

The Contributions of Sheikh Mohamed Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi to the Revival and Construction of Algerian National Identity

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Abstract:

The study aims to highlight the role of Sheikh Mohamed Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi in protecting and strengthening Algerian national identity during the French colonial period. It reached two main conclusions:

- Al-Ibrahimi established a strong cultural foundation through education and advocacy, contributing to raising awareness among new generations about the importance of preserving heritage.
- Al-Ibrahimi emerged as a symbol of cultural resistance, with his work serving as a link between the past and the present, affirming that national identity is the result of continuous struggle to safeguard values and traditions.

Keywords: Contributions; Mohamed Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi; Revival; Building; Algerian.

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1. INTRODUCTION

From the moment it entered Algeria in 1830, French colonialism worked to distort national history and sought to erase the Arab-Islamic identity of the Algerian people. Consequently, it waged war against history, Islam, and the Arabic language. In parallel, France exerted continuous efforts to impose its colonial cultural project. This dangerous endeavor nearly succeeded, if not for the emergence of dedicated Algerian figures who stood as a formidable barrier against France's multifaceted policies. These men devoted themselves to raising awareness within Algerian society and rescuing it from the grip of ignorance. Among these national figures, Sheikh Mohamed Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi stands out as a symbol of the reformist movement in Algeria. He is regarded as one of the most prominent Algerian scholars who devoted his life and efforts to preserving the national identity of the Algerian people. This raises the following central question: What were the contributions of Sheikh Mohamed Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi in reviving Algerian national identity, and how did his ideas and intellectual practices contribute to shaping this identity in the face of French colonialism? To address this question, the article is structured around the following key themes:

1. The Concept of National Identity
2. Sheikh Mohamed Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi: Birth, Upbringing, and Intellectual Legacy
3. Preserving National Identity from the Perspective of Sheikh Mohamed Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi
4. Aspects of Sheikh Mohamed Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi's Commitment to National Identity

Research Objectives:



-To highlight the significant role played by Sheikh Mohamed Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi in reviving Algerian national identity during the French colonial period.

-To analyze Al-Ibrahimi's intellectual and religious contributions in strengthening the Arabic language and Islam as fundamental pillars of national identity.

Research Methodology: The study adopts the following methodological approaches:

-Descriptive Historical Approach: This approach involves reviewing historical events related to the French colonial period, with a focus on tracing the academic and intellectual journey of Sheikh Mohamed Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi, and documenting his key activities and contributions to reform.

-Analytical Approach: This approach focuses on analyzing the revivalist project undertaken by Al-Ibrahimi and examining his efforts to preserve Algerian national identity. It also delves into the analysis of his positions and practices, which formed a cornerstone in confronting colonial cultural and intellectual domination.

2. The Concept of National Identity

2.1 The Definition of Identity in Language

Identity is derived from the diminutive form of "huwya" (abyss), and it is said that "identity" means a well. According to Abu Amr, it is also said that "huwya" refers to a deep pit or chasm, known as "al-mahwah"(Ibn Manzur, (n-d), p374).

The term "identity" is derived from the repetition of "huwa.. huwa" (he is he), meaning the essence and true nature of a thing, encompassing it as a seed contains the tree and its fruits. The identity of a person, culture, or civilization represents its essence and truth

(Amara, 1999, p06). In other words, it forms the foundation and core of existence (Atli, 2017, p21).

2.2 The Definition of Identity Terminologically

The meaning of "identity," according to the "Lalande Dictionary," refers to the fixed characteristic within the self — a marker of what is identical. It can also be defined as the distinguishing feature of an individual or entity, which, in this sense, allows for comparison with another individual said to be identical or the same across different periods of existence, referred to as the "identity of the self." (Lalande, 2012, p607)

Identity represents the way people define themselves or their nation, often manifesting through language, culture, and religion. By its nature, identity resists singularity and purity; it tends toward pluralism and integration when well-managed but can lead to conflict when neglected or misunderstood. Identity can serve as a unifying and developmental factor, yet it can also become a force for fragmentation and the disintegration of the social fabric, which is typically reinforced by a shared language. (Nassar, 2015, p03)

