

The French Plan to Control Southern Algeria: A Reading of the Colonial and Missionary Dimension in the Hoggar Region

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Abstract---The French administration adopted a multi-dimensional strategy to impose its control over the Hoggar region, ranging from direct military force, economic domination, and administrative and political influence, to the cultural and missionary dimension through which it sought to influence education and local customs and to prepare society to accept French domination.

Keywords---Hoggar, French expansion, missionary, Southern Algeria, exploratory missions, Algerian Sahara.

Introduction

The Hoggar region represents one of the most significant Saharan areas that attracted French interest since the late nineteenth century, not only as a strategic geographical space linking North Africa with the depths of the desert, but also as a cultural and civilizational domain that preserved its relative independence in the face of foreign penetration attempts. The French presence in this region was linked to two parallel and complementary paths: the military-political path, which aimed to subjugate the region and consolidate influence, and the missionary-cultural path, which sought to dismantle the Tuareg's social and spiritual structures and to create conditions for accepting colonial domination. Analyzing the colonial and missionary dimensions in the Hoggar also allows for understanding the roots of European interest in the Algerian Sahara, as well as the components of the French project that

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sought to expand the territories under occupation and to annex new areas to the French domain. This was achieved through penetrating southward into Tuareg lands and linking the Sahara to the occupied north, relying on networks of travelers, officers, and religious missions that cloaked missionary work in a humanitarian and scientific guise, while in essence serving the strategy of infiltration and the weakening of traditional authorities. Furthermore, the importance of this topic lies in revealing the nature of the relationship between the material and intellectual tools of domination, and how religious, anthropological, and linguistic knowledge was used to prepare the ground for control or in other words, to what extent the missionary dimension served as a complementary tool to the colonial dimension in France's project in the Hoggar, and how the Tuareg society maintained its belief and social systems in the face of missionary campaigns.

Axis One: The Expansionist Colonial Dimensions of the French Project in Southern Algeria

1. Early European Interests in the Algerian Sahara:

The Sahara Desert was a completely unknown region to Europeans before the era of explorers and adventurers. For, their knowledge of it was limited to information provided by Greek and Roman geographers and Arab scholars of the Middle Ages. European interest in the Algerian Sahara actually preceded the French occupation of Algeria in 1830, through exploratory journeys that began in the fifteenth century. In 1447, a southern adventurer undertook a journey to the Niger Basin through the Touat region. Besides, European rivalry over the African continent intensified in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries among the French, English, and Germans, in their quest to find markets for European products, areas to resettle surplus populations, and to conduct various scientific and exploratory studies (Bouaziz, 1999, p. 62).

To that end, several scientific geographical societies were formed, the most notable being the African Association, established in England in 1788. It set scientific and humanitarian goals and, in the same year, employed the adventurer John Ledyard (Al-Arabi, 1983, p. 65), who was tasked with crossing Africa from east to west; however, he died in Egypt at the beginning of his journey.

Subsequent exploratory attempts failed until 1796, when Mungo Park achieved relative success in his journey across part of Sudan, reaching the banks of the Nile River. Later, Frederick Horneman became the first European to successfully cross the Sahara. Commissioned by the African Association to continue Park's mission, he arrived in Cairo in 1797, then joined a caravan heading to Tripoli, and after two months reached Murzuq, he planned to travel back to Tripoli to write the first part of his journey and then return to Murzuq. His expedition ended upon reaching the famous Niger River, where he died on its banks. Despite being neglected at the time due to the Napoleonic wars and the silence of geographers and explorers about his trip, his work provided significant or at least new information about the geography of the region, the customs of its inhabitants, and the routes and paths he had crossed (Marmouri, 2000-2001, p. 109).

Mungo Park undertook a second journey to the Niger in 1805 but perished the following year, along with his companion, at the hands of the inhabitants of Ouléminden. Moreover, another expedition was led by the German Roentgen from Morocco to the Sahara, which ended with his death in the Hajja region in July 1809 (Bouaziz, 1999, p. 63).

