



Islam and the Métropole: A Case Study of Religion and Rhetoric in Algeria (American University Studies)

Ben Hardman

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Islam and the Métropole is an exploration of the colonial policies of France regarding Islam and the effects they had on religion in the early days of Algerian independence. Following the colonization of Algeria in 1830, the French authorities adopted a manipulative policy regarding the philosophy and practice of Islam. This was based on nineteenth-century theories of progress elucidated by Saint-Simonian thought and the philosophy of Auguste Comte, which posited religion as a symbolic language that could be geared toward political ends in the name of «progress». The ensuing use of Islamic language and a simultaneous effort to depict traditional Islam as backward while using the language of «progress» to legitimate colonial repression created a complex dissonance that was reflected in the Muslim opposition to colonial rule. This dissonance continued in the early days of Algerian independence as the government sponsored its own idiosyncratic version of «Progressive Islam» as the religion of state. The contradictions underlying this vision of religion were never sufficiently resolved, resulting in the violent failure of the state's ideology.

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