

Learning Islam in “the land of Napoleon”: the dynamics of the politics of Islamic education in France

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Abstract

This article discusses the development of Islamic education in France. The reviews in this paper are increasingly exotic because they stretch the historicity of Islamic education with a political-sociological perspective in the country that was once Napoleon Bonaparte's zone of power. Although it uses literary research methods, analysis with a political-sociological approach supported by adequate literature data produces objective conclusions. Some of the findings of this methodological creation include: first, France is one of the European countries with a high Muslim population growth rate; second, the development of Islamic education in France reaped heavy resistance when secular ideology colored the country, but in the era of republican rule its development accelerated until the establishment of private Islamic educational institutions recognized by the government; and third, the sacred public space of Muslims is increasingly widespread both in terms of worship, the use of symbols (headscarves), and others.

Keywords: Dynamics, Islamic Education, and Politics

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini membahas tentang perkembangan pendidikan Islam di Perancis. Ulasan dalam tulisan ini semakin eksotis karena membentangkan historisitas pendidikan Islam dengan perspektif sosiologis-politik di negara yang pernah menjadi zona kekuasaan Napoleon Bonaparte. Meskipun menggunakan metode penelitian kepustakaan, analisis dengan pendekatan sosiologis-politis yang didukung oleh data kepustakaan yang memadai menghasilkan kesimpulan yang objektif. Beberapa temuan dari penciptaan metodologi ini antara lain: pertama, Perancis merupakan salah satu negara Eropa dengan tingkat pertumbuhan penduduk muslim yang tinggi; kedua, perkembangan pendidikan Islam di Perancis menuai perlawanan berat ketika ideologi sekuler mewarnai negara tersebut, namun di era pemerintahan republik perkembangannya dipercepat hingga berdirinya lembaga pendidikan Islam swasta yang diakui oleh pemerintah; dan ketiga, ruang publik suci umat Islam semakin meluas baik dari segi peribadatan, penggunaan simbol (jilbab), dan lain-lain.

Kata Kunci: Dinamika, Pendidikan Islam, dan Politik

A. Introduction

France, a country that once displayed the power of Napoleon Bonaparte's power, where Montesquieu's Triassic theory of politics was born, and a country often dubbed the "land of fashion," even included its arsenal of pornographic films. However, the country whose land is stuck in one of the world's seven wonders, the Eiffel tower, has also been the escape area of a famous Islamic reformer, Muhammad Abduh. While in Paris, Abduh was reunited with Jamaluddin Al-Afghani, his kalam teacher, while studying at al-Azhar. In Paris, they founded an Islamic organization called al-Urwat al-Wustqa (The Strongest Link) and published a newspaper whose name was the same as the organization's name (Rahnema, 1998: 38-39)

Examining the development of Islamic education in France is increasingly attractive not only because the country was once visited by Islamic revolutionary figures of the caliber of Jamaluddin al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh, but the rapid growth in the number of Muslims there, surpassing other European countries, has also become a magnet. Moreover, writings highlighting Islamic education development in France are still relatively few. Therefore, this paper, in addition to enriching the treasures of Islamic education in France, also seeks to uncover the French government's policy towards the existence of Islamic education there is, with a more political and historical approach.

B. Method

The research method used in this research is classified as literature or library research. This literature research involves documentative data, such as books, journals, newspapers, the internet, and other related sources (Sanusi, 2016: 32). Reading materials considered relevant to the theme are recorded in such a way, then systematically arranged. Furthermore, these data are processed and analyzed by content analysis, namely, an effort to analyze the content of the sources that have been used (Afifudin, Et.al., 2012: 165).

C. Result and Discussion

a. Overview of France

History of France

Before 1789, France was under monarchical rule led by a king. At that time, society was divided into three groups: the noble class, the clergy, and the third group (middle class). The noble class had privileges. However, in 1789, a revolution led by the middle class marked by the nobility privileges annulment and the human rights statement. After undergoing various transitions, in 1815, France was overrun by an authoritarian regime led by Napoleon Bonaparte. In 1802, Napoleon Bonaparte proclaimed himself emperor of France, and the already republican French system of government again became a monarchical system. The empire collapsed in 1815 after the British victory at Waterloo. Then his successor continued the monarchical system of government and was only re-proclaimed as a Republic in 1848. Hence after 1848, France was called the Second French Republic (<https://www.scribd.com/doc/79926640/Sistem-Pendidikan-Prancis>, n.d.).