In 1818, the British government organized an expedition led by Joseph Ritchie, secretary of the British embassy in Paris. His journey started from Tripoli toward Murzuq, the capital of Fezzan, accompanied by naval officer Captain Lyon, and it ended with Ritchie's death, and another official expedition was sent under Dr. Oudney, which reached as far south as Ghat and Lake Chad, where the leader of the mission died.

This expedition returned to Tripoli in January 1825, and that same year another British mission was launched under Major Alexander Gordon Laing to Africa (Al-Arabi, 1983, pp. 68-69). Departing from Tripoli, he visited Ghadames, and was guided by Othman bin al-Hajj Bakri bin al-Hajj al-Faqih to Ain Salah. He reached Timbuktu in 1826 after several encounters with the Tuareg of the Hoggar, who attacked him before his arrival, but he managed to survive.

These English and German exploratory missions to the Sahara induced the French to embark on their own adventures of scrutiny in the African desert. The French began with the journey of René Caillié, who was known for his great passion for travel and exploration. In 1828 (Amiraoui Ahmida, 2004, p. 71), he traveled to Senegal without any official support, after two failed attempts between 1816 and 1818. There, he spent a long period learning the Senegalese language and customs. Further, after several attempts to reach Timbuktu, he finally succeeded on April 20, 1828, he left Timbuktu on May 4, 1828, with a caravan heading toward Morocco through the Touat region, reaching Fez on August 12, 1828, then Meknes, and finally Rabat. Since René Caillié was the first to reach Timbuktu and return safely, and the first Frenchman to penetrate deep into the Sahara, he was warmly welcomed in Tangier by the French vice-consul before returning to France on September 27, 1828, and more importantly provided France with valuable geographical and cultural information that later served its expansionist colonial policy in the Sahara and Sudan, although his knowledge about the Tuareg was limited and scattered (Marmouri, 2000-2001, p. 111).

2. French Interests in the Algerian Sahara after 1830:

This growing European inquisitiveness emboldened the French to expand further into the African continent, especially after their occupation of Algeria in 1830 and their success in extending control over the coastal and Tell regions, despite the heroic resistance they faced there. France's occupation of Algeria made it increasingly interested in the Algerian Sahara an interest that deepened further after the southern uprisings, such as the revolt of the inhabitants of the Oranese South led by the Ouled Sidi Cheikh, the Zaatcha revolt in Biskra in 1849, and the movement of Sharif Mohamed Ben Abdallah in the oases of Laghouat, Ouargla, and Tougourt. The French expansion into the Algerian Sahara stemmed from several motives and reasons, including:

- The desert regions, including the Hoggar area, had become strongholds for insurgents fleeing from the north to reorganize and prepare for renewed resistance. Therefore, the French decided to expand deep into the desert to control the entire national territory and turn the southern lands into zones of French influence. Moreover, the Sahara represented a strategic point for France, opening prospects toward the African continent. Consequently, the French government decided to take strict measures to tighten its grip over southern Algeria and ensure its control over the whole country. For that purpose, it multiplied exploratory missions to the desert, recognizing the urgent need for Saharan regions. Even Charles de Gaulle pointed this out in one of his speeches during his visit to Algeria on December 8, 1858, stating: "The Sahara is the land of the future, a bridge between two worlds: the Mediterranean world and the African world, between the Atlantic Ocean and the world of the Nile and the Red Sea." (Bouaziz, 1999, p. 78)
- France's dominance over the Tell and northern regions whetted its appetite for further expansion into the south, as it viewed the Sahara as an economic and strategic security reserve ensuring its future in the African continent which is evident in the report by Marshal Soult, Minister of War, to King Louis-Philippe, where he outlined the objectives of southern expansion: "The Algerian Sahara, or in other words all the territories located south of the Algerian Tell, should form a third type of administrative region. Europeans cannot be employed there, and even the army can only enter with great difficulty, either to establish security or to prepare for commercial opportunities that will open important routes toward Black Africa..." (Meriouch, 2005, pp. 118-119) To ensure the success of its economic project, the French administration founded numerous monopolistic associations, companies, and commercial banks, such as the African Trade Association, the African Commercial Bank, the Bank of West Africa, and the Industrial and Commercial Company of Africa. It also established the Agricultural and Industrial Company of the Algerian Sahara to open new horizons for the expansion of French trade, connect it with inner Africa, and create new trade routes. France invested in establishing a network of railway and road transport and telegraph lines to facilitate the movement of military forces between various Saharan regions. Among the railway projects was that of Kapany (1853), who proposed building a line linking Algiers to Bousaada, passing through Ouargla and Ain Salah to Tamanrasset, with secondary lines connecting Tripoli and extending to Tunis (Bouaziz, 1999, p. 78). Another engineer, Adolphe

