for the assimilation of Muslim Algerians into European culture, this undertaking was, on the whole, unsuccessful. Despite the adversity of the colonial situation, Islamic education survived French encroachment and, in many ways, thrived as an alternative to the European school system. The demand for education could not be met

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<sup>41</sup> Heggoy, "Arab Education in Colonial Algeria", *Journal of African Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2 (Summer, 1975), 154-156.

<sup>42</sup> Heggoy, "Education in French Algeria: An Essay on Cultural Conflict", 184.

by French schools alone, which opened up a market for traditional and reformed “free schools”.<sup>43</sup> Until the late 1920s, Muslim education remained the domain of traditional Koranic schools, which continued to flourish until post-independence. In the early 1930s, as a response to the growing desire for “modern education”, several free school systems developed as hybrids of religious and secular pedagogy. These schools offered places of learning for students who could not or would not fit into the *franco-indigène* system, who wanted an education that was simultaneously “westernized” and Muslim.<sup>44</sup>

The interwar period in Algeria witnessed the growth of several nationalist movements that varied tremendously in ideology and political agenda. Although they differed in constituency, the fact that these movements developed within a span of a few years signalled a common dissatisfaction with the French colonial order. The Islamic reform movement, led by the Association of Reformed Ulama, was the organization most active in the field of education.<sup>45</sup> The leader of this movement was Abd al-Hamid Ben Badis, a Muslim intellectual born into a family of French-educated *évoués*. Rejecting his Europeanized lineage, Ben Badis was educated at the most prestigious Islamic institutions and travelled extensively throughout the Arab world. He was determined to cultivate in Algeria a feeling of Arab unity that would ultimately bring about a Muslim renaissance. In this way, the reform ulama differed from most urban intellectual movements who believed that Algeria’s future lay in greater integration with France. The reform ulama were also in opposition to many religious sects for their failure to understand pure Islamic teaching. They showed equal animosity toward the official

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<sup>43</sup> Allan Christelow, “Ritual, Culture and Politics of Islamic Reformism in Algeria”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 23, no. 3 (July 1987), 261.

<sup>44</sup> Said Ali Alghailani *Islam and the French Decolonisation of Algeria: The Role of the Algerian Ulama 1919-1940* (PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 2002).

<sup>45</sup> Christelow, 261.

religious institutions, which were corrupted by French support, and the Marabouts and Sufi brotherhoods, which supported a superstitious heterodoxy.<sup>46</sup>

Ben Badis and the reform ulama believed that public engagement and education were essential to the revitalization of Algerian culture. Beginning in 1931, they began constructing a reformed Koranic education system that attracted 10 000 students by 1939. Reflecting the fact that leadership of the movement was drawn primarily from among the elite of Algerian society, the reform ulama had great respect for the intellectual achievements of the European world. The curriculum at their free schools included literature, history, mathematics and science as well as the traditional emphasis on Arabic language and scriptural reading. Religious teachings emphasized a purified and “scientific” examination of sacred texts, pious leaders and Islamic history. Although Algeria was the focus of scholastic lessons, the ulama stressed that Algeria was part of the Muslim world and fostered a sense of Islamic identity that went beyond nationalism.<sup>47</sup>

The colonial administration was extremely careful in its dealings with the reform ulama and their system of free schools. According to official policy, France was supposed to respect the right of Algerians to conduct the religious and moral education of their children. It was recognized that any movement to curb the influence of the religious reformers could result in significant popular unrest.<sup>48</sup> At the same time, the reform Koranic schools were in direct competition with French-run primary schools and paid little attention to French regulations concerning their hours of operation and location. Many of the free schools were within the three-kilometre limit of a *franco-indigène* school and all operated during regular school hours. Beginning in the early 1930s, the

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<sup>46</sup> Alghailani, 160-68.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 169-71.

<sup>48</sup> Christelow, 257.