Dr. Burhan Zureiq likens identity to a fingerprint — despite openness to other civilizations and engagement with various intellectual currents, the distinctiveness of this fingerprint cannot be erased. It remains a constant, enduring through the ages. Although identity may evolve, this evolution occurs over an extended period, and any external influences on identity are limited in scope. (Zureiq, 2012, p60)

2.3 National Identity

National identity is what distinguishes members of a society from others through a shared historical, cultural, and social heritage, accompanied by feelings of cohesion among a group living on a specific piece of land to which they belong. In the context of state

formation, they either agree on a social contract of citizenship or oppose its rule with the aim of reclaiming sovereignty. (Al-Agoune & Al-Abrach, 2019, p34)

The national identity of any nation represents a set of general cultural characteristics or traits that constitute the common factor among all its members, distinguishing them from individuals of other nations. Thus, while the components of individual identity are primarily physical traits, national identity is characterized by cultural attributes. (Maghzili, 2023, p325)

2.4 Algerian National Identity

Algeria faced the malicious French colonization, which aimed to erase Islam, the Arabic language, and combat Algerian identity in all its forms. Despite this, the national identity remained alive thanks to the efforts of the Association of Muslim Scholars. Sheikh Abdelhamid Ben Badis expressed the depth of national belonging by saying: "The Algerian people are Muslim and belong to Arabism; whoever claims they have deviated from their origin or have died is a liar," affirming that Algerian identity does not perish but renews itself to resist colonization. (Al-Agoune & Al-Abrach, 2019, p38).

Sheikh Abdelhamid Ben Badis encapsulated the fundamental and national dimensions of Algerian identity in the slogan: "Islam is our religion, Arabic is our language, and Algeria is our homeland" .This motto summarizes the efforts of the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars since 1931 to confront colonialism, which sought to eradicate all cultural, civilizational, and religious elements of the Algerian people, with religion and language at the forefront.(Atli, 2017, p32)

Thus, we can say that Algerian national identity is a blend of cultural, religious, and linguistic values that reflect the unique

character of the Algerian people. It is founded on Islam and Arabic, drawing its roots from historical heritage. This identity strengthens the unity of society and serves as a tool for cultural resistance against colonialism and global changes..

3. Sheikh Mohamed Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi: Birth, Upbringing, and Intellectual Contributions

3.1 Birth and Upbringing

He is Mohamed El-Bachir Ibn Mohamed Al-Saadi bin Omar bin Abdullah bin Omar Al-Ibrahimi (Merzoug & Louali, 2022,p33). He was born in Qasr Al-Tayr, from the famous Rigah tribe, known as "Ouled Ibrahim," (Noueihidh, 1980, p13) which settled in the Constantine region of Algeria, in the rural areas of Algeria. His birthdate was Thursday, 14 Shawwal 1306 AH, corresponding to June 13, 1889 CE, in a family that had inherited Islamic and Arabic sciences for five centuries. (Amara, (n-d), p05).He was the only son of his parents, both of whom passed away, and the third among his sisters. His mother was "Hadda bint Mohamed." (Fayid, 2009, p95) The year of his birth (1889) was the same year that both Sheikh Abdelhamid Ben Badis and Sheikh Tayeb Al-Aqbi were born.

Al-Ibrahimi grew up in a rural scholarly home, characterized by simplicity in living, purity in conduct, strength in morals, and moderation in physical health (Ben Khouya, 2018, p14). He learned from his father and uncle, Sheikh Mohamed El-Makki Al-Ibrahimi, and then received lessons at the Zawiya of Ibn Sharif in Chellata, in the Kabylie Mountains. (Noueihidh, 1980, p13)

At the age of seven, his uncle took him from his Quranic teachers and personally raised him (Ben Nafla, 2023, p80). He was always by his side and quickly showed great talent and educational ability, demonstrated by his strong memory. By the age of nine, he had



memorized the entire Quran as well as many classic Arabic poems. He then mastered jurisprudence, Arabic sciences such as grammar, morphology, and rhetoric. Over the years, he became a scholar whose lessons attracted crowds of students. (Merzoug & Louali, 2022, p33)