Duponchel, studied the possibility of a trans-Saharan railway to connect the French colonies with each other. Other related projects included those of Barbo, Dorian, and engineer Bouyan, all aiming to connect Algeria with Senegal and Sudan (Bouaziz, 1999, p. 80).

The importance of the Algerian Sahara increased even further after the discovery of oil and natural gas. France then worked to separate the Sahara from the rest of Algerian territory, both because of its rich and diverse natural and mineral resources, and to extend its influence deep into the desert by encouraging and intensifying exploratory missions, particularly after the success of René Caillié's expedition. Among the most important exploratory missions were those of:

Henri Barth, who made two journeys — the first in 1849 and the second in 1855 from Tripoli through Ghadames and Ghat in Fezzan to Chad and Timbuktu via Guerrara, Touat, and Tidikelt, he was accompanied by Richardson and Overweg, both of whom perished during the expedition (Amiraoui Ahmida, 2004, p. 72).

Edouard Vogel, who traveled from Tripoli into the Algerian Sahara and met his death in El Oued in 1856.

Ismail Boudarba, who took part in the French campaign on the northern Sahara (Metlili, Ouargla, and Touggourt) and provided France with valuable intelligence.

Right after that comes Henri Duveyrier's journey, (1859–1862) which paved the way for France's penetration into the Tuareg and Hoggar regions, he collected extensive information on the northern Tuareg and helped prepare the ground for the Ghadames Treaty. A mission was then organized, including Mircher, Polignac, Vatonne, Dr. Heffmann, and Ismail Boudarba, which went to Ghadames in 1862 and succeeded in signing a treaty with Akhnoukhène, the leader of the Azjar, on November 26, 1862. The treaty stipulated the opening of trade routes and markets for French goods in Tuareg lands, the protection of French envoys, and the provision of aid and assistance to them. Around the same period, Gerhard Rohlfs carried out several journeys to explore the Sahara. He learned Arabic and, in 1862 at the age of 30, began his Saharan expedition, successfully crossing the desert from Morocco to Libya through the Algerian Sahara. On September 17, 1864, he entered Ain Salah, becoming the second explorer to reach the oasis after Major Laing. He later planned another journey to cross the desert from north to south, intending to travel from Tripoli to Timbuktu through the Hoggar. However, due to inter-Tuareg conflicts, he diverted toward Fezzan, then Nigeria, and finally returned to Europe in July 1868. In 1868, the British government invited him to join their Abyssinian campaign, which he completed successfully, and later, in 1879, he discovered the Kufra Oasis (Al-Arabi, 1983, pp. 90-92).

Other expeditions followed, such as that of Paul Soleillet, who left Marseille on December 6, 1872, for a journey from Algiers to Ain Salah, reaching it on March 6, 1873. Although he failed to enter the oasis despite repeated attempts, he provided valuable information on the Tadmait Plateau and its surroundings, which the colonial authorities used in their southern expansion (Miyassi, 1996, p. 60).

We also mention the journey of Dr. Oskar Lenz, who traveled from Tangier to Timbuktu, and commissioned by the German African Society in the autumn of 1879, he was tasked with studying the Atlas Mountains and the southern arid regions, especially from Tindouf to Timbuktu. He crossed Morocco from Tangier to Tindouf, then to Timbuktu, and continued to French posts in Senegal and finally to the Atlantic coast (Miyassi, 1996, p. 61).

It is worth mentioning that these exploratory missions greatly contributed to the realization of France's expansionist colonial project in southern Algeria.

