

A Failed Acculturation-by-Naturalisation Experiment. The *néo-français* in Tunisia under the French Protectorate¹

Abstract

This article addresses the issues of intercultural contacts and presents historical experiences that relate to contemporary phenomena of the increased flow of migration. The relationship between acculturation and naturalisation and the concepts of integration of colonial peoples with France during the Third French Republic and the colonial empire have been examined. These concepts assumed integration through acculturation and assimilation, and the instrument conducive to this process was to be naturalisation. The article refers to archival material and explores individual cases of naturalisation in Tunisia during the period of the French protectorate. The documents prove that the act of naturalisation itself did not lead to greater acculturation. The main obstacle to acculturation expected by the French authorities was the constant identification of naturalised *indigènes* with native culture through socialization with the native environment.

Keywords: acculturation, naturalisation, French Colonial Empire, North African People, Tunisia.

Introduction

Acculturation is a phenomenon accompanying contact with another culture. It means the adopting of elements of a foreign culture as a result of an individual's adaptation to the new socio-cultural and psychological changes (Maehler et al., 2019, p. 1; Berry, 1997, p. 5). The classical definition of acculturation by Melville J. Herskovits from the 1930s says that it is "the transfer of cultural elements from one social group of people to another," which is the result of an inclination or belief expressed by a people to adopt the culture of another (Herskovits, 1938, p. 2). In the literature on the subject, there is a belief that there is an organic relationship between acculturation and naturalisation. Many studies show that acculturation in the country of residence is an essential motive for migrants to apply for citizenship, and this promotes integration. Other studies point to the other side of the phenomenon, namely that naturalisation increases the degree of identification of migrants with the country of

¹ This article was prepared as part of the project 2017/27/B/HS3/02645 of National Science Centre, Poland.

residence (Maehler et al., 2019, p. 1), and the intensity of social interactions with natives.

In France, naturalisation was legally sanctioned in 1792. The Naturalisation Law created the concept of *nouveaux Français* and referred to those foreigners who defended the Republic. At the time of the First Empire, 14 million New French had theoretically the same rights and guarantees as the French, but the incorporation of new citizens into the “nation” raised the problem of France’s political identity. The main question then was: what did it mean to be French? Thus, three terms and concepts entered the discourse: *citoyenneté*, *naturalité*, and *nationalité*. These terms, transferred to colonial politics and the discussion of slavery and races, gained additional meaning (Sahlins, 2004, pp. 113–117; Weil, 2008, pp. 14–18; Lehning, 2001). Namely, acculturation became a vital part of colonial policy. In the case of the colonial empire of France during the Third Republic, French citizenship was theoretically opened to everyone who wanted to belong to the French nation but assimilationist principles restricted this access to people of one culture (Amara, 2012, pp. 15–16). Adaptation was regarded “exclusively in the container space of nation-states” (Faist, 2010, p. 208). On the one hand, radical assimilationism did not give special cultural rights to ethnic and religious groups; the second position favoured granting such rights, but saw it as a transitional period ending with the adoption of the dominant group’s culture. From 1889, the authorities of the Third Republic tended to extend the *jus soli* principle to overseas territories. The draft legal acts on naturalisation prepared at that time treated citizenship as “a symbol of the republican revolutionary ideology, which gave a universalistic dimension to the Republic.” On the other hand, there were still strong tendencies to reject the possibility of a multi-cultural society and to apply assimilationist principles (Lefebvre, 2003, p. 32). Edwige L. Lefebvre stresses that “the French concept of citizenship has always intentionally neglected /.../ cultural pluralistic dimensions, because of a fear of social fragmentation” (Lefebvre, 2003, p. 15).

This contradiction between republican ideas and colonial interests exacerbated during World War I. Soldiers from the colonies and protectorates fought on the fronts of this war in Europe, including about 270,000 soldiers from French North Africa. As early as the fall of 1914, the French Minister of War submitted proposals to grant French citizenship to soldiers from North Africa as a reward for their dedication to France. For the minister, granting citizenship was an instrument aimed at ensuring a constant flow of recruits to the French Army. Yet, his proposal stimulated the discussion on equal rights for people from the colonies and the policy of integrating the colonial population with France. If anti-colonial circles in France raised the war minister’s

proposal as the correct way to integrate the colonial population with France through naturalisation, the colonial lobby challenged this idea, arguing that naturalisation did not automatically lead to acculturation, which was supposed to be the ultimate goal of integration.

Methods and Materials

This article refers to a discussion in the sociological and psychological literature that shows how complex acculturation is. This common phenomenon occurs when two groups or individuals from different cultures are in continuous and regular contact with each other. These contacts result in changes in the cultural patterns of both groups, which may be significant in some situations (Herskovits, 1938, p. 149). John W. Berry emphasises that the process of communicating two cultures appears neutral, but in practice one side always exerts a more decisive influence on the other. It can provoke various reactions, including opposition or rejection of a more robust culture (Berry, 1997, p. 7). In this situation, acculturation refers to a weaker culture that modifies its patterns under the influence of a more robust culture. The final stage of acculturation is assimilation, expressed in the acceptance by the group or individual of the patterns of culture with which the contacts occur. It is done at the expense of native culture patterns. The theory that is most often used in the study of immigration is the canonical account of assimilation provided by Milton Gordons, which has been subject to intensive critique and numerous studies suggest directions for reformulation (Alba, Nee, 1997). However, other outcomes of these cultural encounters are possible. They can be expressed in adopting only some patterns, e.g. the acquisition of knowledge and skills, including linguistic skills, in establishing social contacts, adopting a behavioural repertoire (food, leisure behaviour), integrating into the social structure (e.g. adopting the education system and places on the labour market), or finally a change of identity or sense of belonging (Maehler et al., 2019, p. 2).