At the age of eleven, his uncle began teaching him many texts that he had previously memorized (Amara ,(n-d), p07). When his uncle fell seriously ill, and despite being on his deathbed, he did not leave al-Ibrahimi without guidance or instruction. They completed the final chapters of Ibn Malik's *Alfiyyah* together, even in those circumstances. When his uncle passed away in 1903, al-Bashir al-Ibrahimi began teaching the sciences he had learned from him to his fellow students. (Al-Ibrahimi, 1997, p274) He was only fourteen years old (Al-Haj Ali, 2022). When the young al-Bashir al-Ibrahimi turned twenty, he was called to serve in the mandatory military service in the colonial army. However, he fled and hid abroad, as was common among most young Algerians at the time (Tamim, 2008, p69).

At the age of twenty-two, in 1911, al-Ibrahimi traveled to Medina, following in the footsteps of his father. There, he studied the sciences of Tafsir (Quranic exegesis), Hadith, and Arab genealogy, During World War I, he moved to Damascus and engaged in free teaching. He was appointed as a professor of Arabic literature at the Sultanate School, the only secondary school in Damascus (Bou Safsaf, 2007, 48), actively contributing to the scientific and literary renaissance in the Levant (Al-Ibrahimi, The Works of Imam Mohamed al-Bashir al-Ibrahimi, 1997, p-p05-08).

During his stay in Medina, he met his lifelong companion, Sheikh Abdelhamid Ben Badis, during the Hajj season in 1913. Their relationship grew stronger, and they discussed the situation in Algeria

at the time, envisioning future projects to confront French colonialism. (Ben Donia, 2018, p460).

Al-Ibrahimi returned to Algeria in 1922, carrying new reformist ideas and theories. He began spreading knowledge and literature to achieve Islamic, social, and human reform. His time in the Hijaz and Syria had a significant impact on his cultural and political future, as he drew from the wellsprings of Arab-Islamic culture advocated by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Sheikh Mohamed Abduh. From this, he built a substantial intellectual, literary, and political foundation to reform his country, which was suffering from intellectual stagnation (Bou Safsaf, 2007, p49). Al-Ibrahimi collaborated with the elite who followed the path he and Sheikh Ibn Badis had outlined. The groundwork for the reformist movement in Algeria continued for ten years (Amara, (n-d), p10). He settling in the city of Setif, where he established a school and a mosque, rejecting a position offered to him by the French authorities. During this period, he frequently visited Tunis, where his in-laws resided, and he maintained friendships in scholarly and literary circles (Al-Ibrahimi, 1997, p10).

In response to the colonial crusader immorality at the time, the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulama was founded on May 5, 1931. Al-Ibrahimi served as its secretary and vice president (Amara, (n-d), p11), becoming its president after the death of Ibn Badis. He worked within the framework of the association's principles, summarized by the motto: "Islam is our religion, Arabic is our language, Algeria is our homeland." Through this, he sought to revive and restore the foundations of the Algerian nation and instill them in the hearts of Algerians (Laamouri, 2005, p69).

Since 1933, al-Ibrahimi took charge of the western region of the country, selecting the city of Tlemcen as the center for his extensive activities. In 1937, he founded Dar al-Hadith School there, which



became a hub of religious, scientific, and cultural influence, comprising a school, a mosque, and a lecture hall (Al-Ibrahimi, 1997, p11).

Al-Ibrahimi initiated a broad scientific and reformist movement, organizing scientific seminars for students, scholarly lessons for small groups, and structured classes for pupils. He also delivered lectures and sermons, traveling from town to town. Additionally, he established a small school in Constantine to train young people in public speaking, writing, and leadership, equipping them with the necessary knowledge to guide the masses (Hamidatou & Attallah, 2018, p258).