In the 19th century, an industrial revolution began with the textile industry, heavy industry, and steam engines. Until 1871, France became the second-largest industrial country in the world after England. At this time, railway roads began to be constructed to facilitate the marketing and development of agriculture. This industrialization resulted in the birth of a labor proletariat and the emergence of socialist movements. In 1870, France lost the war to the Prussians (Germans), and from then on, France was self-proclaimed the Third French Republic.

During the rule of the Third Republic, France realized secularization, in which there was an attitude of separating the church from the state and holding free education and compulsory education for children aged 13 years. At this time, France carried out a massive colonial expansion into Africa. The rule of this Third Republic ended in 1940 after losing the war with Germany. Since 1945, France has experienced two systems of government, namely the

parliamentary system (the Fourth French Republic, 1946-1958) and the presidential system (the Fifth French Republic, 1958-present) established by General De Gaulle (<https://Www.Scribd.Com/Doc/79926640/Sistem-Pendidikan-Prancis>, n.d.).

Geography and Climate

France has a population of about 61,054,000.00 million people, consisting of segmentations under 15 years (18.7%) and over 65 years (16.0%) with a literacy rate of 99%. The number of local communities is very high: 36,934 inhabitants, three times more than the population of other European countries. Most communities are tiny (more than 10,000 residents under 200 people), and those small communities are not allowed to have primary schools (<https://Www.Scribd.Com/Doc/79926640/Sistem-Pendidikan-Prancis>, n.d.).

France has an area of about 675,417 km². To the north, it borders Belgium, Luxemburg, and Germany; to the east, it borders Germany, Switzerland, and Italy; to the south, it borders the Mediterranean (Mediterranean) and Spain; to the west, it borders the Atlantic Ocean. The location of France is between 42^o, and 51^o north latitude is; therefore, the country has four seasons, namely: summer (between July-September), autumn (between October-December), winter (between January-March), and spring (between April - June).

In the southern part, the climate is influenced by the Mediterranean climate, there are winters but not so cold, but in summer, it is sweltering. In the western part, the climate is influenced by the marine climate so that in summer, the air is rather cold, but in winter, the air is not so cold. In the central part of the climate is a mountainous climate. The winter in this area is longer than in other regions, and the air is freezing, while in summer it rains a lot and the air is very cool. In the northern part, the climate is the terrestrial climate. The air is freezing in winter, and in summer, it also rains a lot (<https://Www.Scribd.Com/Doc/79926640/Sistem-Pendidikan-Prancis>, n.d.).

System of Government

The present French system of government is based on the Constitution of the Fifth Republic, which was accepted by a people's referendum on 23 September 1958 and amended on 18 May 1960, 28 October 1963, and 29 October 1974. The constitution reaffirmed the rights of individuals regardless of race or religion as set out in the 1789 declaration of human and citizen rights. The constitution reaffirms the vote and right to office in parliamentary government, with a robust executive body.

A president holds the head of state elected once every 7 years in a democratic general election. The president became a constitution member and headed the Armed Forces. The president can take action except in an emergency and has the authority to dissolve parliament. The head of government is held by the Prime Minister, who heads the cabinet or council of ministers. The Prime Minister is appointed by the president and has the authority to determine the politics that must be carried out. The Prime Minister can put forward government proposals and must also be held accountable if the proposals are accepted.

The French state comprises 96 departments (excluding departments across the ocean such as Guadeloupe, Martinique, French Guiana, Reunion, and Saint-Piere Marquelon). A regional head heads each department, called the Prefect, subdivided into arrondissements headed by Sous-prefet. The arrondissement is subdivided into a commune headed by a Maire. The French Republic is a unitary semi-presidential republic with a solid democratic tradition. The Constitution of the Fifth Republic was approved by referendum on 28 September 1958, thus strengthening the executive's authority with parliament. The executive branch has two leaders: the president of the Republic, the Head of State, who is directly elected by the universal suffrage of adults to the office for 5 years (previously 7 years), and the Government, headed by the President-appointed Prime Minister.