Research on acculturation allowed us to distinguish acculturation profiles or typologies, the most famous of which is Berry's proposal, who believes that there are four acculturation situations: assimilation (a strong orientation towards the culture of the residence country), separation (a strong orientation toward the culture of origin), integration (a strong orientation toward the culture of origin and the culture of the residence country), and marginalisation (a weak orientation toward both cultures) (Berry, 1997, p. 9). Jean S. Phinney proposed similar typology in relation to the identity of young immigrants in the USA, Israel, Finland and the Netherlands, namely: integrated identity, assimilated identity, separated identity, and marginalised identity (Phinney et al., 2001, p. 498).

Two issues discussed in the literature are particularly important for this paper. The first is the psychological aspect of acculturation. Acculturation creates psychological problems as it is related to “behavioural shifts,” “cultural learning,” and “social skills acquisition”. “Psychological adaptation to acculturation is considered to be a matter of learning a new behavioural repertoire that is appropriate for the new culture,” we read in the Berry’s study (Berry, 1997, p. 12). In some cases, the tension that arises from getting to know and assimilating elements of a foreign culture may be so strong that it leads to “culture shock” and “acculturative stress” (Berry et al., 1987, pp. 49-511; Da Silva et al., 2017, p. 214). The psychological aspect of acculturating means that the individuals or groups must solve the problem of how to acculturate. Solving this problem can be called choosing an acculturation strategy. Berry writes that acculturation strategies address two issues: “cultural maintenance (to what extent are cultural identity and characteristics considered to be important, and their maintenance strived for); and contact and participation (to what extent should they become involved in other cultural groups, or remain primarily among themselves)” (Berry, 1997, p. 9). Since the strategy implies an active role of an individual or group subject to acculturation in adopting the patterns of culture of the country of residence, it can be assumed that the selection of these patterns and the scope of their acceptance may assume the achievement of specific goals and may be different depending on circumstances that are often individual and unique.

The second issue of acculturation research relates to socialisation. This term primarily refers to learning the native culture. Its result is internal acceptance by the individual of the behaviour, beliefs, and other norms and actions of community members with which the individual identifies himself (Cromdal, 2006, pp. 462–466). In the case of intercultural contacts, socialisation, understood as the entry of an individual into a group with a culture other than their native culture, acquires a special meaning. Valery Chirkov emphasizes that proper acculturation begins “after meeting and encountering a cultural community that is different from the cultural community where he or she was originally socialised” (Chirkov, 2009, p. 94). Therefore, it can be assumed that the frequency of contact with the cultural environment of the host country and the durability of ties with the native culture environment are of significant importance for the acculturation process. However, it does not automatically lead to assimilation and is of an individual nature.

This article analyses the documents of the French Centre des Archives diplomatiques, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (AMAE), in La Courneuve, particularly the archival group *Correspondence Politique et Commerciale, Nouvelle Série, Guerre 1914–1918* with several subgroups (1664–1671).

They concern the presence of soldiers from North Africa in the French army during the First World War. In particular, the reports of the Resident General of France in Tunisia, which at that time was under the French protectorate of the subgroups 1664 (Jul 1914– Feb 1915), 1665 (March 1915–October 1915) and 1670 (*Panislamisme* 1914–1915), were used. In April 1915, the Resident-General in Tunisia sent a report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the behaviour of Tunisian *indigènes* who had been naturalised. The Resident compiled a list of Tunisian Muslims who had been naturalised under the decrees of the President of France of February 28, 1899, and October 3, 1910. He was interested in the influence that French codes exerted on naturalised Tunisians and the changes in the mentality and behaviour of these new French (*néo-français*) after obtaining French citizenship. The report was based on detailed information received from his subordinate Civil Controllers (*contrôleurs civils*), who supervised individual governorates on behalf of France in the protectorate system in Djerba, Grombalia, Gafaa, Sousse, Kairouan, Sfax, Kef and Bizerte. The issue of naturalisation of the indigenous inhabitants of Tunisia during the French protectorate has been addressed in many studies, the most comprehensive of which is Yahya El-Ghoul's book *Naturalisation et nationalisme en Tunisie de l'entre-deux-guerres*. Its author considers citizenship issues under colonial rule to be based on statutory demarcations strictly separating populations. He points out that until 1923 any sense of dignity attached to the naturalisation procedure was very rare among the Tunisians as French citizenship was seen as acceptance of imperial rule. The situation changed in 1923 when the colonial authorities of the protectorate of Tunisia opened up access to French nationality, both to foreigners, mainly Europeans, and to Tunisians, without waiting for the assimilation effect of naturalisation (El-Ghoul, 2009; see also Clancy-Smith, 2022; Lewis, 2014; Sayad, 1993).