Ministry for Public Instruction threatened repeatedly to close down schools that did not conform to these laws. The ulama, knowing full well that the French would face enormous resistance if they were to act on these threats, continued to disregard regulations governing Koranic education. Laws were then introduced requiring fifteen hours of French instruction per week in all Koranic schools. This rule, too, was ignored. Although most ulama were fluent in French, they often refused to speak it and certainly rejected teaching it to their students as a matter of principle. The colonial government had little choice but to allow these transgressions, not only out of fear of protest, but also because the reformed schools were educating an increasing number of Algerian children who would not have otherwise found room in French classrooms.<sup>49</sup>

The secularism so central to French public education policy did not apply to Algeria's religious population because attempting to limit the influence of Islam was recognized as a dangerous strategy. French authorities instead sought to limit the reform ulama's contact with the broader Algerian population outside of their primary schools. As previously mentioned, the colonial government allowed a breach in the separation of church and state through its financial support of French-friendly mosques and imams. A 1933 circular declared that any religious leader connected with the Association of Reformed Ulama was not permitted to preach from the official pulpit – and many unofficial mosques had been forced to close for financial reasons.<sup>50</sup> Although this exacerbated tensions between the co-opted religious sects and the “unsanctioned”, it did little to quell the influence of the reform ulama. Their system of Koranic education grew throughout the colonial period, reaching a peak of 50 000 students by 1950. The

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<sup>49</sup> Heggoy, “Education in French Algeria: An Essay on Cultural Conflict”, 188.

<sup>50</sup> Ruedy, 135.

Association did not survive the War of Independence, but the puritanical Islam it preached exerted tremendous influence on the post-war cultural terrain of Algeria. The ulama slogan “Islam is my religion, Arabic is my language, Algeria is my fatherland”, recited by students at the reform Koranic schools, became the official motto of the Algerian Republic.<sup>51</sup>

Local protest against secularizing education certainly had a powerful effect on the education systems created in interwar Alsace and Algeria. Although the ideology of *laïcité* was considered a central tenet of French republicanism, political expediency allowed for a reinterpretation of this principle to suit local contexts. The French government, always conscious of nationalist and autonomist agitation, was hesitant to incite hostility through perceived attacks on the religious establishment. At the same time, allowing religious schools to exist outside of the French system was recognized as a potential threat to central authority. The classroom could be the site of much anti-French sentiment, particularly if that classroom emphasized its spiritual nature in contrast to the secular French state. By monitoring and even controlling Koranic and confessional schools, the French government hoped to influence the sort of cultural identity that was cultivated in the classroom. Local populations, through their ongoing resistance to French education ideals, also sought to influence the sort of cultural identity fostered in the classroom. The result was a flourishing of local religious culture that significantly altered the practice of education policy during the Third Republic.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

## Conclusion

The nation-building project of the Third Republic placed considerable importance on a standardized education system. Algeria and Alsace shared the experience of having this education system imposed on their populations. The previous chapters have highlighted the commonalities of education in these two regions: how linguistic, religious and cultural identities were enforced and resisted in Alsatian and Algerian classrooms. There are, however, key differences between the experience of French hegemony in Algeria and Alsace that must be revisited.

Alsace underwent a process of forced integration after World War One. Alsatian autonomist groups, such as the *Landespartei* and the *Union Populaire Républicaine*, desired varying degrees of independence from, or within, the French state. Republican politicians on both the Left and the Right, however, hoped to incorporate the region fully into France. The imposition of French education and language was meant to secure this incorporation. There were several reasons why the government in Paris sought to assimilate Alsace as part of France. The province had a specific role in the mythology of France as the homeland of French nationalism, despite its linguistic and cultural distinction from the rest of the country. Perhaps more important, Alsace had a long history as a contested territory coveted by both Germany and France for economic and geo-strategic considerations. The government believed that solidifying the bond between Alsace and France through education was an effective way to draw the region into the French sphere and away from German influence.

Immediately after World War One, *commissions de triage* were formed to root out pro-German sentiment in Alsace. These commissions categorized Alsatians based on

their race and ancestry in an attempt to determine political loyalties. Thousands lost their jobs and homes because they were deemed to be not of “pure” French blood. By 1920, however, political instability required more delicate handling of the reincorporated province, and racial differences were rarely discussed in government, schools or the media. Since the integration of Alsace was vitally important to the post-World War One Republic, the cultural divide between Alsace and the rest of the nation was minimized in school texts and popular history books.

Algeria was also of particular importance to the French Republic. It was generally considered France’s most important overseas possession and often described as an extension of the metropole “beyond the Mediterranean”. Officially, Algeria was not a colony at all but was in fact divided into three French departments. The administration of these three departments was significantly different from that of metropolitan departments and in many ways resembled the governance of other French colonies in Africa and Asia. Algeria, moreover, was a racially bifurcated colony, a feature that distinguished it from mainland France and most other colonies. Roughly ten percent of the population were European settlers who enjoyed the rights of French citizenship. The other ninety percent of the population were referred to as “natives”: Arab and Kabyle inhabitants, predominantly Muslim, whose status was one of permanent political and economic inferiority. Unlike in Alsace, the racial difference between the two populations in Algeria was emphasized in every facet of society.