French interests in Hoggar region:

1. French Methods of Subjugating the Hoggar Region:

French leaders repeatedly emphasized the strategic importance of the Algerian Sahara in ensuring the success of their expansionist project. For that reason, they mobilized all available means to facilitate the process of penetrating deep into the desert and controlling its inhabitants. The idea of constructing a railway line across the Sahara emerged to support exploration and the exploitation of its riches and

natural resources. Consequently, the authorities sent scientific expeditions to find the most effective ways to achieve this project.

The first to conceive the idea of a trans-Saharan railway was the engineer Duponchel in 1875, and exploration journeys began anew. A high governmental committee was formed for the project, and three exploratory missions were sent, the last of which was led by Colonel Flatters in 1879 (Miyassi, 1996, p. 423), he was assigned by the Minister of Public Works, De Frecine, to carry out an exploration mission to build a desert route from Algeria to Niger and Chad, on February 1, 1880, the expedition held its first meeting in Biskra, and, in addition to its leader Flatters, it included two captains, two second lieutenants, a doctor, engineers, and representatives from the Ministry of Public Works (Al-Arabi, 1983, p. 103).

The Flatters expedition departed from Ouargla on March 25, 1880, heading toward Lake Menghig, and came to know the Erg region and Oued Igharghar. They drew a map of a large part of the land of the Tuareg of Azjar, but due to the Tuareg's resistance, they were forced to return on May 11, 1880. In addition, a second expedition led again by Flatters crossed Hassi N'Souki and Mesguem, the Tadmait plateau, and reached Amguid on January 13, 1881 (Al-Bahith, 1986, p. 80), they passed through the Tinghert plateau and Ain Anziman to the Sebkhia of Amdeggor, and from there proceeded to Tamassinin. However, the Tuareg killed Flatters and his companions when they reached Bir El-Gharama on February 16, 1881, the killing of Flatters and his men led to a series of assassinations of Europeans in the desert by the Tuareg, among them the three monks Richard, Pouplard, and Morat near Ghadames in 1881; the officers Balla in 1886, Camille Douls in 1889, and Marquis Maury near Ghadames in 1896. For this reason, the French paid attention to establishing forward military outposts deep in the Sahara between 1893 and 1894 to confront these dangers, organize expansion operations, and support other missions and campaigns into the desert. These included the expedition of Ferdinand Foureau between 1882–1898 the journeys of Pagot, Chatelée, and Barth to Guerrara, Touat, and Tidikelt, the mission of Collot to South Kolea, the mission of Hors and Totti to the land of the Tuareg and Niger, as well as Emile Gentil's campaign to explore the mouths of the Congo River (Bouaziz, pp. 69-70).

Among the most important expeditions were those of Foureau and Lamy in 1898–1900, they left Ouargla on October 23, 1898, crossing about 2,000 km of barren desert to reach Chad after a full year, this expedition marked the first crossing from southern Algeria to Chad. The nineteenth century concluded with the mission of Flamand, through which France occupied Ain Salah (Miyassi, 1996, p. 65) in 1899 and Touat in 1900 (Pandolfi, 1998, p. 85).

Accordingly, it came the campaign of Lieutenant Cotnest, after Laperrine was appointed head of the military command newly established for southern Algeria in 1902, he made Ain Salah its headquarters because of its importance (Pandolfi, 1998, p. 149). The French administration assigned Cotnest to lead an expansion campaign from Amguid toward Ideles, northeast of the Hoggar region, Cotnest succeeded in penetrating deep into the desert, seizing Tazrouk, and from there moving toward Tin Tarabin, where the French army defeated the Tuareg resistance, due to the great disparity in numbers and weaponry between the two sides. Their expansion extended to the Oued Tite area in 1902, but the French army faced fierce resistance that ended with the death of Cotnest. However, the Tuareg could not withstand the invaders and suffered a crushing defeat, leading to French control over the Hoggar region. It appears that the Tuareg's defeat resulted from the lack of unified leadership among the tribes of the region, especially after the death of Amenokal Ahitagel Ag Mohamed Biska (1877–1900), shortly before the occupation of the Hoggar (Meriouch, 2005, p. 131). He had wished not to live to see the face of the French colonizer. After his death, two rival factions emerged over leadership, in which Itcay Ag Amellal advanced quickly and gained command over his rival Mohamed Ag Ourzig (Pandolfi, 1998, p. 150).