French Colonial Policy

French colonial policy was oriented towards acculturation, understood as assimilation. The conflict in Algeria in 1830 initiated France's occupation of the country. In 1857, after the conquest of Kabylia, all of Algeria was in the hands of the French. Algeria was incorporated into France as an integral part, divided into departments and covered by French legislation. The country occupied a unique place in French colonial policy. As Charles Jonnart, a minister, senator and later the Governor-General of Algeria, wrote in 1893, it was neither a colony nor a separate department. The Law of December 19, 1900 provided that Algeria was to have a separate budget, governed by two assemblies of representatives of the population – *les Délégations financières* and *le Conseil*

supérieur. The indigenous population was represented in these assemblies and city councils (Bernard, 1926, pp. XIII–XIV; Vatin, 2015, pp. 27–28; Frémeaux, 2016). In 1881, Tunisia and in 1904 Morocco became protectorates of France, which meant that the local structures of power headed by the Bey in Tunisia and the Sultan in Morocco had a social organisation. North Africa became a crucial destination of French colonisation. The French settled in the countries and capital was invested. In 1911, 4,740,000 people lived in Algeria, including 752,000 Europeans, 304,000 of whom were French. Tunisia had a population of 1,928,000, of whom 1,730,000 were *indigènes*, 50,000 Palestinian and 148,000 Europeans, including 46,000 French. In Morocco, the population was 4.5 million *indigènes* and 50,000 Europeans, including 28,000 French. Between 10 and 11 million *indigènes* and around one million Europeans were then living in the three countries of North Africa (Bernard, 1926, p. XVIII).

France's policy in North Africa was to implant themselves there and win over the *indigènes*. This meant double assimilation: the French from Algeria should look like the French from France and the *indigènes* should look like Europeans. The *sénatus-consulte* from 1865 was to serve this purpose. It made it possible for *indigènes* to obtain the rights of a French citizen, but on condition that they give up the personal status as Muslims. Naturalisation was therefore associated with assimilation, and very few Algerian Muslims chose to do so. The low number of applications for naturalisation caused astonishment in France and was explained by the ignorance of Muslims, who did not realise what benefits of civilisation could be brought by naturalisation (Hamel, 1880, p. 6). Those who did not decide to naturalise-assimilate, and thus the vast majority of Algeria's population, received special status, that of the *indigènat* or native population. Laure Blévis writes that the history of Algerian citizenship during the colonial period underwent few inflections after 1865, which strengthened France's presence and brought institutionalisation of colonial domination (Blévis, 2001, p. 559). In 1881, a code de *l'indigènat* or native penal code created penalties unknown to common law for forty-one offenses "peculiar to the natives." These offenses were scaled down to twenty-one in 1890. Until 1919, Muslims had to pay various taxes, so-called *impôts arabes*. From 1901 onwards, a new native policy was officially introduced, entitled the "policy of association." The principle of legislative assimilation was rejected and the new policy aimed at the "advancement of Muslims within their own civilisation" (Ageron, 1991, p. 69 and pp. 73–74; Betts, 2005, pp. 106–133). Judith Surkis stresses that the French colonial authorities in Algeria constructed Muslim legal difference and used it to deny Algerian Muslims full citizenship. One example of this is polygamy and anxiety about it was used as a rationale for exclusion (Surkis, 2019, pp. 55–89). In 1892, Eugène Etienne,

an exponent of colon ethnocentrism, called for a strict separation of Muslims and colons (Cooke, 1976, p. 18).

However, as Richard S. Fogarty and David. Killingray write, “assimilation, as the orthodox republican justification for empire, never entirely disappeared as a theoretical goal of French colonialism” (Fogarty, Killingray, 2015, p. 115), as was shown by the discussion on the naturalisation of Muslim soldiers fighting in the French army from 1914.

1915 Discussion on the Naturalisation of the Colonial Population

On November 20, 1914, Alexandre Millerand, the Minister of War, sent a letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in which he expressed the view that the war and the participation of Algerian soldiers in it had created a new situation in the matter of naturalisation and made it necessary to take steps to resolve this issue. The Minister proposed to create formal and legal possibilities for Algerian soldiers to choose between their current personal status and the naturalisation and acceptance of French citizenship (*la nationalité française*) as “compensation for their loyalty to us” (*Minister of War to Minister of Foreign Affairs*).

Millerand’s proposal had two aspects. On the one hand, it referred to broader discussions about the possible naturalisation of Muslim inhabitants of Algeria and, in this respect, did not go beyond the colonial discourse of the Third Republic. However, he stated, “the moral attitude and civic education of Algerian Muslims were not adequate for them so far to be able to exercise their civil rights fully consciously, but those of them who are so brave and gloriously shed their blood for their adopted motherland, they are becoming more and more worthy of acquiring the rights of a French citizen” (*Minister of War to Minister of Foreign Affairs*).

On the other hand, the issue of naturalisation had a military and political aspect as it would lead to an increase in the number of volunteers from North Africa to join the army, which would reduce the number of soldiers called up to serve in the army from France. From a political point of view, making a decision enabling the people of Algeria to obtain the rights of French citizens would weaken the power of propaganda carried out by the Ottoman Empire and Germany aimed at separating the Muslim world from France. In addition, such a decision would meet the expectations of the *Jeunes-Algériens* community, which advocated the close integration of Algeria with France but demanded the same citizenship rights for the people of Algeria that the French had. At the same time, the minister expressed the view that the opposition of many political circles in France to the naturalisation of the Algerian population

for fear of the far-reaching effects of this decision was unjustified because, according to him, only a tiny part of Algerian society would benefit from the right to naturalisation, as the majority would want to keep their current personal status (*statut personnel*).