While the French parliament is a bicameral legislative body consisting of the National Assembly (Assemblée Nationale) and the Senate, deputies of the National Assembly represent local constituencies and are directly elected for 5 years. This Assembly has the power to dissolve the cabinet, and most Assembly members determine the government's choice. The electoral council elects' senators for 6-year office (actually 9 years), and half the seats are included in elections every 3 years beginning in September 2008.

The legislative power of the Senate is limited; in mediating conflicts between the two parties, the National Assembly has the final decision authority, except for constitutional law and *Lois organiques* (laws provided directly by the constitution) in some respects. At the same time, the government strongly influences the formation of the Parliamentary agenda. At least the face French politics is characterized by two opposing groupings: first, the left-wing, centered around the French Socialist Party, and the other right-wing, previously centered on the *Rassemblement pour la République* (RPR) and now the Union for Popular Movements (UMP), where the executive branch consists primarily of members of the UMP (<https://www.scribd.com/doc/79926640/Sistem-Pendidikan-Francis>, n.d.).

History of Education

As well as other countries with a long history, France has an education system that has been very institutionalized and strives always to carry out reforms. History tells why France is so centralist and bureaucratic in the form of government, including its education system. A world like this has awakened a sleeping giant (J.C. Eicher 1995) because of (1) the opening of high schools and universities to new students who are primarily from social groups that once could never be placed. (2) the existence of continuous reforms that the ruling parties have happily accepted (Nur, 2001: 243-257).

France is a developed country mainly in the industrial field compared to other developed countries in the west. The problem of education is one of the problems that has not been resolved century after century. Before the post-

revolution of 1789, education in France was in the hands of the Catholic Church or the nuanced Church. Since the beginning of the 18th century, it is arguably culturally that French society was divided into two: (1) traditional Catholics; and (2) secular factions with a revolutionary spirit (Tadjab, 1994: 90).

The education system changed both before and after World War II. However, until now, what has been used as a principle of education in France is the idea of the revolution of 1789, which has the motto: Liberty, Egalite, and Fraternite (freedom, equality, and brotherhood) (Arifin, 2003: 84). However, the motto is not easy to implement in education. Because the management of education is very dependent on the leadership model of the government, if the leadership model does not support that direction, then the educational address will also be far from the substance of the motto.

In the early days of the revolution, the leaders of the revolution were suspicious of the catholic church, which was considered an anti-revolutionary group. They are concerned that an anti-republican spirit is instilled in children cared for in schools under the auspices of the church. Revolutionaries do not hate the church because, among themselves, they are also part of the church itself. They are all about the authority of power held by the clergy (church officials) over politics and education (Tadjab, 1994: 98).

Republicans prefer an educational model that is free from tuition payments, open to all, and secular. They also wanted education to be republican and neutral in religious matters so that the children's souls would be revolutionary and nationalist. At the same time, Catholics do not agree with such an educational system. They consider it a "godless" education. Thus, there was a rivalry between secular government schools and Church schools. The model of education in France is centralistic. The Condorcet first proposed this idea in 1792 to establish an educational system for all, disseminated throughout the commune, which would be the foundation for constructing an

educational pyramid with universities and ministries of education as the culmination (Tadjab, 1994: 98).

In 1808, Napoleon Bonaparte took over education management by establishing the “Universit  Imperiali de France” (Royal French University), which was not the same as a union. Because the term implies the France territory’s division into “educational areas,” each of which is called “Academic.” It has one university as its center. The university’s president headed the educational area called “academic” and became a direct subordinate of his headquarters in Paris (Arifin, 2003: 84). According to Tadjab, the monopoly on education by the state started by Napoleon ended in 1850, with private universities allowed to be established. It is just that the spirit of organization of Napoleon’s creation still prevails and that the centralization system still colors the characteristics of French education (Tadjab, 1994: 99).