In 1940, following the death of Ibn Badis, Mohamed al-Bashir al-Ibrahimi was appointed president of the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulama. His presidency was marked by periods of arrest and exile to Oran for three years in 1940. He was later detained again following the events of May 8, 1945, and was not released until a general amnesty was issued on March 9, 1946. Upon his release, he resumed his activities with the association and established a secondary institute to continue the education of graduates from free primary schools, which had been closed during the massacres of May 8, 1945. The institute was named after Abdelhamid Ben Badis in Constantine. (Al-Ibrahimi, 1997, p-p285-287).

Al-Ibrahimi is considered the second prominent founding and reformist figure of the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulama. He was known for his long-standing struggle against France and its schemes, as well as against the Sufi brotherhoods and their intrigues, through his insightful and comprehensive articles. His fight continued even after Algeria gained independence. Upon his return to his homeland in 1962, he sought to reconcile and unite the leaders who had long been

divided by disagreements (Seddiki, 2014, p26). As his health declined and age caught up with him, he retired to his home. He passed away on Thursday, 18 Muharram 1385 AH, corresponding to May 19, 1965, leaving behind works that testify to his brilliance and dedication in the fields of science, literature, education, and politics. He also left behind legions of disciples who had been nurtured by his teachings and guidance (Seddiki, 2014, p-p26-27).

3.2 Intellectual Imprints

Al-Ibrahimi contributed writings on valuable topics despite his numerous responsibilities and the absence of printing presses to facilitate the publication of his works. As a result, most of his writings remained as drafts in Algeria. Among his most notable works are (Al-Ibrahimi, 1997, p288):

- ‘Uyun al-Basa’ir – A collection of articles he wrote for Al-Basa’ir newspaper during its second series.
- Remnants of Eloquent Arabic in Algerian Colloquial Dialect.
- The Secrets of Pronouns in Arabic.
- Refuse and Residue in the Arabic Language – A compilation of all words formed on the pattern fa‘alah, representing either the choicest or the most rejected items.
- The System of Arabic in the Measures of Its Words.
- Naming with the Infinitive Form.
- Adjectives Formed on the Pattern fa‘al with an Open ‘Ayn.
- Regularity and Irregularity in Arabic – A treatise on the distinction between the frequent and rare terms in Ibn Malik's work.
- What Books of Proverbs Have Omitted from Common Proverbs.
- The Wisdom Behind the Legislation of Zakat in Islam.
- Branches of Faith – A compilation of Islamic morals and virtues.
- A Treatise Preferring the View that the Original Structure of Arabic Words Consists of Three Letters, Not Two.



-A Treatise on the Articulation Points and Characteristics of Letters Between Classical and Colloquial Arabic.

-The Kahina of Aurès – A novel blending fact and fiction in an innovative style.

Additionally, many lectures and studies about him were documented by his students.

4. Preserving National Identity from the Perspective of Sheikh Mohamed Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi

Sheikh Mohamed Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi's thought focused on three key points that formed the foundation of his orientations: Islam, Arabism, and the homeland. In 1920, after his first journey to the East, Al-Ibrahimi returned to Algeria and found the situation unchanged, dominated by ignorance, poverty, and backwardness. He came back carrying in his mind a renaissance project aimed at bringing the Islamic nation into the circle of progress and modernization, grounded in Islam. Influenced by the ideas of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Mohamed Abduh, Al-Ibrahimi was convinced that Islam held the cure for all the societal ills, provided that three weapons were employed in the struggle: reason, knowledge, and justice (Al-Ibrahimi, 1997, p14).

In 1929, Al-Ibrahimi delivered a lecture in the capital, Algiers, titled "Social Cooperation," in which he outlined the pillars of his revival project within the framework of the Islamic system. This project rested on four main pillars: religion, knowledge, ethics, and economy (Al-Ibrahimi, 1997, p14). Al-Ibrahimi viewed illiteracy as one of the deficiencies that diminish the vitality of nations and could ultimately lead to their extinction and annihilation. He believed that illiteracy, once it spread within a nation and became prevalent among its people, would destroy it, reducing it to the lowest forms of

existence, and paving the way for ignorance, decline, humiliation, degradation, and enslavement (Sharif, 2010, p105).