On April 1, 1915, the Chamber of Deputies heard a new draft law on facilitating naturalisation by Muslim soldiers from Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. The draft was submitted by four deputies – Albin Rozet, Georges Leygues, Louis Doizy, and Lucien Millevoye – known for their liberal views on the rights of the colonial population. The deputies began with high patriotic tones, listing war operations involving indigenous soldiers from North Africa. Such behaviour by Muslim soldiers was a complete disappointment for German propaganda, which had hoped that slogans of a holy war between Muslims and non-Muslims would drag soldiers from North Africa to the side of Turkey. The loyalty of North African soldiers to France was total, and the bravery of Tunisian recruits from the 1912 enlistment in the recent battles at Charleroi and Reims was especially emphasised in the orders of the Minister of War and statements of the Governor-General of Algeria. “Everyone, no doubt, will agree that this lasting loyalty deserves immediate compensation from the sovereign nation,” we read in a speech by deputies. “This matter should be considered separately from the issue of electoral reform, announced for a long time and expected to be carried out after the wars’ end. For France, it is an obligation to find a form of compensation for *indigènes* who fight for her and show devotion to her cause. The highest satisfaction they can receive from France will be French citizenship (*la nationalité française*) as the most valuable form of compensation” (*Chambre des Députés: Albin Rozet, Georges Leygues*).

Liberal deputies clearly stated the purpose of their project, which was to create such conditions for the naturalisation of indigenous soldiers that their applications would not depend on the goodwill or the whims of the state administration in Algeria and the administrative authorities of the protectorates in Morocco and Tunisia. The law in force at that time allowed the French administrative authorities to refuse the application of French applicants. Consequently, the first Article of the new law would refer to Muslim soldiers from Algeria and give them the right to receive the rights of a French citizen (*la qualité de citoyen français*) by a simple declaration of the acquisition of those rights after reaching the age of 21 and at any time. The only condition was to attach a good behaviour certificate from an army superior. Active or former Tunisian and Moroccan soldiers could not obtain French citizenship by simple declaration because Tunisians and Moroccans were foreigners by French law. However, the French administrative authorities could not reject

the principle that they would receive full French citizenship rights and their declaration (application) of the desire to receive French civil rights (*Chambre des Députés: Albin Rozet, Georges Leygues*).

The draft of the four deputies was more of a political declaration than a law given the existing legal system. The authors did not ask any naturalised French citizens to give up their native culture in favour of French culture. We read: “Some will probably have objections to the new law’s effects because the number of applications for naturalisation will not be significant. However, this is about the symbolic significance of our proposal. We believe that it is not too zealous to ex officio give one group of people the right of a French citizen as compensation for their attachment to France and - on the other hand - let them retain their personal status as Muslims to which they are so attached and which we constantly respect. Our proposal does not mean these people are obliged to apply for citizenship. When proposing to grant *indigènes* citizenship, we do not put ourselves in the position of someone who assesses their behaviour because whether they accept citizenship or reject such a possibility depends on their beliefs and self-assessment of their situation. The proposed law will no doubt show that France knows what gratitude and dignity are; in this way, it will reward individual units and show the magnitude of the entire indigenous population” (*Chambre des Députés: Albin Rozet, Georges Leygues*).

The draft law’s authors were convinced that the new law would significantly impact the future of France’s relations with the indigenous population, as it would be a step in overcoming mutual prejudices. They were more politically than culturally conditioned, for the Muslim faith alone determined these relations to a lesser extent than the activities of religious brotherhoods and political groups. The authors were concerned with the ideas of Pan-Islamism, which was increasingly influencing Muslims and turning them hostile to European civilisation. According to the authors, France was losing Muslims and steps had to be taken to regain them. The law on the naturalisation of soldiers would be such an action (*Chambre des Députés: Albin Rozet, Georges Leygues*). The design and thinking of liberal deputies remained within the framework of *la mission civilisatrice* but was ground-breaking in the perception of Muslim culture by politicians. Until then, it had been believed that it was incompatible with republican values. The project’s authors, “allowing” naturalised soldiers to stick to their Muslim personal status, “suggested that the coexistence of two cultures within one European civilisation is possible.” A severe obstacle was polygamy, prohibited by French law, but which liberal deputies saw as temporary, and history confirmed their suppositions.

Millerand’s proposal met with strong opposition from the so-called colonial party. The officials of the Ministry of Colonies noted that the possibility of

naturalisation had not yet attracted Muslims' attention because, for many, it was associated with apostasy and, for everyone, with a departure from Muslim personal status. In this way, they raised the issue of cultural conflict (*Interministerial Commission*). The high officials of the French administration in North Africa were most critical. Gabriel Alapetite, the French Resident-General in Tunisia, explained that a Muslim who was a naturalised French citizen was treated as an apostate in his country. The active exercise of French civil rights conflicted with Muslim family law and personal status. Specifically, it was about polygamy and the unequal position in the inheritance of property under Muslim law. Alapetite strongly spoke against the adoption of any naturalisation law without consultation with the Tunisian authorities and without considering changes in the family and legal situation of the beneficiaries of such law (*Resident General in Tunisia to Minister of Foreign Affairs*).

Charles Lutuad, the Governor-General of Algeria, considered that there was no need to introduce new naturalisation regulations as in the case of *indigènes* from Algeria; their situation was sufficiently regulated by the *sénatus-consulte* of July 14, 1865, and the decree of October 14, 1870. Although both legal acts did not speak of soldiers fighting at the front, the Governor considered that the general provisions of these acts also included the case of soldiers (the *sénatus-consulte* of July 14, 1865). The Governor-General concluded that the new law would not increase the number of applications and naturalisation of the indigenous Algerian population. From 1865–1914 in Algeria, French citizenship was granted to just 1,611 people of the Muslim religion, which meant that 34 people were granted this right every year. According to the Governor, the reasons for this were cultural. Muslims in Algeria treated the adoption of French citizenship as apostasy, and those who applied for citizenship were renegades. In turn, this was conditioned by a lack of knowledge about the benefits of adopting French citizenship for the development of civilisation and the reluctance to naturalise on the part of Muslim religious brotherhoods. The General-Governor concluded that the very law, even the most perfect, would not change this situation and that successful assimilation required taking steps to change the population's attitude concerning the benefits of naturalisation (the *sénatus-consulte* of July 14, 1865).