The level of education in France is divided into three:

1. Primary Education (Pre-School and Lower Secondary)
2. Secondary Education
3. Higher Education (Tadjab, 1994: 99).

At the level of primary schools (SD), whose education is free, compulsory, and does not distinguish between religious traditions, there are two types of parallel education: government public schools and small secondary schools, called Cycles. The latter tended to accommodate the Bourgeois middle-class pupils, who always sent their children to the same school as the ordinary people. From the age of 6 to 11 years, children enter low school. Lessons at this level are the same for all children, both boys, and girls. Nevertheless, before entering that low school, children enter preschool education, called “Ecoles maternelles” or mother’s school, starting at the age of 2 years. The center of attention of this preschool education is the child’s physical, intellectual and moral development. The curriculum achieved this goal of gestures, playing, singing, drawing, painting, and making things by

hand; observation exercises were held on objects around the child's environment (Tadjab, 1994: 100). In contrast, the low education curriculum consists of French, reading and writing, numeracy, history, and earth sciences, ethics and citizenship lessons, the basics of exact sciences and nature, drawing, handwork, singing, and gestures (Tadjab, 1994: 100).

Secondary education in France begins with entering the classroom (cycle d'observation), which in the past went through rigorous selection, but now all who pass qualified public primary schools can enter this class without selection. Accepted in this experimental class are children at least 11 years old and not more than 12 years old (Tadjab, 1994: 100).

After the child completes the cycle observation, which lasts 2 years, there are 5 types of education for children according to their talents and abilities. The first type is Closing Education, which is 3 years long and has no continuation. The curriculum is a continuation of primary school general education and is supplemented with practical subjects for daily life whose intellectual ability is the lowest. With the enactment of the compulsory education law until the age of 16, this education ends with exams and compulsory education diplomas. The second type is Short General Education, also called a Public High School, which is 3 years long. Graduates of this general education can enter positions that are not technical and can enter the Normal School (Teacher).

The third is the Short Vocational education, which is given in the Vocational High School and is 4 years long. This education is intended for technically gifted children. In addition to expanding general education, this education includes theoretical and practical exercises in a vocational and is also given specialization. This education is intended for technically gifted children. The fourth type is Long Vocational Education, which is intended for those with high intellectual abilities. This education consists of the education of an engineering agent for 4 years and gifted education for 5 years. The fifth type is Long General Education, which prepares the child or its graduates to

enter higher education. The length of his education is 7 years, including the determination of majors (practical classes) (Tadjab, 1994: 100).

The level of higher education is given in universities. The University of Sorbonne in Paris is the Central University. In each academic there is a university as a center. Each university, both at the center and in the academia, consists of a million faculties. A university may also include institutions that include an academy in particular sciences. Faculties, research institutes, or colleges that are part of a university have broad autonomy and facilities such as laboratories and libraries. The University of Paris, for example, has more than 100 libraries specialized in specific fields and is spread across various places (Tadjab, 1994: 101). University higher education is divided into 3 cycles of 2 years each and ends with an exam.

1. The first cycle on science consists of four majors. If they pass the exam in this science cycle, students get a DUES diploma and are allowed to continue to other institutions or will continue to study at the same university.
2. The second cycle is about art and has 5 majors for students who do not want to be teachers. Those who pass the final exam of this art cycle get a DUEL diploma.
3. The third cycle aimed to produce researchers with the title "Maitresse." The science section consists of 12 majors. Science students must get 4 diplomas (2 diplomas) every year during this cycle. To get the degree of "maitraise," a student must do a thesis and, at the end of the year, is awarded the degree of "license," which requires specificity in one or two subjects at school. The diploma to become a Lycee teacher was obtained after completing IPES (Institut de Preparation Aux Enseignements Du Second Degree) and taking the state exam, which is held annually and is competitive and selective. At the end of the third cycle, students who pass the exam get a Doctorate (Tadjab, 1994: 102).

Religion

France is a secular state because religious freedom is a constitutional right, although some religious organizations such as Scientology, Children of God, Unification Church, and the Order of the Solar Temple are considered worship. According to a January 2007 poll by Catholic World News: 51% of French people are Catholics, 31% are agnostics or atheists (Other polls give atheists a percentage of 27%), 10% from other religions or without opinions, 4% Muslims, 3% Protestants, 1% Jews (https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perancis#cite_note-31, n.d.).

According to the latest Eurobarometer Poll 2005 (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2005), 34% of French citizens responded that “they believe in the existence of God,” while 27% answered “they believe there is a type of spirit or life force” and 33% stated, “they do not believe in the existence of a type of spirit, God, or life force.” Another survey stated that 32% of the French population was atheist, and another 32% “doubted the existence of God but not atheists” (Religious Views and Beliefs Vary Greatly by Country, Financial Times/Harris Poll, December 2006).

