

The Cultural Frame Of Reference Of Salafism And The Demand For Recognition

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Citation: Bendjebbar Belaid, et.al (2024), The Cultural Frame of Reference of Salafism and the Demand for Recognition, *Educational Administration : Theory and Practice*, 30(8), 442 -454
Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v30i8.7403

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

This article deals with what we consider to be an important issue, namely the religious-cultural frame of reference of the Salafi current in the context of its cultural-religious discussions with the official religious institution. It is trying to advance the process of gaining recognition through the discourse and perceptions it has disseminated in society in order to shape a new religious identity and form of religiosity. This is a religious culture based on four constitutive elements: First, faith, which interprets life and defines origins, where Salafism has debated the choice of the official religious institution represented by the Ash'ari creed. Secondly, the sharia (school of jurisprudence) to which the community must submit in order to achieve the goals of the creed, where we refer to the Salafi position on the tradition of the Maliki school. The third element is the rituals that represent the religious acts that apply the principles of faith and define the sacred spiritual and material time and place, at this level Salafism faces the choice of the official religious institution for Sufism as behaviour and practice. The fourth and final element is the human community that believes in the same beliefs and practices them, here we will present the issue of citizenship in the political culture of Salafism. Finally, we say that culture comes from all directions and absorbs from more than one source.

Keywords: Salafism, religious-cultural frame of reference, recognition, mosque, official religious institution.

Introduction

Today, we are faced with claims and currents that seek a connection with the religious values and references that call for science, knowledge and practice, after a separation from the religion and its references that built a civilisation for Muslims and created glory for them. Thus, in the Islamic experience, the text remains the correcting ruler, taking into account the characteristic of preservation with which it has distinguished itself. Therefore, there must be a framework of reference values that directs and guides the movement of man in his actions and achievements. Since man is a relative being subjected to various hardships, it was necessary for this system to come from other than him, and there is no one who knows the absolute knowledge of the universe and beings except their Creator, may He be glorified and exalted.

The strong and central presence of the religious cultural reference is also linked to the decline and decline of intellectual production that approaches social reality, and this has led the internal structures of society to work on themselves and seek support in the awareness of what is coming in, especially with regard to religious discourse and practice, as these choices are influenced by the scientific level of the actors and their representation of the referential frameworks of religion. Contemporary field research has shown the emergence of a trend towards religious individualism in the practice and cultural acquisition of religious knowledge, without reference to institutional religiosity. The British sociologist of religion, Professor Brian Turner, believes that "individuals in contemporary societies (at all levels of scientific and social status) will maintain their beliefs and faith without being associated with, and without belonging to, religious institutions", that is, abandoning

institutional references and focusing on personal references, neighbourhood and virtual spaces. Moreover, as societies progress and develop, the local culture changes and is mixed with another foreign one, and the interpretations of this change differ. The author Raed Al-Samhuri, in his book "Critique of the Salafi Discourse", states that the prevailing thought today is the product of various inherited cultural and social components, but the deepest influence on the collective mind of the nation is undoubtedly religious thought. Many Islamic movements are the intellectual reference and foundation of the collective mind of the nation, which responds to them with enthusiasm, is deeply affected by them, listens to them with awe, and regards them with reverence (Al-Samhuri, 2010).

Salafism considers itself the sole owner of the cultural capacity and the basic scientific reference for the rationalisation of extremist currents. Therefore, Salafi discourse seeks recognition within society by establishing mechanisms of power, authority of speech and authority of reaction in various spaces such as the mosque and virtual networks. The state has also shown interest in the mosque, making it an official institution, after it had previously been a stage for ideological and political conflict and a platform from which political Islam movements benefited between the 1970s and 1990s. The state's interest in mosques and their nationalisation increased after the emergence of different religious currents that competed to use this space to spread their culture and religious references. The authority has thus sought to integrate the mosque and the official religious institution as a whole, making them part of the authority and its mechanisms.

Between those who see religion as an instrument of reform and those who see religion as the subject of reform, i.e. reform must first address religion, the intended reform of religion is not Islam in general, but rather the religious currents' conceptions of the nature of social reform and its steps. The Salafists acknowledge that their thought, through its early pioneers such as Ibn Badis, Al-Ibrahimi and Al-Okbi, played an effective role in the national movement in Algeria by spreading religious awareness and culture and preserving identity through the teaching of the Arabic language and the Koran.

According to the Salafists, this historical fact has been obscured by the authorities and the political system through their official religious discourse, which has been dominated by a language of exclusion and disregard for the prominent role of Salafism in the stability of Algerian society by resisting currents of westernisation, Shiism and extremism¹.

The Salafi sheikhs say that the official discourse aims to distort their image by presenting some of what the authorities consider to be a lack of patriotism, extremism and intolerance, such as the issue of standing for the national anthem and the flag, their disagreement with the Maliki school of jurisprudence and their objection to the Sufi orders. The Salafis claim that these issues, which are used to condemn them, are in fact correct issues based on rational and textual evidence, as they are among the common characteristics of the Sunni people. The Salafis do not completely reject Sufism, but rather object to some of the foreign practices within it, and this is considered one of the controversial issues that is not exclusive to the Salafis, but is also present among the Sufis themselves, as many Sufis, jurists and Ash'arites have different positions regarding these practices or the true meaning of Sufism.

The Salafi movement classifies the conflict with the official religious institution on the basis of certain issues that are the result of a scientific dispute or a value judgement on the actions of some ordinary Salafis, which in no way represent the Salafi position. In addition, there are doctrinal enmities that some opponents of Salafism have exploited to tarnish its reputation in public opinion. The most prominent of these issues and matters are:

1. The position on following the Maliki school of jurisprudence
2. The position on Sufism
3. The position on the Ash'ari creed
4. Issues related to citizenship, which are summarised in The flag and the national anthem.

The Salafi scientific movement objects to the position of the official religious institution towards them, which they consider to be highly unjust. They consider themselves to be the sole holders of scientific competence and the fundamental reference for rationalising extremist currents, especially on the issue of excommunication (takfir). The Salafist movement has made a significant contribution to the suppression of strife in Algeria and to the success of the reconciliation called for by the Algerian state. They continue to work to maintain stability and promote an atmosphere of calm.