Education in Algeria, like most colonial institutions, was highly racialized. The vast majority of the population had no access to the French metropolitan school system, which was designed for settlers and a small number of Algerian urban elites. The *école*

*franco-indigène* was a mass education system designed to give Algerian youth some working ability in the French language as well as a basic education in the “core” subjects. A heavy emphasis was placed on the acquisition of employable skills in agriculture and manual labour. The goal of this education system was two-fold: to instil loyalty to France by teaching of its history and its civilizing mission in the colony, and to ensure that youth would secure employment and therefore not be left jobless and restless. The low quality of education at the *école franco-indigène* was a deliberate policy to keep Algerian youth subservient – educated enough to be content but not enough that they would demand equality. It was difficult if not impossible for a graduate from this system to find placement in higher education or a job that paid anything but the basic labourer wage. This is a striking difference from education in Alsace, which was designed to facilitate the integration of young Alsatians into French society. Cut off from Arabic or Islamic culture but denied entry into French society, Algerian youth did not experience the republican virtues of liberty, equality and fraternity.

Although the racism inherent in the colonization of Algeria differentiates it fundamentally from the integration of Alsace, to compare educational experiences in both locations is nevertheless highly instructive. Such comparison breaks down traditional barriers between western and non-western history and reveals significant commonalities in government policies, resistance to such policies and ultimate compromises forced upon the French state.

In both Algeria and Alsace, there was considerable demand for bilingual education that would place equal importance on French and the local language in the classroom. Nevertheless, a bilingual approach to education was almost universally

rejected by republican politicians and education officials. Authorities within France and in the colonies vacillated between allowing local languages to be taught as foreign languages for a minimal number of hours per week, to banning the use of a second language altogether. A vital link between French national identity and language had been forged at least as early as the Revolution and the establishment of the First Republic. The public education system developed under the Third Republic continued to uphold the ideal of linguistic unity and successive education ministers argued that allowing other languages equal weight in the classroom would be a threat to national solidarity. The importance placed on language instruction was closely connected with the extension of the French empire. Government reports and pedagogical journals continuously referred to French as the language of progress and enlightenment, connecting its spread to the overall *mission civilisatrice* of the Republic.

The method of imposing French language instruction was similar in Alsace and Algeria. In both locations, the direct method was employed to enforce language acquisition without the use of an intermediary language. Through this method, students' vocabulary would develop independent of a secondary language reference. Textbooks reinforced unilingualism because they were written exclusively in French regardless of the intended audience. French words and terminology were taught through images, a method known as *leçons des choses*. Texts bound for the colonies, as well as those used in metropolitan France, included many references to the association between national unity and linguistic unity. From the conversations of André and Julien in *Tour de France par Deux Enfants* to Edgar Colin's *L'Algérie: Histoire et Géographie*, the message was made clear: to speak French was to be French.

Since Alsatians and Algerians were predominantly non-Francophone, hiring teachers for a unilingual French school system became a contentious issue. Nearly one thousand Alsatian teachers lost their jobs after the province was reincorporated into France. They were replaced by teachers from the interior whose French was fluent but who could rarely understand or speak Alsatian German. This caused tremendous resentment in local communities because the implanted teachers were felt to be insensitive to the cultural traditions of their students and their very presence was seen as illustrative of France's "colonial attitude" toward Alsace. Similarly, French teachers sent to Algeria were often accused of insensitivity toward their Algerian colleagues and students. In both locations, teachers from France were paid considerably more than local teachers. The high salary was meant to encourage French instructors to relocate to non-Francophone areas, but this privilege exacerbated tensions in the schools and local communities.

In both Alsace and Algeria, the imposition of French-only schooling became an issue around which local populations rallied. Interestingly, political groups whose agendas differed tremendously shared a common goal in the promotion of local language. The *Union Populaire Républicaine*, or UPR, was an Alsatian autonomist group that wanted to be part of France while retaining some control over local institutions. The *Landespartei* campaigned for the creation of a fully independent Alsatian state. Both organizations, however, placed primary importance on the promotion of the regional language in education. A similar comparison can be made between the Association of Reform Ulama and the Young Algerian movement. The former called for full independence while the latter favoured greater integration with France and political

equality for Algerian citizens. Both groups, however, argued that bilingual schooling was essential in order to increase education quality in Algeria and to foster a sense of cultural pride among the population. These arguments were clearly echoed in Alsace, as organizations in both areas sought to strengthen regional identity through language promotion.