New French in Tunisia

In April 1915, at the height of the discussion on granting the rights of a French citizen to *indigènes* who served in the French Army, the Resident-General in Tunisia sent a report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the behaviour of those Tunisian *indigènes* who had been naturalised. The

Resident compiled a list of Tunisian Muslims who had been naturalised under the decrees of the President of France of February 28, 1899, and October 3, 1910, and collected information concerning their lifestyle. At the same time, he compiled confidential information about the behaviour of these people as employees of public services to determine to what extent Muslims who received naturalisation identified themselves with the legal culture of France.

The French Resident was interested in the influence that French codes exerted on naturalised Tunisians and what changes in the mentality and behaviour of these new French (*néo-français*) took place after obtaining French citizenship. The questions posed by the Resident were as follows: (1) whether in Tunisia a naturalised French person complied with the provisions of the French Civil Code regarding marriage or still with the provisions of the Koran and (2) whether in the matter of educating his children, especially his daughters, a naturalised Frenchman in Tunisia tried to adapt to a lifestyle consistent with the French civil code, or whether he remained in a world defined by Islamic law. The report was based on detailed information received from his subordinate Civil Controllers (*contrôleurs civils*), who supervised individual governorates on behalf of France in the protectorate system in Djerba, Grombalia, Gafaa, Sousse, Kairouan, Sfax, Kef and Bizerte.

In January 1915, according to the Resident's report, 73 Tunisians who were naturalised French lived in Tunisia, three of whom were naturalised under the decree of July 29, 1887, 64 under the decree of February 28 1899, and six under the decree of October 3, 1910 (*Resident General in Morocco to the Minister of Foreign Affairs*). Civil Controller of Djerba reported to the Resident-General: "While browsing the census of young people who would be of military age in 1914, I noticed that the local Tunisians who are naturalised French do not report to the French authorities [i.e., to the Controller – J.Z.] the fact of the birth of their children," wrote the Civil Controller from Djerba in 1913. He proposed that the sons of naturalised French people over 20 should be included ex officio in the 1914 conscription register and not wait for their father to register them. As for younger children, he believed that their parents should apply for their children to return to their original nationality because they did not represent any "French element" (*Civil Controller of Djerba*).

The personal status of 36 naturalised French living in the Governorate of Sousse had not changed since their naturalisation. They behaved exactly like other Muslims; most did not know French. They should have reported their sons to serve in the French Army, but they had not. Most of them applied for naturalisation during military service (*Civil Controller of Sousse*).

The Civil Controller at Kairouan wondered why the *indigènes* had applied for naturalisation and concluded that individuals who applied were from

lower social classes, most often in military service. They were urged by the French and indigenous officers to do so and had no choice but to obey their officers' wishes. These soldiers knew that, as French citizens, they would not have to pay *medjba* tax and would be less dependent on local notables and *caïds* or provincial governors. *Medjba* was a poll tax paid in Tunisia by all the Bey's subjects after the age of 17. According to the Resident, naturalisation should be cancelled in the case of people who did not cooperate with the French authorities, thus constituting a category of French who "weakened our national prestige." Naturalisation should cover only those *indigènes* whose evolution towards the French language, ideas, and customs was so advanced that naturalisation would only complement this evolution from the legal point of view. Attached to the letter was a list of seven naturalised French living in Kairouan, three of whom were naturalised in the military, one in the police, and one was naturalised by birth (his father was naturalised). The author of this report considered that acculturation should precede naturalisation. "Naturalisation is beneficial for them as it gives them legal protection, but they do not appreciate being French and do not try to get closer to the essence of French citizenship" (*Civil Controller of Kairouan*).

Not all *indigènes* sought to reap the benefits of French citizenship. For many, naturalisation in the army was one of the formal activities performed as part of their official duties. After leaving the army, they did not feel that what had happened while serving meant altering their lives. Thus, their lives in civilian life did not change in any way (*Director of Railway Company*).

The French administration understood naturalisation as a means of civilising the *indigènes* and a road leading to a higher culture. We read about it in the report of the Civil Controller of Djerba on January 23, 1915. The Civil Controller did not notice any change in the mentality of the behaviour of naturalised French in his district and, most importantly, no identification with the French state and its values. For these people, he believed, being naturalised French was about looking out for their interests and using naturalisation's status to derive personal gain from it. Their lifestyle did not differ from that of other Tunisian Muslims. As a rule, they disregarded the obligation to report the birth of their children to French registry offices. If they did not report the birth of their sons to the French Consulate, their sons were not registered on conscription lists for the French Army, and the Tunisian authorities did not call them to serve in the Tunisian Army because they were the sons of naturalised French. They married, divorced, remarried following Islamic law, and did not speak or understand French. "They raise their children under their customs and do not make the slightest effort to civilise" – according to the author (*Civil Controller of Djerba*).

In some cases, the acculturation of *indigènes* who became French citizens was discernible but judged by French administrators to only be occurring on the surface. The Civilian Controller from Kef informed the Resident on January 27, 1915, that two naturalised French people lived in his area. One of them was sent as a soldier in the gendarmerie with a unit to Morocco and was stationed there, while the other served in the local gendarmerie. The man who lived in Kef spoke French well and assisted Europeans in matters concerning relations with the Tunisian authorities; he had completed all the formalities related to being naturalised French, and in particular, he reported the birth of his children at the French Consulate. However, as regards his lifestyle, nothing changed, i.e., he lived like other Muslims. Two of his daughters, who were of school age, never went to school, and his son only attended the Koranic school at the mosque. Another naturalised Frenchman of Algerian origin in Kef was a non-commissioned officer in the *Spahis* expedition unit and had settled in Kef 32 years earlier. In 1883, he was appointed justice of the peace in that city. He married a Spanish woman, knew French well, and “adapted to our customs – as far as external observations can determine it” – wrote the report’s author (*Civil Controller of Kef*).