France did not stop there; it resorted to various maneuvers and reconnaissance missions, the most important of which was the Guillo-Lohan patrol, tasked with exploring the Hoggar. His unit consisted of 200 Saharan camel corpsmen, leaving Ain Salah on October 1, 1902, taking a route slightly different from that of Cotnest. He visited Herfik, Ideles, Tazrouk, Tin Tarabin, Aitoukalan, Taghouhouat, Tamanrasset, and In Amguel, making him the first to penetrate deep into the Hoggar. He provided

valuable information about the region's geography and the distribution of its inhabitants (Marmouri, 2000-2001, pp. 176-177).

All of this facilitated the mission of French intelligence, which infiltrated the ranks of the Hoggar population and managed to win over some local notables for use when needed. This is precisely what they did with the successor of the former Amenokal, Moussa Ag Mstan (1904–1921), from the Kel Agala tribe, who assumed leadership of the Tuareg. It is also notable that this leader did not reach the political shrewdness of his predecessor; instead, he adopted a policy of truce and peace rather than resistance, signing a surrender agreement with the French in 1904 on the condition that they would not interfere in the internal affairs of the Tuareg. On the other hand, this agreement was reminiscent of the Treaty of July 5, 1830, concluded between Dey Hussein and the commander of the French expedition to Algeria, de Bourmont as if history were repeating itself, with the Algerian side once again failing to learn its lesson (Meriouch, 2005, p. 132).

The Role of Christianization and Missionary Work in Colonial Policy:

Christianization (missionary work) played an important role in strengthening the European colonial movement. A large number of missionary religious groups from across Europe contributed to spreading religious influence and, in turn, supporting military, economic, and political presence outside the European continent. These groups received both material and moral support from their governments, since clergymen possessed unique methods and approaches for extending religious and political influence. Thus, these missions spread beyond Europe and became the backbone of the European colonial expansion.

In Algeria, Christianization was closely tied to the French occupation, forming one of its main weapons, and even serving as one of the pillars on which colonial rule rested. After the French succeeded in crossing the Sahara which had been an obstacle to their expansion into Africa by sending several exploratory missions (most of which failed due to the resistance of the desert inhabitants), they resorted to missionary work.

In French colonial policy, missionary activity was part of the pacification and assimilation strategies in the Saharan region, aimed at ensuring France's expansion southward and spreading French "civilization" among Algerians through missionary associations (Al-Qashat, 1989, p. 251). This was clearly expressed by the French deputy Fernand Engerand, who declared: "The missionary works for the prosperity of the colonial idea of the country that sends him; he thus elevates the spiritual and moral condition of the natives... Missionary and colonial activities are inseparable, for the supreme goal of colonization is the spiritual and moral advancement of the colonized." (Amiraoui Ahmida, 2004, p. 120•121)

Missionary associations thus played an active role in establishing and consolidating French occupation in Algeria, and experienced notable development from the mid-nineteenth century onward as part of the collaboration between Christianization and colonization. This connection was made clear by statements from French war generals, among them General Bugeaud, who emphasized the usefulness of Christianization in serving colonial aims, saying: "The Arabs will not accept France unless they become French, and they will not become French unless they become Christians." (Amiraoui Ahmida, 2004, p. 120•121)

During the French occupation of Algeria, the colonizers sought to Christianize the environment before Christianizing the soul, by erasing Islamic religious symbols and building churches and bishoprics to spread Christian teachings. Furthermore, the separation between religion and state was a principle of French law that France never deviated from, yet in Algeria, there was close cooperation between the Church and the colonial authority, which actively supported missionaries in carrying out their missions as planned by the Church.