In 1830, France's General Bourmont and the Turkish Pasha had signed a convention of capitulation that marked the beginning of French colonialism in Algeria. The treaty stated that the French government would respect the religious freedom of the population, the majority of whom were observant Muslims. In 1914, another military official, Joseph Joffre, similarly pledged to protect and respect the cultural and religious traditions of the Alsatian population, the majority of whom were Catholic. In both cases, the initial promises to safeguard religious custom quickly broke down. The French government clashed with Algerian and Alsatian populations over religious issues, particularly as they affected education. As a secular regime, the Third Republic's policy regarding religious education was often at odds with the desires and demands of local populations.

French policy toward religious schooling vacillated considerably through the interwar period. Across France, religious schools had been denied state support since 1905. In Alsace, which had not been part of France in 1905, the issue of confessional schools remained contentious. Left-wing factions within the Republic argued that as a part of France, Alsace must submit to republican ideology including the separation of church and state. In 1924, with the electoral victory of the *Cartel des Gauches*, and again in 1936 under the Popular Front, the government in Paris introduced legislation designed

to secularize Alsatian education. These measures met with considerable resistance and were overturned by successive governments. Religious schools continued to exist and to receive state funding, a feature of Alsatian education that sets it apart from the rest of metropolitan France. This allowed the government in Paris to exercise considerable influence over confessional schools, to control who was doing the teaching and to monitor curricula.

France was generally more conciliatory towards religious education in the colonies than in the metropole. In Algeria, Koranic schools continued to exist, although a number of measures were introduced to limit their influence and numbers. Islamic primary schools and secondary-level Madrasas received funding from the French government, a policy that seems at odds with the secularism of the Third Republic. Through this funding, however, the government was able to exert control over what it feared could be anti-French institutions. As in Alsace, the French government was willing to be flexible about its *laïcité* because of the advantages of influencing or controlling religious education. Interestingly, Christian missionary schools were also permitted and even promoted in the French colonies. Again, this policy appears to contradict official French rhetoric on the benefits of secularism. Despite the fact that these schools were religious in orientation, even the most anticlerical republicans agreed that they served to extend French cultural influence across the empire. Promoting French culture and language use in the colonies was important enough a goal to warrant government support for missionary schools.

Although religious schools received state support in both Algeria and Alsace, the French government did develop public, secular schools to compete with the already

established religious systems. The public system had certain advantages over the Koranic or confessional schools. In Algeria, French businesses and government recognized only diplomas given out at the *franco-indigène* schools. In Alsace, the Popular Front government introduced an extra year of education for students at confessional schools to make up for time lost to religious instruction. In both locations, state schools sought quietly to undermine the religious traditions of the region. Textbooks used in Alsace, such as the popular *Tour de France*, could not include any religious figures or landmarks in their discussion of French history and geography. Colin's widely-used history textbook for Algerian students described Islam as a violent religion responsible for bloodshed and upheaval across North Africa.

Resistance against the imposition of French education in Algeria and Alsace was often led by religious organizations. In the former region, the Association of Reform Ulama is credited with creating the most successful free school movement to compete with the *écoles franco-indigènes*. Education was the main focus of the ulama, who sought to rejuvenate Algerian culture through a hybrid Islamic-western school system. In Alsace, fear of secularism in education led many religious figures to oppose French schooling. Bishop Ruch was among the leaders in this area, and he organized a province-wide school strike in 1925 aimed at bringing down the *cartel des gauches*. Ruch was joined by clergy members across Alsace, who urged students, parents and other members of their congregations openly to resist the application of anti-clerical laws in Alsatian schools.