Their role in promoting behavioural virtues and raising the level of religiosity, away from political conflicts and narrow personal ambitions, is known and observed and can only be denied by a denier. As some Salafist preachers say, the blockade imposed on them by the state, by excluding them from the media and restricting them in the mosques, will sooner or later have many negative consequences for the state. This is because the other groups that employ them in religious work do not have the depth and breadth of presence in Algerian society that the Salafists have. The Salafis are more widespread and their academic discourse is more deeply rooted.

They alone have the capacity to address the issues that threaten the stability of the country with a strong and effective doctrinal and scholarly approach. In this way, they can match, if not exceed, the authority and discourse of the state and its official discourse. Given this role and their real weight in society, as well as their

position in preserving the country's stability by filling the void suffered by the official religious institution in the field of preaching and combating widespread social ills, it has become a matter of justice to grant them a presence in the media and mosques commensurate with this position and role.

The Salafists are trying to take advantage of the modernist discourse that is being exported, which advocates freedom, recognition of the other and other discourses. They demand that all Sunni religious groups present in Algeria be represented within the official religious institution and in the media, as long as their discourse falls within the common ground and does not provoke sectarianism or division. Here we can clearly see the level of parity that other religious currents and discourses have reached with the official discourse, to the point where the Salafi current is demanding its most certain right, given its merit in stabilising the situation. Therefore, isolating and excluding this current will not serve the state in any way.

As for the relationship between Salafism and other groups and currents, they consider the existing disagreements as a natural matter, but on the condition that they do not go beyond the realm of reason and acquire a tone of sharpness. The Salafi sheikhs acknowledge that if the official religious institution has a genuine desire and a correct vision for a beneficial and lasting relationship with the Salafis, in line with the interest of Algeria and the Algerian people in strengthening unity and social cohesion within the framework of the Sharia, then this matter must be reviewed, especially since the (scholarly) Salafis are qualified and moderate preachers who have served Algeria in various fields and have credibility on the street and acceptance among the people.

Salafism and the demand for recognition:

The Salafist discourse seeks recognition from society and the authorities by establishing mechanisms of capability, power of speech and power of reaction (capable, pouvoir dire, pouvoir réagir, dire quelque chose the meaning- sur quelque chose -the reference-) (Ricoeur, 2005). It exports a discourse on questions and issues in society in order to maintain referentiality. The religious culture acquired by individuals from the discourses of the religious currents present in society determines their choice of religious references. We have noticed that the religious cultural references that are most readily accepted are those that are closest to the practice and translation of religious culture into daily practice, which answer the daily questions of individuals. This is what we have observed in recent years through our study of a religious current such as Salafism, where this group has been able to bring its religious referentiality closer to the local community, whether this referentiality is related to the persons, i.e. the sheikhs and scholars of this current, or whether it is in the depths of the written heritage, where there has been a significant influx of religious references to construct the religious culture that will establish a religious identity within the local community.

Salafism also has the ability to narrate (pouvoir raconter) (Ricoeur, 2005) by explaining fatwas (religious rulings) and jurisprudential opinions through evidence or text, which gives the discourse power and authority over the recipient. As a result, Salafism disseminates its opinion and discourse in a different way within society, leaving it to be circulated and transmitted by others. The power of discourse lies in what Paul Ricoeur calls "la possibilité de raconter autrement et de se laisser raconter par les autres" (Ricoeur, 2005).

Islamic history and sources, in all their diversity, are available to everyone, but the challenge and the stake remain in how to present them to society in a different and distinct way. The ability to speak and discourse will provide the ability to deal and interact with a specific situation. The Salafi discourse has the power of speech based on a rigid discourse through an arsenal of texts that makes the recipient either awestruck by this discourse and their ability to interact will be minimal, ending in submission to this discourse, or conversely, their ability to interact will be high and they will provide a reading of the meaning around what has been said about a particular issue or matter. The discourse is addressed to an individual who is capable of answering, responding, questioning, exchanging and engaging in dialogue, because the act of discourse takes place with other agents who can either support the discourse or stand in its way and prevent its reach and continuation. Salafism in Algeria today demands recognition based on the principle of mutuality (la mutualité) and reciprocity (la réciprocité) (Ricoeur, 2005). This exchange is not freely given, it is demanded, and this demand is not without conflict and struggle, since the idea of the struggle for recognition is at the heart of modern social relations. The struggle is to achieve equality and justice and to limit the role of negative actions and practices such as contempt, humiliation and neglect, which lead to violence in all its physical and psychological forms.

When Salafism struggles for recognition by the authorities for the services that its discourse has provided and continues to provide, it is also implicitly struggling to preserve the identity of this discourse and to anchor it in society. This is why we always find it in conflict with society, with other religious currents, sects and discourses. This is what Hegel called the "engaged struggle" (la lutte engagé) (HONNETH, 2013), which we call the "permanent struggle" (la lute Permanente).

Through field observations and interactions with the Salafi current, we see that they adopt strategies to gain recognition from the local community or even at the national level. I had the experience of attending Friday sermons between 2013 and 2014 in the city of Algiers, in the Bab El-Oued district, in the Three Caves neighbourhood, where the Abu Dhar Al-Ghifari mosque is located. The mosque's administration (with a Salafi imam) organises a knowledge circle every Tuesday. The choice of this day has two meanings: the first is to avoid Mondays, usually a fasting day for some, as the circle is held between Maghrib and Isha prayers. The second

explanation is inspired by Islamic history and refers to the scholarly circles and debates that took place in the presence of Al-Ma'mun during his caliphate. This circle is considered to be a purely scientific lesson directed at the people, as it deals with their daily lives, whether it be through rulings on trade, repairing social relations, honouring parents, and other topics studied and derived from reading the book "AlAdab Al-Moufrad" by Al-Bukhari.