Eight naturalised French lived in Bizerte, and all of them were naturalised during their military service. One of them was a customs officer in the port, the second operated a motorboat there, and the rest did not have permanent jobs and were engaged in various simple labour. None of them wore either a beret or a cap – which would indicate a change of mentality for the Controller – but only a *chechia* [a traditional Tunisian hat also known as *fez* or *tarboosh* in the Maghreb countries – J.Z.] – a symbol of Arab-Muslim culture to the Controller. The Civilian Controller of Bizerte thus had a different view of the relationship between naturalisation and acculturation than his colleagues, who believed that naturalisation should culminate in the acculturation process. In this case, naturalisation should initiate acculturation, and the first visible step on the way was to change the headdress.

Several reports indicated wearing the *fez* on one’s head as a symbol of belonging to Arab-Muslim culture. Another such symbol was going to an Arab café. On the Bône-Guelma railway, an *indigène* named Balit, was brought up by les Pères Blancs and naturalised in 1907 while working on the railroad. He was a very dedicated worker and was eventually promoted to station manager in Matur-Sud. He registered his marriage with a Muslim woman with a French Administrator, although he divorced only in a Sharia court. However, he was a practising Catholic and received regular communion. He spoke French well and wore European clothes outside his railroad service. He claimed that he would only remarry a Catholic woman, marry in a church according to French

law and bring up his children to be French. His director, however, noticed a few “blemishes” on the image of this man as a wholly assimilated person. We read in the report: “Despite clear signs of progressive assimilation, it must be said that he wears a fez outside his service hours. Moreover, he enjoys visiting traditional Arab cafés during his spare time” (*Director of Railway Company*).

The *néo-français* group – if it grew to the size of social strata due to an overly liberal policy of naturalisation – would threaten the enduring governance of countries where the administration consisted of *indigènes*. The Civilian Controller of Grombalia presented this point of view on January 30, 1915. Naturalised persons maintained a pre-naturalisation mentality, but at the same time pretended to be independent, as French citizens, from the leaders of local communities. They did not observe some rules of the local law. If such people were few, their presence was imperceptible, but if there were more and more of them, their behaviour would lead to chaos in the country’s administration. “Besides, what values will they stand for if they vote in elections as French citizens?” The Controller believed that only the naturalisation of *indigènes* who were well acquainted with French culture would not raise political problems and that only such naturalisation should be the point of reference when considering applications by *indigènes* for French citizenship (*Civil Controller of Grombalia*).

The Civil Controller from Kairouan reported that it was not those *indigènes* who had become naturalised in his district but the families of some notables firmly attached to Islam, including the Mufti family, who wanted to move closer to French culture. These families tried to get their children into French school to learn the French language and civilisation better. Meanwhile, three naturalised French citizens in Kairouan returned to their traditional life after leaving the military. One came from a tribe of nomads who had camped near Kairouan, and it was hard to expect that there he would assimilate himself and his children to the rights and duties of a French citizen. The second was a worker in a mine who lived a solitary life. He had also received naturalisation in the army after serving 15 years. In the case of the third man, one could speak not so much of his approaching French culture but of returning to his Arab-Muslim roots. This man was a policeman and spoke French fluently. He was born to an Algerian father who had become naturalised in 1878. He married a cousin who did not know any French. They had four children who were registered with the French Consulate. The sons attended an Arab-French school where only *indigènes* studied. The daughters went to a Koranic school, and there was no doubt that they would be taken home from school when they reached puberty. The man’s family, who was formally French from birth, was entirely indigenous. Not only did they not socialise with the French environment, but they avoided it (*Civil Controller of Kairouan*).

The French community living in Tunisia could favour the rapprochement of French political culture and organisational patterns. However, contacts between the new French and the French colons were minimal. The new French, as a rule, did not report to the French authorities to register the birth of their children or file tax returns. An example was the payment of the *istitane* personal tax, which replaced the *medjba* poll in 1913 and was paid by both Tunisians and French. The former paid to the offices of the *caïd*, i.e., the Tunisian governor, and the latter to the Administration des Finances, the institution of the administration of the protectorate, dealing with the financial affairs of Europeans, including the colons. *Indigènes* who obtained naturalisation, as a rule, did not report to the institutions of the protectorate so that they would be treated as equal to the French. Therefore, *l'Administration des Finances* did not treat them as part of the European population of Tunisia. They were called upon to pay the *istitane* by the governors' services, which was an arbitrary decision because these naturalised French lived like other *indigènes*. There were two naturalised French people in the *caïdate* of Kairouan, and neither of them applied to *l'Administration des Finances* to pay the personnel tax. However, both signed up to the *Société indigène de prévoyance*, which was established in 1907 as a benefit fund supporting indigenous farmers. They must have been destitute, as they had not paid the 1914 *istitane* tax of 10 francs nor the annual fee of 2.5 francs for membership in the loan and assistance fund. Both were in the French military services and one was called up as a reservist to the local Zouaves battalion. The man did not know French and had three daughters, whose birth he had not reported to the French authorities.