There is no doubt that education and political awareness are among the most crucial tools for solidifying national identity. Despite the favorable atmosphere for political activism, Algerians were not sufficiently prepared. This preparation took ten years, culminating in 1930 with the founding of the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulama, coinciding with France's celebration of the centenary of Algeria's occupation (Al-Amri, 2003, p179). Sheikh Al-Ibrahimi remarked, "We exploited all of this to stir the pride of the Algerian nation, awaken its consciousness, and complete its readiness for action. Those festivals failed due to our efforts and other external factors, and France lost the hopes it had pinned on them." (Al-Amri, 2003, p179)

Aware of the moderation and balance inherent in Islam, Al-Ibrahimi chose gentleness as the means to advance his reformist project. Through the beauty of eloquent and creative language, which he mastered, he succeeded in developing the concept of "Literature of Preaching" – a form of writing that serves Islam and reinforces its ideas. (Boujlel, (n-d), p15)

Due to the significance of Islam and the Arabic language in Algerian society, when France organized celebrations for the centenary of its colonization of Algeria in 1930, one of the leading French colonial politicians stated: "We will not triumph over the Algerians as long as they read the Qur'an and speak Arabic. We must remove the Qur'an from their existence and uproot Arabic from their tongues" (Amara , (n-d), p10)

Al-Ibrahimi focused on preparing the Algerian individual to spark a reformist revolution that would change the lived reality of that era, which heavily burdened the Algerian people. He relied on the



pillars of education and upbringing to preserve a society firmly attached to its religion, Arab identity, and nationalism. (Yahiaoui, 2022, 471). Al-Ibrahimi applied his reformist project throughout his life. He taught knowledge, religion, and ethics as an educator in Medina and Damascus, then as a teacher in Setif, and later in Tlemcen. Subsequently, he became the leader of a significant religious and cultural movement in Algeria. Understanding the importance of economy and finance, he did not neglect this aspect. He urged his followers and students to pay attention to economic matters. In the 1940s, he succeeded in encouraging major Algerian merchants to establish a large company to counter colonial monopolies at the time. (Al-Ibrahimi, 1997, p16)

Al-Ibrahimi focused on protecting national identity through Islam, Arabism, and the homeland, considering education a fundamental tool to combat ignorance and illiteracy. He made the Arabic language and the Quran key symbols of Algerian identity against French colonization. His revival project also extended to the economic sector, calling for the establishment of national projects to resist colonialism.

5. The Manifestations of Sheikh Mohamed Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi's Interest in National Identity

The Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars and Sheikh Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi played a pivotal role in protecting Algerian identity from colonial attempts to undermine it, by resisting the fight against the Arabic language, distorting Islam, and erasing national history. (Al-Zubairi, 1984, p57)

5.1 His Contributions in Defending Islam

The Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars focused primarily on reviving the Algerian identity, represented by its Arabism and

Islam, as a direct action, and supporting political national movements in an indirect way. (Al-Mili & Chareet, 1965, p227)

Islam was the cornerstone of Algerian society, as al-Ibrahimi stated: "Islam and Arabism are two pillars that hold this nation from falling. In separating Islam from governance, the first pillar is solidified, and in Arabic education, the Arab nationality is empowered...Colonization came to this land with three things to erase three things: Latin to overwhelm Arabism, the French language to eliminate Arabic, and Christianity to replace Islam..." (Al-Ibrahimi, 1997, p-p159-160). Religion was one of the main factors that allowed the Algerian people to preserve their identity despite all the forces of destruction that France used to attack their national character (Al-Mili & Chareet, 1965, p223). In another instance, he said: "French colonialism came to this land like an invading disease, bringing death and the causes of death...Colonialism is a scythe that fights the immune system in a healthy body, and in this land, it used its laws to abolish Islamic rulings." (Al-Ibrahimi, 1997, p-p46-47)