As for the occasion of the Friday prayer, the Salafi discourse benefits from it for more mobilisation and proximity to the community, as it is known among the people that the Salafis excel in practising the Friday lesson (the chair for the general public). But in order to apply the instructions of the supervising ministry, i.e. the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments, and not to fall into the category of innovation, they practice what they consider more influential than the lesson, which may interest some and not others. On this occasion, the Salafi sheikh opens the door for fatwas, receiving written fatwas and those presented orally and directly by the participants on topics related to their religious practices and daily life. This makes their discourse more present and recognised by the community in the form of fatwas and jurisprudential or creedal opinions.

The birth of what we see is the result of the experience of contempt that Salafism has been subjected to in the local sphere by all parties of society, whether the defenders of the religious reference or those who carry older and more entrenched religious ideologies in society, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Sufism.

If recognition is granted, the logical consequence will be to achieve integration into society, resulting from the acceptance of the individuals of that society and the authority of that thought or ideology and its practices. We would like to propose an idea in the form of a question, that is: Is the participation of the Salafi discourse in public life and the critical social issues related to the religious aspect that has a relationship with politics due to the fact that it is a thought and a form of religiosity that ensures independence from the prevailing religious thought in the general society, which gives confidence in presenting ideas and perceptions in the public sphere? Because we believe that the Salafi thought or the Salafi current, especially in the city of Ghilizane, has raised individuals on the basis that they possess the religious truth, which is not debatable, and the validity of religious practice, which is based on a strong reference in the Islamic heritage, which is the reference of the understanding of the companions and the righteous predecessors of the text and the great ability to translate this understanding into daily practice. On this basis, we can rely on the thesis that the social conflict is based on the conflict for the achievement of recognition, and this social conflict, in our opinion, is clothed in the garment of a moral and religious conflict.

As requested in the field, the feeling of contempt towards the worship practices, appearance and dress of the Salafists on the part of the local community has generated or increased the obstinacy and rigidity of the youth in their struggle to spread this ideology. This is because the issue has entered the realm of the struggle for intellectual existence and social presence, and the recovery of respect (THOMASSET, 2014, p. 39) in a local space firmly rooted in beliefs and rituals.

We find that Salafism in Relizane has passed through three spaces of struggle for recognition: the family space, the local community space, and the local authority space. This involves demanding recognition for the formation of the association or, in other words, negotiating and settling to gain recognition of the new religious identity within the local community (THUDEROZ, 2007, p. 9).

Here we see an implicit mutual recognition between the local authority, the wilaya (province), and the Salafists. This recognition manifests itself in the Salafists' acceptance of the positive laws governing the creation of associations, which can be seen as a concession on their part, but a justified one in terms of obedience to authority. These laws are imposed by the authority to organise the daily life of individuals and are not seen as competing with the Sharia. On the other hand, the local authority recognises the presence of this movement in the local space and its ability to confront some local ideas and currents by granting accreditation in a short period of time, based on informal relationships (personal acquaintances of the association's managers with some of its founders).

Participatory recognition (la participation) based on equal opportunities to seek social esteem according to Nancy Fraser (CAILLE, 2004, p16), and this participation is embodied in the framing of religious discourse, considering that Salafism has a discourse characterised by depth, authenticity and a certain degree of happiness (HEINICH, 2007, p130). Thus, the concern of Salafism has become the transition from physical presence and clarity to pure social clarity (CAILLE, 2004, p. 15). However, we would like to raise a question: does Salafism, in its quest for recognition, actually recognise difference (la différence)? (CAILLE, 2004, p. 16) Salafism values this difference on the basis that it is a universal decree, not a legal decree, meaning that God has decreed that there should be a difference, quoting the noble verse: "And if your Lord had willed, He could have made mankind one community, but they will not cease to differ. Except those to whom your Lord has bestowed Mercy, and for that He has created them". (Hud 118/119), and the hadith of division "My community will be divided". However, Salafism introduces this difference into the conflict between Sunnah and innovation (al-'Urawi, 2008), and the necessity of clarifying, advising and responding to the opponent within a specific methodology invented by the hadith scholars, which is defamation and modification. Sheikh al-Albani's fatwas (religious rulings) and some of his writings and positions on certain thinkers and preachers have sparked extensive debates and discussions in religious scholarly circles, especially when he was a teacher of hadith

(prophetic tradition) at the Islamic University in Saudi Arabia in the 1960s. We know that this period was crucial for the Islamic call and its activists at the international level, as it witnessed the persecution of the Muslim Brotherhood and its symbols by the nationalist Nasserist regime, including the execution of the Egyptian Islamic thinker Sayyid Qutb. As a result, Saudi Arabia became an intellectual and geographical refuge for this current, which infiltrated several social spheres, such as the educational and religious spheres in Saudi Arabia, even reaching the university.

During this period, the letters of Hasan al-Banna and the writings of Sayyid Qutb were the references from which the intellectual and ideological religious movement was taught, which was in conflict with the nationalist ideas and the Nasserist current. This required the presence of a more civilised intellectual discourse and references rather than legal ones. It was in this intellectual atmosphere that al-Albani emerged to say about these references and their intellectual heritage that they were not scholars, in order to deprive them of the status of being followed scholars (references) in a way of criticising and modifying the Hadith. This aroused the indignation of the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood current that had infiltrated various religious and educational institutions in Saudi Arabia. Then came his fatwa, which contradicted the Hanbali reference in Saudi Arabia through his book "The Muslim Woman's Dress", in which he allowed the woman to uncover her face. With this fatwa, he contradicted and confronted the highest fatwa institution in the kingdom, the Council of Senior Scholars, one of whose members, Bakr Abu Zayd, wrote a book, "Guarding Virtue", to discuss him. This eventually led to his expulsion from Saudi Arabia after these debates in which he tried to overturn the logic of references in Islamic society in favour of hadith, traditionalists and the method of criticism and modification².