Conclusions

The data from the questionnaires prepared for the Resident-General by the French administration in Tunisia were unambiguous: most of the *indigènes* became naturalised French in the French Army, and after leaving the army, i.e., a few to a dozen years after naturalisation, they were still in the same cultural situation in which they had been at the time of obtaining French citizenship. Newly naturalised Muslims lived indigenously, except in a few cases, just like their co-religionists, both in terms of appearance – headdress and clothing – but also in terms of mentality, language, and customs. Many of them were illiterate and did not speak French; in most cases, they were already married or remarried in the presence of the judge of an Islamic court. Their wives were veiled and locked up. Some of them practised polygamy. As a rule, they did not report their children to the French civil authorities. As a result, their sons could not be included in the French military recruitment records. Due to ignorance, they could not exercise their mandate as French electors – wrote the Resident-General (*Resident General in Tunisia to Minister of Foreign Affairs*).

The Resident-General believed that granting citizenship to indigenous soldiers had led to the formation of a layer of *indigènes* who were formally French but had nothing to do with the mentality of the native French. If they were to change their attitude towards French legal culture, it would mean that their social environment would turn away from them as apostates. The internal conflict of the naturalised French citizen concerning his personal status would undoubtedly spread to family relations, leading to the anarchisation of social life (*Resident General in Tunisia to Minister of Foreign Affairs*).

The examples from the French resident's questionnaire clearly showed that naturalisation did not stimulate acculturation, and various factors and the acculturation strategy conditioned the process of acquiring the patterns of another culture. It was relevant that the naturalised inhabitants of Tunisia functioned in their native environment, which limited contact with the culture of France and perpetuated the patterns of native culture. However, it should be considered that acculturation occurs in a specific historical and political context. The French authorities understood acculturation as assimilation and expected naturalisation to have such an effect. The concept of French citizenship assumed that the citizen of France should actively practice citizenship in the sense that he should fulfil the obligations that he assumed with his citizenship. The title of citizen of France was the highest value and could not be the source only of the *petit bonheur*. The concept of citizenship arose from history and culture and combined political rights and obligations that emerged from history and culture.

As a consequence, French citizenship was linked to the particular culture and its active practising assumed the acceptance of this culture – if not all, then certainly some of its elements and, above all, the law. According to some, naturalisation was the culmination of acculturation and an *indigène* had to give up Muslim personal status if he wanted to receive French citizenship. Liberal deputies did not set such a condition – a naturalised *indigène* could keep his native status at the moment of naturalisation. However, in this case, too, it was ultimately about assimilation. The difference was in the order: in the first case, assimilation was to precede naturalisation; in the second, it was its consequence. However, the concept of citizenship did not allow cultural pluralism.

On the other hand, imperial pride and racial prejudices determined the active effort of colonial administrators to maintain a distance towards the natives, both legal and social, which contradicted the idea of assimilation. Colonial social and power dynamics presented a strange case of acculturation uneasily fit into a model aimed more at contemporary immigration policy. The summary can be Jessica M. Marglin's words who said that relying on terms

like citizenship or nationality without mentioning historical baggage “would ultimately lead to more confusion than clarity” (Marglin, 2021, p. 685). It must be emphasised that Tunisia differed from other North African countries, especially Algeria. The latter was incorporated to France as three departments of the French Republic (albeit with different rights for Muslims, Europeans and Jews), while the former was a protectorate. Because of this, the political context of Algeria, as departments where voting (by settlers) took place, was very different from the protectorate of Tunisia where it did not and where there was at least the pretence of *beylical* sovereignty.

References

- Ageron, Charles-Robert. 1991. *Modern Algeria. A History from 1830 to the Present*. Translated by M. Brett, London: Hurst.
- Alba, Richard, and Victor Nee. 1997. ‘Rethinking Assimilation Theory for a New Era of Immigration.’ *The International Migration Review* 31(4), Special Issue: *Immigrant Adaptation and Native-Born Responses in the Making of Americans*, pp. 826–874. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01979183970310040>.
- Amara, Noureddine. 2012. ‘Etre algérien en situation impériale, fin XIXème siècle – début XXème siècle: L’usage de la catégorie «nationalité algérienne» par les consulats français dans leur relation avec les Algériens fixés au Maroc et dans l’Empire Ottoman’. *European Review of History/Revue européenne d’histoire* 19 (1), pp. 59–74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2012.643606>.
- Bernard, Augustin. 1926. *L’Afrique du Nord pendant la guerre*. Paris, New Haven: Les Presses universitaires de France, Yale University Press.
- Berry J.W, Uichol Kim, Thomas Minde, Dorik Mok. 1987. ‘Comparative Studies of Acculturative Stress’. *International Migration Review* 21 (3), pp. 491–511.
- Berry, John W. Berry. 1997. ‘Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation’. *Applied Psychology* 46 (1), pp. 5–68. http://www.cultureresearch.org/sites/default/files/berry_1997.pdf.
- Betts, Raymond F. 2005. *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890–1914*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press.
- Blévis, Laure. 2001. ‘Les avatars de la citoyenneté en Algérie colonial ou les paradoxes d’une catégorisation’. *Droit et Société* 48, pp. 557–580.
- *Chambre des Députés: Albin Rozet à Monsieur le Ministre des Affaires Etrangères*, Paris, 29 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1664.
- *Chambre des Députés: Albin Rozet, Georges Leygues, Louis Doizy, Lucien Millevoye, Proposition de Loi*, No. 820, 1 avril 1915, AMAE, G1665.
- Chirkov, Valery. 2009. ‘Critical psychology of acculturation: What do we study and how do we study it, when we investigate acculturation?’. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 33 (2), pp. 94–105. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2008.12.004>.