According to the World Jewish Congress, the number of Jewish communities in France reaches 600,000 and is the largest in Europe. Estimates of the number of Muslims in France have always varied. According to the 1999 French census, there were 3.7 million people with “probable Muslim beliefs” in France (6.3% of the total population). In 2003, the French Interior Ministry estimated the number of Muslims at 5-6 million (https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perancis#cite_note-31, n.d.).

The concept of *laïcité* exists in France, and because of this. Since 1905, the French government has legally rejected any religious recognition (except regulations such as military clerics and the Alsace-Moselle). Meanwhile, according to formal legal criteria, France recognizes religious organizations that do not use religious doctrine. Instead, religious organizations must repeat from intervention in policymaking. Tensions are frequent regarding

discrimination against minorities, particularly against Muslims (see Islam in France) (https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perancis#cite_note-31, n.d.).

Pre- and Post-First World War Migration

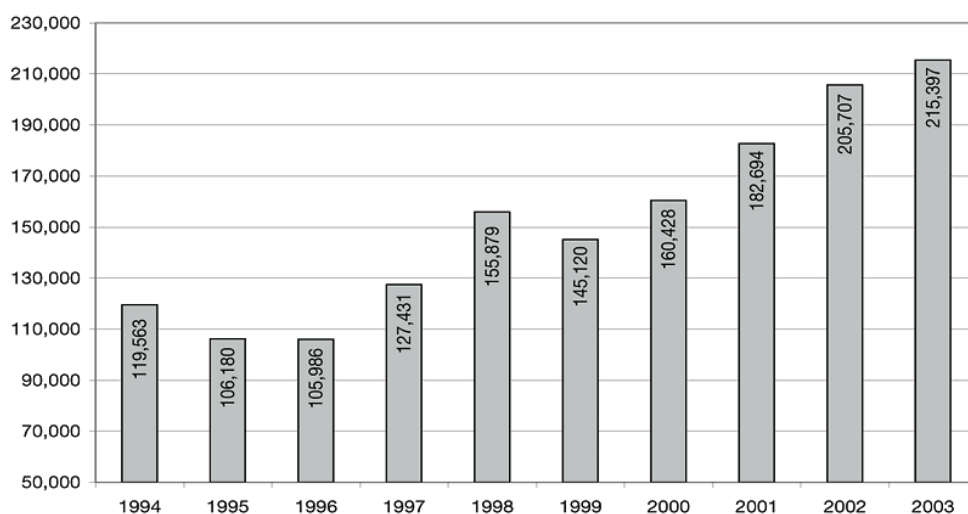
After the First World War, many migrant workers sought a more decent livelihood in France. Most immigrants come from North African countries that are also French protectors, such as Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco. The most significant number came from Algeria; in 1912, about 4000 to 5000 workers in France were from Algeria, half of whom worked in oil refineries and the like around the City of Marseille (Nielsen, 1995: 6). This massive exodus of the population of North Africa, especially Algeria, occurred as settlements in their country were increasingly squeezed by French colonies living in urban areas, making it difficult for them to earn an income. In addition, French colonial policy also supported them to migrate in the form of French residence and resident permits (Robinson, 2011: 116-117).

The immigrants arrived at the beginning of the 18th and 19th centuries due to the process of industrialization. This is the impact of the decline in the birth rate, which has resulted in the country's shortage of human resources. France was the exception in Western Europe during this period. Most other industrialized countries, including Germany, have higher birth rates and are mainly emigration countries. The French labor market's shortage was worsened due to the population decline brought by the wars of 1870-1871 and 1914-1918. To reduce this, France entered into labor recruitment agreements with Italy (1904, 1906, 1919), Belgium (1906), Poland (1906), and Czechoslovakia (1920). In the early 1930s, France was the second most important country in the world in terms of immigration after the United States. At that time, about 2.7 million immigrants lived in France (6.6% of the total population). After the Second World War and the economic progress of the 1950s and 1960s, France once again recruited (mainly male) workers from Italy, Portugal, Spain, Belgium, Germany, Poland, and Russia. At the same time, immigration from the former colonies increased due to the war of liberation

and the decolonization process. As a result of the Algerian War (1954-1962) and subsequent Algerian independence in 1962, most of the pro-French and Algerian settlers moved to France ([Http://Focus-Migration.Hwwi.de/France.1231.0.Html?&L=1](http://Focus-Migration.Hwwi.de/France.1231.0.Html?&L=1), n.d.).