We can say that the factor that drove Salafism to enter the arena of conflict in order to gain recognition was perhaps that cultural injustice (injustice culturelle) adopted by the political authority in supporting the discourse and religious (Sufi) ideology - especially after emerging from the crisis of the Black Decade - over another religious culture, which is Salafism, which thought it represented the legitimate party for this support - and in this way Salafism was subjected to another kind of injustice, which is economic injustice. In this way, Salafism was subjected to another type of injustice, which is economic injustice, so that the Sufi current receives material privileges from the political authority. According to Nancy Fraser, these two types of injustice (cultural and economic) are constantly interacting. (ROULLEAU-BERGER, 2007, p. 136)

The quest for recognition by the authority is based on the vocabulary of recognition (vocabulaire de la reconnaissance) - recognition of the self, the centre and the role (we helped the state to eliminate terrorism, we have a discourse far from politics, we have the ability to convince, people listen to us, our discourse is profound and scientific, etc.)³.

The Position on the Options of Authority

1- The teaching of Imam Malik

Every thought, in every field, always and forever depends on "predecessor" models to which it refers in acquiring and transmitting knowledge, or we can say that the thought is correct only by relying on the previous models of knowledge. The way sought by the obligated or practicing believer to acquire divine knowledge is the way of mediation through the duties imposed by the Shari'a, practices based on the rule of reporting, which makes the practitioner or believer believe in what others (references) have informed him, because this other has accustomed him to truthfulness, or because there is no obstacle to believing him. (Taha Abdel-Rahman, 1997, pp. 70-74)

As the belief in the virtue of the work increases, the listener begins to search for principles or foundations in order to establish the evidence of the belief itself on them and to correct the inference from them, until the belief increases again by virtue of the continuation of the work, the obligated person searches for deeper and more comprehensive principles and foundations than the previous ones, The more the belief is rooted in a matter, the more the listener is sure of his tools in this matter, and it is known that the considered belief is the one that carries its owner to work or, in our expression, to engage. (Taha Abdel-Rahman, 1997, p. 74) In the matter of ordinary imitation, that is, working on the basis of what others have said while limiting the practical significance of this statement to the apparent movements, the Ash'arites have warned against imitating the deceased scholars (i.e., making them a reference in practice and in the performance of rituals). They have called for consulting the living among them and renewing this consultation whenever a new issue arises, even if it is the same issue (linking new issues to living references who know or are informed about the nature of these issues and their social, political, economic and cultural characteristics, among other things), and for acting on the fatwa even if it changes in relation to the same issue. Al-Baqillani has a famous saying: "Whoever imitates should only imitate the living, and it is not permissible to imitate the dead".

This suggests that the distinction between imitation and following is not merely the acquisition of evidence in the abstract, as is often said, but rather the acquisition of evidence from the living. The connection between the provision of evidence and life (in the construction of authority) means that observation of the work of the living scholar is crucial to the acceptance of the evidence, for without it the evidence would lose its intellectual validity and practical usefulness. Therefore, the condition of succession is the living observation of the work of the living

(Taha Abdu al-Rahman, 1997, p. 89). The anxieties of revival and the concerns of reform tend to identify authorities other than those associated with traditional social structures.

In the context of illustrating the practical construction of authority, Taha Abdu al-Rahman cites the example of the Sufi Master Teacher and states that the stage of (recognition/cognition of) the Sufi path is characterised by the presence of a (living Master Teacher), (i.e. a living reference and meaning of life for the Qur'an, Sunnah, texts and practice).

1. That he lives the meanings of the revealed Book and the purified Sunnah through his actions and words, and that these meanings come to life only when they are embodied in his behaviour and represented for observation through his limbs.
2. That he has directly observed the behaviour of a teacher, which he himself has learned in the same way from another.
3. That his behaviour becomes worthy of being imitated by others.
4. That he takes over the practice of religious education, correcting and purifying it.
5. Travelling through cities and countryside, settling in areas that need this education because of the emergence of heresies or the dullness of religious sentiment.
6. That he should endeavour to approach religious practice and adapt it to the objective circumstances of his call. (Taha Abdu al-Rahman, 1997, p. 96)

Most of the Salafi preachers interviewed believe that the judgement on Salafism based on its position on the jurisprudential schools in general and their tools for it was made due to confusion, lack of precision and misunderstanding of the scholarly debates and positions, especially those that took place between Sheikh alAlbani and Sheikh Muhammad Said Ramadan al-Buti regarding school affiliation (madhabiyah), since Salafism is a Sunni group that greatly reveres the Prophetic Hadith and its centrality in legislation and the well-known method of the people of Hadith in jurisprudence. Salafism rejects school affiliation (madhabiyah) in jurisprudence because it is a form of condemned imitation (taqlid). Salafism also emphasises that the four Sunni Islamic schools of jurisprudence are a great and tremendous asset for Muslims that must be preserved and developed by eliminating sectarian affiliations. A close study of the jurisprudential works of the Salafis, led by Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al-Qayyim, is sufficient to understand the Salafi current's position on the jurisprudential schools.

Some sheikhs admit that the Salafi preachers in Algeria do not oppose the Maliki school, but rather serve it greatly by trying to renew it from within, using its own means, linking it to its athari (traditionalist) evidence and defending it in scholarly forums. In fact, many of them issue fatwas (legal rulings) based on it for the common people in Algeria and call on other Salafi preachers outside Algeria to take into account the specificity of Islamic countries and their scholarly references.

Among the most important works that played a role in defining the Maliki school and its foundations in various sciences are the efforts made by these advocates in extracting the manuscripts of the Maliki school, meticulously editing them, publishing them and teaching them. Sheikh Farkouss, who has made great efforts to familiarise students of knowledge with the Maliki references in the principles of jurisprudence, has a distinguished record of service and teaching these references, as attested by his students and disciples. Similarly, Shaykh Ibn Hanafiyyah Zayn al-'Abidin, whose efforts in this field have been acknowledged, has said Some Salafi proponents in Algeria insist that their position on the Maliki school is known through their stance on the school's founder, Imam Malik, whom they consider to be one of the great figures of the Salaf (pious predecessors) and the Imams of the Sunnah. They base many of their scholarly positions in creed, jurisprudence and methodology on his statements, as he is a reference for them in the sciences of Hadith, the methodology of criticism and the rules for studying the texts of the divine names and attributes⁴. In fact, they even adopt his famous quote "The latter part of this nation will not be corrected except by what has corrected its former part" as a slogan for their approach.