- *Civil Contoler of Djerba to Resident General in Tunisia*, Djerba, 23 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1665.
- *Civil Controler of Djerba to Resident General in Tunisia*, Djerba, 23 Jan 1915; *Civil Controler of Sousse to RGT, Sousse*, 1 Feb 1915, AMAE, G1665.
- *Civil Controler of Grombalia to Resident General in Tunisia*, 30 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1665.
- *Civil Controler of Kairouan to Resident General in Tunisia*, 4 Feb 1915, AMAE, G1665.
- *Civil Controler of Kairouan to Resident General in Tunisia*, Kairouan, 19 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1665.
- *Civil Controler of Kef to Resident General in Tunisia*, Kef, 27 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1665.
- *Civil Controler of Sousse to Resident General in Tunisia*, Soussa, 18 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1665.
- Clancy-Smith, Julia. 2011. *Mediterraneans: North Africa and Europe in an Age of Migration, c. 1800–1900*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Cooke, James J. 1976. 'Colonial propaganda and legislation, 1880–1920'. *Proceedings of the Meeting of the French Colonial Historical Society* 1, pp. 17–27.
- Cromdal, Jakob. 2006. 'Socialization', in: Brown, K. (ed.). *Encyclopedia of language and linguistics*. North-Holland: Elsevier, pp. 462–66. doi:10.1016/B0-08-044854-2/00353-9.
- Da Silva, Nicole; Dillon, Frank R.; Verdejo, Toni Rose; Sanchez, Marianna and de la Rosa, Mario. 2017. 'Acculturative Stress, Psychological Distress, and Religious Coping Among Latin Young Adult Immigrants'. *Couns Psychology* 45 (2), pp. 213–236. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000017692111>.
- *Director of Railway Company in Bône-Guelma to Resident General in Tunisia*, Tunis, 20 Feb 1915, AMAE, G1665.
- El-Ghoul, Yahya. 2009. *Naturalisation et nationalisme en Tunisie de l'entre-deux-guerres*. La Manouba, Tunisia: Centre de Publication Universitaire. <https://fliphtml5.com/xqmg/skhw>.
- Faist, Thomas. 2010. 'Transnationalization in international migration: implications for the study of citizenship and culture'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23 (2), pp. 192–222. <https://doi.org/10.1080/014198700329024>.
- Fogarty, Richard S. and Killingray, David. 2015. 'Demobilization in British and French Africa at the End of the First World War'. *Journal of Contemporary History* 50 (1), pp. 100–123. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009414552868>.
- Frémeaux, Jacques. 2016. *La conquête de l'Algérie: la dernière campagne d'Abd el-Kader*. Paris: CNRS Éditions
- Hamel, Louis. 1880. *De la naturalisation des indigènes musulmans de l'Algérie*. Alger: Adolphe Jourdan.
- Herskovits, Melville J. 1938. *Acculturation: The Study of Cultural Contact*. New York: J.J. Augustin.

- *Interministerial Commission for Muslim Affairs: Seance du 31 décembre 1914*, 16–18, AMAE, G1670.
- Lefebvre, Edwige L. 2003. ‘Republicanism and Universalism: Factors of Inclusion and Exclusion in the French Concept of Citizenship’. *Citizenship Studies* 7 (1), pp. 15–36, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1362102032000048684>.
- Lehning, James R. 2001. *To be a Citizen. The Political Culture of the Early French Third Republic*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
- Lewis, Mary D. 2014. *Divided Rule: Sovereignty and Empire in French North Africa, 1881-1938*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Maehler, Débora B.; Weinmann, Martin and Hanke, Katja. 2019. ‘Acculturation and Naturalization: Insights From Representative and Longitudinal Migration Studies in Germany’. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, (1–12), <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01160/full>.
- Marglin, Jessica M. 2021. ‘Extraterritoriality and Legal Belonging in the Nineteenth-Century Mediterranean’. *Law and History Review* 39 (4), pp. 679–706.
- *Minister of War to Minister of Foreign Affairs*, Bordeaux, 20 Nov 1914, AMAE, G1664.
- Phinney, Jean S.; Horenczyk, Gabriel; Liebkind, Karmela and Vedder, Paul. 2001. ‘Ethnic Identity, Immigration, and Well-Being: An Interactional Perspective’. *Journal of Social Issues* 57 (3), pp. 493–510. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537-00225>.
- *Resident General in Morocco to Minister of Foreign Affairs*, Rabat, 4 Feb 1915, AMAE, G1664.
- *Resident General in Tunisia to Minister of Foreign Affairs: Enquête sur la situation des naturalisés musulmans*, Tunis, 5 Apr 1915, AMAE, G1665.
- *Resident General in Tunisia to Minister of Foreign Affairs*, Tunis, 19 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1664.
- Sahlins, Peter. 2004. *Unnaturally French. Foreign Citizens in the Old Regime and After*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
- Sayad, Abdelmalek. 1993. ‘Naturels et naturalisés’. *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 99, pp. 26–35. https://www.persee.fr/doc/arss_0335-5322_1993_num_99_1_3059.
- *Sénatus-consulte* of July 14, 1865.
- Surkis, Judith. 2019. *Sex, Law, and Sovereignty in French Algeria, 1830–1930*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.
- Vatin, Jean-Claude. 2015. ‘Retour sur les spécificités algériennes’, in : Bras, J.P. (ed.). *Faire l’histoire du droit colonial. Cinquante ans après l’indépendance de l’Algérie*. Paris: Karthala, pp. 27–28.
- Weil, Patrick. 2008. *How to Be French: Nationality in the Making since 1789*. Translated by Catherine Porter. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