Among the contributing factors to the migration of the French protectorate state's population was the difficulty of living in one's homeland with the conflicts that occurred with the colonial nation. In addition, France is also in dire need of menial workers who are not filled by domestic labor. Thus, the dynamics that occurred in the French protectorate countries in political, social, and economic aspects have impacted the people's movements that began to be pressed by colonialism.

After the Second World War, the immigration of North African citizens was dominated by the Algerian population. In 1957, about 190,000 Algerian immigrants crossed the Mediterranean Sea, most of them from the Tizi Ouzou, Setif, and Constantine regions of northeastern Algeria. Even in the next decade, their number reached a quarter of a million inhabitants (Nielsen, 1995: 8). In the late 1950s, immigrants arrived not only from Algeria but also from Tunisia and Morocco, so France's immigrant population reached 48,000 in 1964 (Nielsen, 1995: 8).



Source: Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques, INED (2005)

Figure 1. Immigration to France

Islam in France

According to the book *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, the first time Islam penetrated French territory occurred in 721 AD. At that time, Islamic forces managed to attack the City of Toulouse and capture Autun and Poitiers. However, the Muslim army was defeated by the forces of Karel Martel in 732 AD. Historians consider defeating the main obstacle to expanding Islamic rule in Europe (Robinson, 2011: 232). At that time, the Muawiyah dynasty was aggressively expanding the territory of the Islamic world.

The Islam position as a France religious community has been recognized for its existence in the Act of 9 December 1905 (Nielsen, 1995: 12). In the first article of the Act, it reads: "The State guarantees freedom of trust." This guarantees freedom in the practice of worship, as long as it does not interfere with the public interest. Article two of the Act states, "The State does not give recognition, give salaries, or provide subsidies for any religion (Nielsen, 1995: 12). Thus, since France implemented a system of secularization in the relationship between the state and religion, various religious activities were legally carried out, as long as they did not interfere with the public interest. Then none of the religions in France got the subsidies provided by the state as much as Christianity. So the religion of Islam developed without the French government's help. Alternatively, in other words, Islam developed with self-help financial power.

In France, there are approximately 1500 Muslim organizations, each of which has its mosque. The trend of French Muslim affiliation refers to ethnic similarities or homeland origin ("Islam in France," article accessed on 28 March 2015 from <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/france/>). This situation is a logical implication of the presence of Law number 4 of 1905, which guarantees freedom of organization (Nielsen, 1995: 13). This law guarantees freedom of organization for all French residents, whether native French citizens or foreign residents. The condition is that it must be officially registered in the population data in the government. As a result, because of

this freedom, Muslim-based organizations founded by migrants are mushrooming in France (Nielsen, 1995: 13).

The first mosque erected in France was the Grande Mosquée de Paris ("Grand Mosque of Paris"), a mosque located in the Arrondissement of Ve. The mosque was erected after World War I to signify France's gratitude to the Muslim curtains of the colonies who fought against German forces. This mosque was built following the Mudejar style; the tower is 33 meters high. President Gaston Doumergue inaugurated the mosque on 15 July 1926. In September 1976, the government issued a circular through the State Secretariat of Immigrant Workers containing support for improving social conditions and maintaining the roots and cultural identity of migrant workers (Nielsen, 1995: 14). With this circular, migrant worker get financial assistance intended for various purposes. In this case, Muslim immigrants gained recognition and financial assistance from the French government. They may forget that Islam is an integral element of a culture (Nielsen, 1995: 14).

The development of Islam and mosques in France was also written by a French journalist who is an expert on Islam, Xavier Ternisien. In his latest book, Ternisien writes the Area of Saint-Denis, in the north of France, there are approximately 97 mosques, while in the south of France, there are 73 mosques. Ternisien added that the mosques that stand in France with their distinctive domes show that Islam is now coming to the fore. Islam in France is no longer the religion that in the past moved secretly (silent movement) ([Http://Www.Republika.Co.Id/Berita/Dunia-Islam/Islam-Mancanegara/09/07/27/65037-Islam-Di-Prancis-Terb Besar-Di-Eropa](http://www.Republika.Co.Id/Berita/Dunia-Islam/Islam-Mancanegara/09/07/27/65037-Islam-Di-Prancis-Terb Besar-Di-Eropa), n.d.).