It is worth pausing to examine the Salafis' understanding of reform, as they see the problem of reform at the level of defining its scope and steps, because the conflict is intense between those who see religion as an instrument of reform and those who see it as the subject of reform. If all those who believe that religion, specifically Islam in its general characteristics and comprehensive reading, is the only capable and qualified tool for reform (which is, of course, the Salafi view) agree on this, then we must admit that religion as such does not exist, because we only have readings of Islam and, consequently, religious conceptions of the nature of reform.

The Salafi perspective on reform is that it is a necessity and a universal norm that preserves the survival of the human race on earth. God Almighty said: "If only there had been among the generations before you people of integrity who would have forbidden corruption in the land, except for a few of those whom We saved from among them. But those who did wrong pursued the luxuries they were given, and they were criminals" (Hud, 116). The Salafis interpret "and their people were reformers" to mean that they were reformers among themselves in the exercise of rights. God would not have destroyed them for disbelief alone, unless corruption was added to it, just as He destroyed the people of Shu'ayb for cheating in measures and the people of Lot for

sodomy. Because the matter is of such grave importance in determining the fate and future of the nation, reform is not the concern of a particular group, but the responsibility of all active forces in society, first and foremost the scholars.

In the Salafi conception, reform is a comprehensive process for all aspects of religion (not politics, nor society, nor the economy). The Salafis make it clear that the meaning of reforming religion is the meaning of renewal, not innovation and change. However, it depends primarily on reforming the elites who carry the vision of reform in all areas. That is, by reforming the religion of the elites, reality can be reformed. Naturally, this reform is based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah, as opposed to polytheism and innovation. This is the jurisprudence of the Salafi reform.

The statement of Imam Malik (any [scholar] can be taken and refuted except the owner of this tomb) is their slogan in condemning blind imitation, and they have based the following principle on it: There is no Imam among the Imams of the Muslims, except that he has statements and actions that are not to be followed, although he is not to be blamed for them, and the statements and actions of the Imams that contradict the Sunnah are considered to be matters of independent reasoning (ijtihād), and it is not permissible for him to oblige people to follow them. Similarly, one of the contemporary Salafi scholars, Ibn 'Uthaymin, says: (The statement of the scholar is argued for, but not argued by).

As for his [Imam Malik's] statement (The [divine] establishment is known, and the [divine] way is unknown, and belief in it is obligatory, and asking about it is an innovation), it is the foundation on which they build their creed regarding the [divine] attributes.

The Salafis admit that they have defended and supported the jurisprudential school of Imam Malik and its status in the Islamic heritage from outside the school, as did the giants of Salafism such as Ibn Taymiyyah, who said (And these sciences of Quranic exegesis, Hadith, and giving rulings, and other sciences, it is not known that the people took from al-'Umari the ascetic [Malik] what is mentioned of them, so how can this be compared to Malik in knowledge and the people's journey to him?), (The testimony of the people of Medina is either a conclusive proof or a strong proof or a preponderant proof). On this basis, some Salafi scholars in Algeria acknowledged that this was a misunderstanding and a lack of distinction between the issues of calling for the renewal of religion and the elevation of the jurisprudential schools and the condemnation of being bound to a school in an absolute sense.

When we asked about the cultural influence, especially in certain customs such as dress in Saudi Arabia, and the issuance of religious edicts (fatwas) from there, some scholars admitted that there is a cultural alienation, and this is due to the low academic level of some of those who belong to the Salafi methodology, where they mix between religion and customs, and between the religious constants and the secondary jurisprudential interpretations. Some of them mistakenly thought that wearing the Gulf dress and greeting with the phrase "May God welcome you" came from the Sunnah (the tradition of the Prophet), and this is also seen as an influence of some sheikhs on their students in their eagerness to obtain the approval of Saudi scholars. Some Salafi scholars also acknowledge that Algeria has scholars who have served the religion through jurisprudence, hadith, language, the Qur'an and the science of logic during the long periods of Islamic history in Tunisia, Morocco, Timbuktu (Mali), Sudan, Egypt, the Levant and the Hijaz. They blame this ignorance and lack of knowledge among today's religiously committed youth on their lack of knowledge of the Algerian scientific personality and its history, because the official institutions have not played their role in this regard. The Algerian Salafi scholarship acknowledges that there is a total and precise absence of planning by the state to revive the Maliki school of jurisprudence to a level that corresponds to the conditions of the time and the conditions of a stronger scientific arena than its current state. We have seen only a few renovations from them that do not rise to the level of the challenges, but their role is almost limited to serving the zawiyas (Sufi lodges) that have funded them, while the mosques are left to the pockets of the citizens.

It was their duty to take care of the mosques, because they were the common place of all the religious components of Algerian society, unlike the Zawiyas (Sufi lodges), which played a pioneering and wonderful role in preserving religion and identity during the French colonial period, because France used to besiege the few mosques and prevent their construction, and for no other reason. However, these zawiyas still represent only one sect (the Sufis) of Algerians, not all. The Salafis also do not want the religious institution to be a prominent servant of the personal religious beliefs of the ruler, but rather for the benefit of Algerian society as a whole. They do not want this important institution to serve only one sect.