Missionary activity played a major role in strengthening and expanding French colonialism in Algeria, and it was nothing less than a continuation of the Crusades. This was confirmed by General Bugeaud, who stated: "Our African war is nothing but a continuation of the Crusades. We have established

ourselves on African soil as heirs of the ancient Romans, and we have planted in the heart of this country Algeria the French idea, the Christian idea..." (Miloud, 2003-2004, p. 22)

Hence, it is clear that the missionary policy in Algeria was supported not only by the official French authorities, but also by the religious papal authorities, which reveals the deep spiritual bond between colonialism and the Church, embodied in the missionary expeditions sent to Algeria in general and to the Sahara in particular.

The Most Prominent Figures of Christianization and Missionary Work:

The historical period between 1830 and 1916 was marked by the emergence of numerous Christian religious figures who played a significant role in supporting missionary activity and serving the French occupation in Algeria, among them were:

Émilie Duféart who was credited with opening schools for girls, and building shelters for orphans and the homeless, and establishing clinics to treat the poor, through these charitable institutions she carried out her missionary and evangelical work simultaneously.

Another key figure was François Bourgade, whom Émilie appointed as the spiritual guide for her group; François expanded missionary activity through his charitable deeds and kindness to the people, founding a hospital where he personally practiced medicine with the help of nuns.

Also noteworthy was Bishop Antoine Dupuch, who believed in the importance of returning Muslims to the faith of their ancestors Christianity by offering help to the locals and meeting their needs. He stated: "Our mission must be among the natives... We must make them know the faith of their forefathers through charitable works." (Amiraoui Ahmida, 2004, p. 125) He also was one of the most devoted figures to the study of the history of the African Church, authoring the book *Christian, Roman, and French Algeria*, in which he sought to revive and affirm the continuity of Christianity in Africa. In addition, he was the first bishop of the Diocese of Algiers, established on August 8, 1828, which played an important role in advancing both Christianity and French colonial interests.

Another major figure was Cardinal Charles Lavigerie (1825–1892), one of the most prominent missionaries in Algeria. He arrived on May 15, 1867, with the goal of making Algeria a center for launching the Christianization of Africa and turning this mission into a cornerstone of the colonial enterprise. He also aimed to revive the Christian Roman past of the region, as reflected in his famous message to the monks of Algeria, in which he wrote: "I have been called to achieve conquest with you, to make Algerian soil the cradle of another great, generous, Christian, and French nation. In a single word — to spread around us the true light in which the Gospel will be the source and the law, and to carry that light beyond the Sahara into the heart of this vast continent, still immersed in barbarism — that is the destiny God has chosen for us..." (Meriouch, 2005, p. 132)

Lavigerie founded the Society of the Missionaries of Africa (the White Fathers) shortly after becoming a cardinal, and the White Fathers were among the most active missionary groups in Algeria, aiming to compete with the Protestant missions that had arrived from Europe, he understood that traditional Christian clerical garments could create a barrier between missionaries and the local population, so he required members of his order to adopt local customs, language, and dress to better blend with the people. The group focused on various fields, including education, medicine, and establishing orphanages.

Lavigerie also sought to recruit local converts as missionaries, believing they would be more easily accepted among their own people (Amiraoui Ahmida, 2004, p. 128). To that end, he founded missionary centers in several regions. Yet, despite France's principle of separating religion and politics, missionaries in Algeria faced a profound challenge from the start: the strong intellectual and moral resilience of the Algerian and Saharan people, deeply rooted in Islam, which had been passed down for generations. In 1876, the Church, determined to overcome these obstacles, sent three missionaries, Fathers Douchar, Minoret, and Poulmier across the Sahara. Lavigerie announced: "At this very hour, three of our missionaries are among the Tuareg. Soon they will enter Timbuktu, resolved to settle in the capital of Sudan or to die there for the love of truth." (Al-Arabi, 1983, p. 110) However, fate had other plans: the priests were killed by the same Tuareg guides assigned to accompany them.

By 1878, the oasis of Ghadames became the headquarters of the missionary expedition under the command of Father Richard, known for his skill in horseback and camel riding, as well as his charitable work distributing food to gain the goodwill of the local population.