The correct understanding of Islam, in the view of Al-Ibrahimi, forms the cornerstone of his revivalist project. He dedicated his life to instilling it in the hearts of children through schools, strengthening it in the youth through cultural clubs, and reviving the minds of the elderly through mosques, so that the nation becomes solidly unified and capable of expelling the occupying colonizer. For Islam is the religion of liberation. (Al-Ibrahimi, 1997, p20)

One of the most significant truths that Al-Ibrahimi sought to establish and emphasize is that the Algerian people are Muslim, as evidenced by their history, present, and future. He states: "In this Algerian homeland, there exists an Arab Muslim people with a deep-rooted spiritual heritage, namely Islam and its ethics and morals, and with a material heritage built by their ancestors to preserve this legacy, represented by mosques with their structures and endowments...."



(Al-Ibrahimi, 1997, p46)

The Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars focused on reclaiming mosques that were converted by French colonization into churches or museums, and emphasized the need to free the endowments from foreign control, with the goal of enabling them to fulfill their social and cultural role in society.(Al-Zubairi, 1999, p-p203-204). Sheikh Mohamed Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi believed that colonial infringement upon religious constants, through the invasion of mosques and their replacement with churches, would weaken the religious conscience of the Algerian people. Hence, he devoted all his efforts to preserving the spiritual dimension through Islam, which he viewed as the cornerstone of the nation, uniting it under the banner of monotheism. (Yahiaoui, 2022, p472)

Imam Mohamed Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi addressed the issue of liberating Islam from the control of French colonialism, which considered its oversight of religion a fundamental matter, despite the fact that its constitution stipulated the secular nature of the state. While France responded to some of the social and political demands of the Algerians, it completely ignored their religious demands until it was expelled from Algeria. (Sharif, 2010, p110). In 1950, Sheikh Mohamed Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi devoted the entire year to promoting the ideology of the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulama. This ideology can be summarized as striving to liberate Algerian society from the effects of colonial invasion, which had employed various means to undermine the foundations of the Algerian state that had existed prior to the Treaty of July 5, 1830. (Al-Zubairi, 1999, p207)

From the above, it can be said that al-Ibrahimi's contributions in defending Islam reflect his deep awareness of the necessity to link Algerian identity with Islam and Arabism, He realized that French colonialism systematically targeted these elements, so he focused on

religious education and the Arabic language to confront these threats, He also emphasized the role of mosques and schools in strengthening national identity, which led him to dedicate his efforts to spreading the ideology of the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars and fostering national awareness across generations

.5.2 His Contributions to Defending the Arabic Language

Sheikh Al-Ibrahimi describes the Arabic language by stating: "The Arabic language is the official language of Islam, and this language has two undeniable rights over the nation... one being that it is the language of the nation's religion, and the second being that it is the language of its ethnicity, as the nation is of Arab descent. Preserving it is therefore a preservation of both the nation's ethnicity and its religion." The Arabic language is considered the language of the Qur'an. The colonial administration showed a degree of tolerance toward the existence of Quranic schools because the education there did not affect the surrounding environment. However, when scholars began teaching Arabic, which was essential to understanding the religion, the French authorities responded by implementing a series of repressive laws aimed at undermining the reformist movement and marginalizing the Arabic language, considering it a vital tool for delving into religion and fostering intellectual revival prior to any revolution. (Al-Zubairi, *The Algerian Revolution in Its First Year*, 1984, p-p50-51)

A significant conflict arose between the colonial administration and the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulama over the classification of Arabic as a foreign language in Algeria. The association performed admirably in this battle, which Sheikh Mohamed Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi described in issue 74 of *Al-Basa'ir* magazine (April 4, 1949) as a confrontation between Islam and Christianity, with its effects evident in two aspects: on our side, with relentless patience and unyielding firmness. (Balah, 2006, p271)