One of the scholars surprised us with this answer about dress and dialect: (To know that Salafism has nothing to do with dress and dialect and the customs of each region, as long as they do not contradict the Sharia, we must mention the concept of Sunnah among the Salafis. Let us hear from the greatest Salafi scholar who was distorted by the wrong practices of his followers. Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, may God have mercy on him, said in Majmu' al-Fatawa (21/181): "It is well known that what God created in the rest of the earth in terms of food, clothing, means of transport and shelter, not every type of it was present in the Hijaz. The Prophet, may God's prayers and peace be upon him, did not eat every kind of food and fruit, nor did he wear every kind of clothing. Then, among the Muslims in other countries such as Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Yemen, and the Maghreb, there are foods and clothes that they do not have to assume that it is a Sunnah of the Prophet, may God's prayers and peace be upon him, not to use them because he did not eat or wear the like of them.)⁵

2- The Problem of Dependence in Issuing Fatwas:

Some of the Salafi call scholars in Algeria, such as Sheikh Farkous, Abdul Majeed Jum'ah and Izzedine Ramadani, have written that the problem of issuing fatwas (Islamic legal rulings) and dependence, especially on Saudi Arabia, stems from the problematic nature of the work of the official institution. When the Algerian youth finds that their country does not care about the Algerian cultural personality by relying in the teaching of religious sciences on the excellent books written by Algerian scholars in various fields, including highly precise scientific texts, with the weakness of the imams of the mosques in rooting and citing evidence due to the weakness of their training, especially in the sciences of Hadith (the sayings and traditions of the Prophet), and their apparent inability to elevate the Maliki school of jurisprudence in comparison with the incoming fatwas and other schools of thought, and to link it to its archaeological and historical heritage, the Algerian youth finds that the country does not care about the Algerian cultural personality by relying in the teaching of religious sciences on the excellent books written by Algerian scholars in various fields, including highly precise scientific texts, and linking it to its archaeological evidence, and a negative rigidity towards what was written in the era of weakness and decline from the margins, which have harmed the beauty and strength of the Maliki school, he resorts to what he finds in the field and believes that it is correct because the incoming fatwa is adorned with hadith and explained, while the fatwa he receives in his country is entirely based on the renewed imitation without its proofs and evidence.

In addition to the cultural weakness in the personality of some Salafi preachers and their need for the approval of the Hijazi sheikhs, without which they cannot preside over the Salafi masses, some sheikhs point out that from this previously presented logic there emerges a suspicion that derives its substance and is nourished by both sides, the Salafis and the official religious institution, which is the concept of "Algerianisation". By Algerianisation, I do not mean the well-known Islamic group, but rather the Algerian character that is shaped by the customs, traditions and nature of Algerian society and its particularities. If taking into account the specificity of Algerian society, its customs, political, social and economic realities when issuing a fatwa (religious decree) is a praiseworthy Algerianisation, since the Sharia calls for the application of the legal decree to what is appropriate to reality and to follow customs if they do not contradict the Sharia, then the introduction of fatwas from outside Algeria that contradict this criterion is a danger to the Islamic call itself.

The Salafi sheikhs and preachers send a recommendation or advice to the leaders of the official religious institution, calling on them to reconsider their positions towards the Salafis and to seek their support, especially since among the Salafis there are imams and sheikhs with the greatest knowledge and expertise in the jurisprudence of Imam Malik, and they have excelled in teaching it in their mosques. If they receive support from the official religious institution, they will be able to serve this important heritage by extracting the manuscripts and jurisprudential references written by Algerians in various Islamic countries.

3- The Salafi position towards the Ash'ari creed:

The Salafi scholars in Algeria limit the ongoing dispute between them and the Ash'ari creed, or as they call the Ash'arites, to a scientific dispute that is almost entirely scientific in terms of language on the issues of names and attributes. These are theoretical scientific issues, and neither party in this era has been able to escape the consequences of the scholars who have written about them. Moreover, both creeds fall within the Sunni framework that lies between the Mu'tazilites and the Jabriyya.

Although the Salafis do not agree with the Ash'arites in their creed regarding the names and attributes, and some issues of names and rulings, and some discussions of fate and ability, the Salafis emphasise two important issues from their perspective:

1- The dispute between the Salafis and the Ash'arites is not an aberrant or strange dispute, for even the Ash'arites are not a single school of thought, but rather a group of schools that can only be united by their love for and allegiance to Ash'ari. The Ash'arites, such as al-Ash'ari, al-Baqillani, Ibn Mujahid, and Ibn Furak, in one school of thought, and the Ash'arites inclined towards the Mu'tazilite school, such as al-Juwayni and al-Ghazali, in another school, and the Ash'arites inclined towards philosophy, such as al-Shahrastani, al-Razi, al-Aiji, and al-Baydawi, in a third school, and the later Ash'arites, such as al-Subki and al-Sanusi, in a fourth school, and the keepers of the Ash'arites, such as al-Bayhaqi, the Hafiz Ibn Hajar, Abu Dhar al-Farawi and alQushayri, in a fifth school, which the Salafis classify as the Ash'ari school closest to their own, because it is the school with the least interpretation. It should also be remembered that the theological schools emerged during the Abbasid Caliphate (132 AH-750 CE/656 AH-1258 CE).

2- The disagreement between the Salafis and the Ash'arites should not be taken out of context. The verified Imams of the Salaf (pious predecessors) were not prejudiced against the Ash'arites, as some Salafis assume. This is the view of the sheikhs in relation to the ordinary Salafis who have adopted this approach from the books of Saudi scholars and preachers who, according to some Salafi preachers in Algeria, have exaggerated in their method of criticism and validation. For example, Shaykh al-Islam al-Sabuni was an associate of Muhammad al-Juwayni and his group, and Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allah have mercy on him, despite the extensive campaign he waged against them in the context of academic discussion, was fair to them. He distinguished between their errors in theoretical matters and their leadership in religion, and he forbade prejudice against them and condemnation of them without qualification, and he denigrated the virtues with which they served

religion. They magnified the Sunnah, but they fell into heresy due to a flaw in their conception and corrupt premises that they thought were correct. The true Salafi, who speaks with knowledge, establishes their excuse, but explains their mistakes with knowledge and evidence. Salafism acknowledges that its doctrine is based on the great state in the history of the Maghreb, the Almoravid state, which the Almohads, especially their historian al-Baydhaq, who is Abu Bakr ibn 'Ali al-Sanhaji, criticised as anthropomorphists.