After preparing for a religious expedition across the desert with two Tuareg men and an Arab from the Chaamba tribe, Father Richard managed to travel through Tuareg lands unharmed an achievement he viewed as a great success. Encouraged, and urged Lavigerie to allow him to return, his wish was granted, and in December 1881, he set out for Ghat with two other priests. However, just three days into the journey, the three missionaries fell into an ambush near Ghadames, laid by the same Tuareg tribe that had received Father Richard a year earlier (Al-Arabi, 1983, p. 112).

Thus, within five years, six priests had perished in the desert men whom Cardinal Lavigerie hailed as martyrs, declaring: "They have tasted the pain of death for the sake of God." (Al-Arabi, 1983, p. 111)

The fervor of these White Fathers ultimately led to their demise before they could accomplish their goals, as they collided with the deeply rooted Islamic moral and spiritual values of the local people, they soon realized that conquering souls was far more difficult than conquering lands. Yet, this truth did not deter them from renewing their efforts to "save" the souls of the Tuareg. After twenty years, at the dawn of the 20th century, missionary attempts were revived under the leadership of Brother Charles de Foucauld, who sought to convert the "pagan" peoples to Christianity (Bazin, 1923, p. 268 269).

The Missionary Foucauld in the Hoggar:

Charles de Foucauld's stay in Béni Abbès broadened the scope of his activities and led him to consider moving further south — specifically to the land of the Tuareg in the Hoggar region. His idea of venturing into this area took shape after his failed attempt to settle in Morocco, and his conviction grew stronger following the defeat of the Kel Ahaggar and the subsequent opening of the region to French influence. At that point, Foucauld seized the opportunity and, on June 24, 1903, sent a letter to the Apostolic Prefect of the Sahara, Mgr Guérin, requesting permission to visit the Tuareg tribes, after discussing the matter and its potential advantages with his old colleague Laperrine. On August 29 of the same year, he received official approval, supported by his spiritual leader Father Huvelin, which paved the way for his establishment among the Imuhagh (Tuareg) (Marmouri, 2000-2001, p. 144).

Given the value the French authorities attached to Foucauld, they issued direct threats to ensure that no harm would come to him (Marmouri, 2000-2001, p. 152). Consequently, Moussa Ag Amastan consented to Foucauld's settlement in Tamanrasset, which took place on August 13, 1905, upon the recommendation of local leaders, since Foucauld was unfamiliar with the region, he established himself in the heart of one of the largest Tuareg tribes, Dag Ghali, providing him with essential conditions of security and stability (Maurice, 1997, p. 34).

Foucauld played a dual role in the Hoggar. On the surface, he appeared to be a missionary seeking to spread Christianity by showing deep interest in the Tuareg people and their language as a means to approach and win them over, he is regarded as one of the greatest religious explorers as well and most dangerous missionaries, driven by a burning zeal and a readiness to endure hardship and sacrifice worldly comforts for his cause. Further, he made every possible effort to achieve his goal of conversion, yet ultimately failed to convert a single person, a failure largely due to the strong attachment of the local population to their Islamic faith. On the other hand, Charles de Foucauld seems to have had another side, revealed through his suspicious interactions with colonial authorities and the French army, leading many to consider him a spy disguised as a monk which is someone whose outward piety concealed a covert role in supporting French colonial ambitions.

Conclusion

The study of the expansionist dimensions of the French project in southern Algeria and the Hoggar region reveals that French colonialism was not limited to mere military control over the land. Rather, it went beyond that to include comprehensive attempts to reshape the economic, social, and cultural environment. For, the French administration adopted an integrated strategy that combined military

force, economic domination, and missionary and cultural influence, with the aim of consolidating its control over this strategic region at the heart of the Algerian Sahara. Furthermore, the Hoggar emerged as a living example of resistance to this expansionist project, as its inhabitants despite various pressures; it maintained partial independence and held firmly to their religious and social identity. This analysis highlights that resistance was not merely a military act, but also a cultural, social, and political struggle, demonstrating the limited capacity of France to completely transform the local society according to its colonial vision.

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