In both Algeria and Alsace, compromises had to be forged between local demands and the policy of secularism and linguistic unity coming from Paris. Many competing voices and agendas vied for influence in the classrooms of Alsace and Algeria. As the

previous chapters have shown, the French government often had to alter its stance on key education issues, particularly secularism in schools, in order to ease instability in Alsace and Algeria. In the interwar era, Alsatian autonomism was a very real threat to French control in the newly-incorporated province. Much of the hostility towards France stemmed from the imposition of French language and the perceived threat to religious institutions posed by the Third Republic. Education officials and republican politicians were unwilling to compromise on the linguistic issue: the French language was a powerful symbol of the state and the use of German in schools was seen as far too risky to national security. On religious education, however, Paris was prepared to negotiate. Although radical left-wing governments tried to enforce secular education, the project was a definitive failure and the Concordat between church and state has remained in place in Alsace.

In Algeria, unrest in the interwar period took several forms. Many young Algerians were discontented by their inferior status within the French empire and demanded greater integration and equality with France. There were also a number of Algerian organizations calling for the complete independence of Algeria from French rule. What these groups shared was a common desire to increase the education of the Algerian population in order that the region might achieve a greater degree of political freedom. The French government sought to answer these demands for education in order to minimize unrest. At the same time, they wanted to limit this education to one that would instill a sense of loyalty to France and minimize the cultivation of an Algerian, Arabic or Islamic identity. Furthermore, as has been previously discussed, this education had to tread a fine line between instilling loyalty to France and giving Algerians a sense

of entitlement to the benefits of French citizenship. Throughout the interwar period, French education in Algeria attempted to answer all these claims: to provide schooling that made the population content and loyal but not ambitious. The growth of Algerian nationalism, particularly among educated youth, signals that the French government was unable to balance these objectives.

Compromise had to be negotiated not only between the French government and local populations, but also within the government itself. Interwar France was marked by a succession of governments, many of which lasted less than a year. Education policy in both Alsace and Algeria was shaped by the fluctuations in government and by the compromises that had to be met between political factions. Religious schooling in Alsace was often the target of left-wing governments. Under more conservative governments, such as those headed by Alexandre Millerand and Aristide Briand, confessional schools remained untouched. Conservative elements in the Republic were often sympathetic to the religious convictions of the Alsatian population, a point that serves to underscore the presence of two “imagined communities” in Third Republic France. Policy had to balance between these competing identities, which resulted in the introduction of republican curricula, textbooks and teachers alongside the continuation of religious instruction.

The colonial policy of the French government also fluctuated throughout the interwar period. Many Governors-General of colonial territories favoured an associationist approach to colonialism that would see education cater to local needs rather than replicate the metropolitan school system. Politicians in Paris were divided over whether to adopt this approach or to maintain the assimilationist ideal. By the late 1920s,

a compromise emerged that saw the creation of textbooks designed for colonial classrooms with lessons that still encouraged students to assimilate to French language and culture. In Algeria, a minimal amount of Arabic was permitted in French schools, but it was to be taught orally and as a foreign language. One could argue that assimilation remained the dominant ideology throughout the colonial period, despite the fact that aspects of associationist doctrine, such as colonial textbooks and language allowances, were introduced. A number of historians, most notably Gail Kelly and Alice Conklin, have argued that there was little difference between the two colonial ideologies and that the rhetoric of association was simply a means to justify the colonial project. -

Members of the French government also disagreed about the extension of rights to the colonial population. Under the leadership of Georges Clemenceau, and later Léon Blum, reforms were introduced to expand the Algerian electorate and citizenship eligibility. Left-wing governments such as those led by Clemenceau and Blum argued that instability in Algeria was due to the abuses of the colonial situation and could be remedied through the application of more progressive politics. These proposed reform projects met with considerable resistance from conservative republicans and the *colon* population, who felt that extending privileges to the colonized would only lead to further demands and unrest. Concessions were made to balance between these competing interests. The Jonnart-Clemenceau reform bill discussed in Chapter Two is an example of just such a compromise, where the Algerian electorate was expanded but reforms to the administrative framework were scrapped. Funding for Algerian education was increased dramatically, but was still far less than the amount allotted for the schools of European settlers.

Competing voices within Algeria, Alsace and Paris shaped the way education policy was put into practice in the interwar era. The classrooms of Algeria and Alsace were culturally contested terrains where religious and linguistic identities were imposed, adapted and resisted. Although the Third Republic sought to use public schools as a means to foster unity and loyalty in these two regions, education policy was neither universal nor monolithic. It was constantly being formed and reformed as a reaction to local demands and as a compromise between conflicting ideologies. In this way, the development of education systems in Algeria and Alsace was a fluid process negotiated on all sides of the colonial relationship.

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