While the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulama only taught in Arabic and advocated for the freedom of education in Arabic and its formalization, it did not oppose Algerian students learning in French as well. In fact, it considered French as an essential tool for citizens' lives (Saad Allah, 2007, p334). However, it consistently rejected Algeria's joining the movement of French-speaking countries. The Association aimed, through all means, to promote the use of the Arabic language, a challenging task, as both classical and modern literary Arabic were foreign to the Algerians. (Ageron, 1982, p197)

Sheikh Al-Ibrahimi also focused on the fate of students who had completed their primary education in the Association's schools. He thought of establishing an institute to mark a new phase in their education. He sought to link this institute with Al-Zaytuna University (Sharif, 2010, p106). However, his fellow scholars agreed that the time was not suitable to launch such an initiative due to the financial situation of the nation and the ongoing crises. Despite this, Al-Ibrahimi was determined to carry out the project, and his efforts were ultimately successful. (Al-Ibrahimi, 1997, p19). The institute eventually enrolled about 700 students and twelve teachers. The studies at the institute served as a bridge to secondary education, leading to a certificate of eligibility, after which the students would proceed to Al-Zaytuna for their higher education or general secondary certificate. The Association also planned to establish a college in Constantine for graduates from Al-Zaytuna and other Islamic institutes. Through this institute (Saad Allah, 2007, p22). From this institute emerged men who later led the armed revolution. Some became martyrs, while others contributed to rebuilding the nation after independence, taking roles as leaders, senior state officials, ministers, ambassadors, governors, commissioners, military commanders, professors, and university directors. (Al-Ibrahimi, 1997, p12)

Al-Ibrahim sought to link Algeria's national and religious identity with Islam and Arabism, considering this essential for preserving both religion and ethnicity. He confronted French colonialism by developing Arab education and establishing the Ibn Badis Institute, which bridged primary education with higher education. He also contributed to reviving the Arabic language through articles and participation in scientific bodies, emphasizing that defending it was a crucial battle between Islam and Christianity in the face of its marginalization by colonial authorities

.5.3 His Contributions to Defending History

The Sheikh Al-Ibrahimi did not limit his defense to religion and Arab identity alone but extended his efforts to protect all elements and components of national identity without exclusion. One example of his defense of Algeria's glorious history can be seen in his response to France's attempts to distort history and claim Algeria as French, saying: "Algeria is not a nation that exists, but a nation in the making." (Belkarfa, 2021, p-p131-132). Sheikh Al-Ibrahimi also fought against the idea of assimilation by asserting Algeria's identity, clarifying its distinctive features that set it apart from French identity. His eloquent discourse as a knowledgeable historian highlighted Algeria's lineage and origins, rejecting assimilation and adoption, which he argued even religion opposes. He stated: "Algeria is not French, and it will never be French. These are the words of our forefathers, and our descendants will echo them; our predecessors died believing this, and our successors will meet God holding onto it." (Harech, 2021, p109). Members of the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars aimed to protect national heritage from being dissolved into European civilization, revitalize national spirit through youth education, foster social awareness, and combat false religious figures whom France attempted to use to weaken Algerian resolve. (Bouhouche, 1997, p244)



Al-Ibrahimi believed that nations consist of three dimensions: the geographical homeland, represented by Algeria's borders, which France seized in 1830; the intellectual homeland, represented by the Arabic language, which the colonizers sought to eradicate by banning Arabic education and establishing French-based schools; and finally, the spiritual homeland, represented by Islam, which serves as the spiritual system of Algerians. (Barouale & Makarma, 2019, p725)

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it becomes clear that Sheikh Mohamed al-Bashir al-Ibrahimi played a fundamental role in protecting Algeria's national identity from colonial erasure. His efforts to promote Islamic values and disseminate the Arabic language contributed to building a strong cultural foundation that served as a shield against colonial influence. Through his activities in education, advocacy, and reform, he helped raise awareness about the importance of preserving cultural and religious heritage, paving the way for the national liberation movement.

Al-Ibrahimi was not merely a religious scholar but a symbol of cultural resistance, as his works bridged the past with the present, emphasizing that national identity is forged through continuous effort. His legacy endures, inspiring new generations to uphold identity and culture as a means of resistance and survival.

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