4- Disagreement over the meaning of Sufism:

Salafism recognises that the science of conduct (ilm al-suluk) is one of the foundations of faith and the principles of religion. Ibn Taymiyyah said in the collection of his fatwas (the book of conduct): "These are concise words about the works of the heart, which may be called 'the stations and states', and they are among the fundamentals of faith and the principles of religion, such as love of Allah and His Messenger, trust in Allah, sincerity of religion towards Him, gratitude and patience towards His decree, fear of Him and hope in Him, and what follows from them. So the Salafi position on the science of conduct or the works of the heart or the refined discourses or the stages and states or Sufism based on these meanings is that they are among the foundations of faith and the principles of religion. What is as such cannot be opposed or condemned, but it is either obligatory or recommended for all Muslims.

The Salafi tradition notes that this esteemed science has been infiltrated by gross innovations (bid'ah), resulting in a Sunni Sufism and another innovated (bid'ah) Sufism of the philosophical mystics such as the Illuminati (al-Ishraq), the Stoics, and Shi'a Sufism, among others. Therefore, a clear distinction must be made between Sunni Sufism based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, such as the Sufism of Shaykh Abu Madyan Shu'ayb al-Ansari and Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, and the innovated (bid'ah) Sufism imported from the philosophies of India and Greece, such as the Sufism of Ibn Sina, al-Suhrawardi, Ibn 'Arabi, and al-Ghazali.

As an example of this innovative (bid'ah) Sufism, some Salafi works cite the following: "The Alexandrians said: Man is the highest degree of existence in the lower world, and he is like the link between the world of pure spirituality and the world of matter; his body is of the sensible nature, and his intellect is a light borrowed from the higher light. Thus he is a mediator between the two worlds, looking with one of his faces towards the Divine and with the other towards the natural world, being in it but not of it".

Ibn al-'Arabi in (Fusus al-Hikam) said: "You are a union of two essences, one of which is problematic, delimited, quantified, moving, stationary and divisible, and the other is different from the first in these attributes and does not share with it the reality of the self. It is reached by the intellect and shunned by the imagination. For you have gathered [within yourself] from the world of creation and the world of command, for your mind is from the command of your Lord, and your hand is from the creation of your Lord.

There are two points of contention between the Salafi and Sufi traditions:

1. The points of disagreement are of two types - scholarly issues and practical issues. Scholarly issues include disagreement over the nature of annihilation. The Salafis consider the annihilation of existence to be similar to the philosophy of the unity of existence associated with the Stoics. The annihilation of testimony, where one loses the ability to discriminate, is considered excusable, as exemplified by the statement "There is nothing in the cloak but God". However, the annihilation of the will is considered correct and praiseworthy.
2. The second type are practical issues related to seeking help from the dead, intercession and pilgrimages to shrines. While the Salafis categorically state that seeking help from the dead is a form of polytheism, similar to sacrificing or praying to them, they do not necessarily declare the practitioner to be a polytheist because of their principle of excusing ignorance. Ibn Taymiya's writings on these matters are elaborated in his work "The Reply to al-Bakri" (here the Salafis refute the extremists in declaring takfir).

The Salafis and the question of citizenship:

The Salafis have long sought a form of citizenship based on the precepts of Islamic law, which recognises the political realities of a nation's strength, weakness and incapacity. They regard the implementation of Sharia as an unattainable obligation, and therefore legally void, because they distinguish between the establishment of Sharia as the religion of the state and the actual implementation of its rulings. In their view, the implementation of Shari'a requires first defining its overarching goals and principles, which entails raising the religious consciousness of the people and developing an Islamic alternative to Western models with a comprehensive epistemological basis.

If the state considers Islam to be its religion, it must acknowledge that the religion is the Shari'a, and the Shari'a rulings are part of the religion, which includes faith, rulings, transactions and ethics. Faith (though with some shortcomings according to the Salafi movement) and ethics, as well as many transactions, exist because most people avoid the forbidden forms in trade and transactions. As for rulings, some of them exist and are practised in matters of personal status, while others are absent.

The issue of nationalism is a sensitive one for most Islamic countries, especially those with a sectarian composition, and for Muslim minorities in the West. It is well known that anything that incites sectarian strife, weakens national unity or threatens the internal and international stability of Islamic countries must be

avoided at all costs. In this way, the religion is preserved, the homeland is protected, the rights of the rulers are fulfilled, and obedience to God and His Messenger is shown, thus manifesting the religion.

For the Salafis in Algerian nationalism, we are Muslim Algerians, and there is no difference between Arab and Berber, northerner and southerner, easterner and westerner, or between a mountain dweller and a desert dweller, except in piety and righteous deeds. Every Muslim Algerian has the right to preserve his linguistic and cultural identity, but it is not permissible to elevate it to the level of a common identity.

The Salafis in Algeria affirm that they love their homeland and fulfil their duty towards it out of obedience to God and His Messenger (peace be upon him), in accordance with the innate love of homeland that God has instilled in them. They understand that the current era has imposed new concepts called nation-states, which resemble the formerly independent states outside the Caliphate.

The Salafi says to you: My loyalty is to Algeria because it is my country, and this is an innate human nature, because it is the homeland of my ancestors and fathers, i.e. my country. It is also a Muslim country that upholds the banner of monotheism, lives the Islamic life of prayer, fasting, zakat, recitation of the Koran, the call to prayer and the observance of religious rites. I work to remedy any deficiency in religion, morality, or efforts to increase the prosperity of the homeland through knowledge, wisdom, and the best form of invitation. I seek to save my homeland from all causes of fragmentation, division, and social, economic, and political weakness, and to protect its interests and avoid harm.

But you ask the Salafis: Why do you wield the sword of criticism and modification against the Imams and preachers who differ from you in their interpretations? Is this not one of the causes of division and fragmentation? With your statement: "This one is a preacher, that one is a brother, and that one is a Sufi", etc. In this way, the Salafis make a distinction between legitimate citizenship and secular citizenship. The former comes from religion, and religion promises those who fight for their religion and their homeland, because it is the homeland of Islam, or because it is their possession, property and land, paradise. In contrast, Western secular citizenship promises him a monument.

Salafis believe that citizenship is not manifested in listening to the national anthem, standing for the flag, or cheering for the national team. True citizenship is a deep quality in the human soul that manifests itself in sincerely working for the dignity and pride of one's country and protecting it from all that harms it. Unfairly consuming the wealth of Algerians, restricting their interests and not seeking to serve them wholeheartedly are all antithetical to citizenship. Even if one's skin crawls when one hears the national anthem, sees the flag or witnesses the victory of the national team, the homeland does not rise and its banner does not fly only through these symbolic acts, important as they are in the consciousness of the people.

The religious discourse of the authorities and the official religious institution

One of the officials of the official religious institution, Professor Bouzid Boumediene, Director of Islamic Culture at the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments, acknowledges that the authority has paid attention to the mosque and made it an official institution after it had previously been a stage for political struggle and a platform from which political Islamic movements, such as the Front for the Islamic Salvation, benefited during election campaigns. As a result, the monitoring of classes and Friday sermons has been stepped up, and these measures have been followed by regulatory decrees and laws, which leads us to call this step "the process of nationalising the mosque".

Professor Boumediene points out that at the time of independence, the second article of the Algerian constitution of 1963 stated that Islam was the state religion, and that this constitution was amended five times (1976/1989/1991/1996/2008), but its second article remained unchanged. He also notes that decisions on appointments were published in the Official Gazette.

The state's interest in mosques has increased, especially after the emergence of various religious currents, and they have become competitive in exploiting this space. A television channel bearing the name of the Holy Quran has also been established, indicating that the authority also has a reading of the sacred text. The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments has been tasked with activating its scientific and cultural programmes.

However, the Director of Islamic Culture admits that the official discourse is facing strong competition from other discourses, especially what he calls the Salafi-Wahhabi discourse. This can be seen at the popular level, where thousands of young people still accept fatwas (religious rulings) from satellite channels and lessons from new preachers by downloading their recordings from the Internet.

Professor Boumédine, in his research entitled "The Religious Institution and Fundamentalism in Algeria", presented some statistics: the number of Koranic schools has reached 2,269, with 155,114 pupils and 2,773 teachers. There are also 1,683 katatib (Koranic schools) with 10,150 pupils. As for the centres for the training of imams, there are 19 centres spread over several provinces of the country.

The authority has thus tried to integrate the mosque and the official religious institution as a whole, making it part of the authority and its mechanisms. The mosque has become an apparatus of the state that the authority has tried to organise continuously in order to provide ideological services to a system that lacks direct communication with the people, through the Friday sermons that the authority sometimes unites throughout the national territory.

Conclusion

Through our daily lived experience, it seems that the mosque is a contested space among several actors in the religious field, and it is also an institution that is contested by the state and society, with each party carrying a project for this institution and trying to subjugate it to its logic and interests, starting from the authority. The coexistence of these authorities in the mosque space indicates the lack of control of the official religious institution over this space, but rather its focus on implementing the government's policies according to the requirements of the latter's projects, which means that the official discourse is marginalised according to certain policies and not in response to an urgent social need, but rather in response to Islam and religion, which the authorities see as a group of groups that have a conception of religion.

The idea of society adopting a cultural and religious reference that is different from that of the authorities is an indication of the severing of the bonds between the state institutions and society, and it is a general problem that has affected several fields and arenas, and it is an extension of several ruptures between the authorities, the official discourse and society, and the result of a long-term structural transformation of the religious field in Algeria. The mistrust of young people towards the national or local is therefore not just a crisis of circumstance, but rather the result of the decline of an institutional programme for the religious field. We are faced with a generational challenge that reduces the space for recognising the bureaucratic nature of the management of the religious field (and therefore its references) and declares margins of independence through indifference to the fatwa or distrust of its references. The positions of this public do not seem to be an exceptional case with regard to this actor's relationship with the religious field and its public policies, but we find the same positions of the youth in other areas such as entertainment, education, training, employment and associative activity, so we are faced with a phenomenon of withdrawal of the youth from the areas managed by public policies to a freer space (the virtual space).

The weak presence of the official and local religious authority (Maliki jurisprudence in practice/not even the Ash'ari creed) in shaping the religious culture among the youth, and the strong presence of the external religious authority, especially Saudi Arabia and its Hanbali doctrinal and jurisprudential heritage. Religious activists (especially imams) consider the term 'religious authority' to be a (flexible) one that even the Ministry of Religious Affairs does not adhere to (as evidenced by the recent announcement of Zakat al-Fitr, where we found the presence of names from other jurisprudential schools such as (Abu Hanifah/Sufyan al-Thawri/and Ibn Taymiyyah)). This shows that the socio-cultural religious mindset is broader than the jurisprudential mindset that produces religious knowledge, as the social practice of the religious culture of the society has imposed on the official religious institution the diversification of sources and references of fatwas (religious rulings).

The reason for the weak presence of the official religious authority is the absence of a project, programme or strategy to support and strengthen this authority at all levels, especially financially. The Saudi model of exporting the Hanbali school around the world is evident. Therefore, the void left by the official institution at the level of discourse and official religious culture in the social space was filled by other sources and references that were more present, more accessible to society and its individuals, and able to shape it and become the references of Mecca and Medina (the Islamic University of Medina).

The war of the religious authorities manifests itself in religious and cultural occasions by presenting controversial issues to the social base of society. Likewise, during crises and the COVID-19 pandemic, this is the best evidence, as fatwas (religious rulings) on controversial and jurisprudential issues proliferated among religious authorities, both institutions and individuals.

The question of religious-cultural authority, especially among university youth in Islamic sciences, is constructed with the factor of time and is subject to the indicator or variable of collective affiliation, such as Salafism, Ikhwanism, Malikism, or academic specialisation.

Footnotes:

- 1- Mokhtar Al-Akhdar Taybawi, *Islamists in Algeria and the Official Religious Institution, a series of scientific meetings, Arzew/Algeria, 24/11/2012.
- 2- Axel Honneth, author of *The Paradigm of Recognition*, attempts to offer an explanation and understanding of all phenomena related to recognition, considering that in all human relationships, interactions, institutions and positions, the individual is seeking recognition.
- 3- A series of interviews with Salafis.
- 4- <http://www.doctrine-malikite.fr> 5- Sheikh Mokhtar Akhdar Taybawi.

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