The first mosque built in France was the Paris Mosque, precisely in 1926. The term used by the French government to identify places of worship of Muslims is mosque; another term also mentions salles de priere (Ibid). France does not conduct a special census to calculate the current number of mosques; this count is only an estimate carried out by the Legrain institution (Nielsen, 1995: 15). Meanwhile, according to a survey conducted by French

Muslim groups, until 2003, the number of mosques throughout France reached 1,554 pieces ([Http://Www.Republika.Co.Id/Berita/Dunia-Islam/Islam-Mancanegara/09/07/27/65037-Islam-Di-Prancis-Terb Besar-Di-Eropa](http://Www.Republika.Co.Id/Berita/Dunia-Islam/Islam-Mancanegara/09/07/27/65037-Islam-Di-Prancis-Terb Besar-Di-Eropa), n.d.). Starting from those in the form of rented rooms underground to buildings owned by Muslim residents and built-in public places.

Table 1. Number of rented rooms underground to buildings owned by Muslim residents and built in public places

	Total	of which <i>foyers</i>	Other
1976	131	93	38
1978	197	125	72
1980	322	178	144
1982	451	212	239
1984	578	234	344
1985	619	238	381
Total	941	187	516

Nevertheless, to date, there are an estimated 1500 Muslim places of worship, although most of them are very small in size and lack equipment ("Islam in France," article accessed on 29 March 2015 from <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/france/>). This is undoubtedly very contrary to the needs of Muslims for places of worship, especially for Friday prayers. In addition, it is not easy to build a mosque in France; in addition to the complicated administrative process, in terms of architecture, it must also be considered to fit the city's infrastructure. As of 2010, it is estimated that the number of Muslims in France has reached more than four million ([Http://Www.Muslimdaily.Net/Berita/Internasional/Pemerintah-Prancis-Ada-4000-Muallaf-Di-Prancis-Setiap-Tahun.Html](http://Www.Muslimdaily.Net/Berita/Internasional/Pemerintah-Prancis-Ada-4000-Muallaf-Di-Prancis-Setiap-Tahun.Html), n.d.), continues to develop every year.

France's Muslim population works as factory laborers in industrial cities such as Marseilles, Lyons, Lille, and Paris (Nielsen, 1995: 12). This condition in the early days of immigrants came due to the low education and skills. In its minority numbers, French Muslims have been named the Muslim community with the lowest unemployment rate among western European

countries (Nielsen, 1995: 12). Among the youth, some workers have reasonably high education and are employed in fields that require special skills. Until 1980, economic difficulties and the opening of employment influenced women also to come to work. However, only women of Turkish descent showed readiness to seize this opportunity.

In the political sphere, no one has yet been involved in the parliament of the French state. However, some French representatives in the EU Parliament have Muslim backgrounds. Meanwhile, the first Muslim cabinet member in French history was the Minister of Equality, Azouz Begag. Prime Minister Dominique de Villepinhal appointed him in June 2005 ([Http://Www.Euro-Islam.Info/Country-Profiles/France/](http://www.Euro-Islam.Info/Country-Profiles/France/), n.d.-a). Meanwhile, the contribution of Muslims to French society is seen to be more significant in sports. There are currently at least four Muslim players in the 2014 World Cup ([Http://Www.Uefa.Com/Worldcup/Season=2014/Teams/Team=43/Index.Html](http://www.Uefa.Com/Worldcup/Season=2014/Teams/Team=43/Index.Html), n.d.). Many immigrants and later generations of immigrants living in France demand equality in various fields. In this case, sports are a suitable medium to show equal rights for all walks of life regardless of ethnic background, religion, or race.

Islamic Education System in France

In 1980, statistical data showed that nearly nine percent of children under 14 were immigrants. The data also show that two-thirds of them are in kindergarten and elementary school (Nielsen, 1995: 20). Here is the data on the level of education of immigrants in France.

Table 2. The Statistical Data of Immigrants Children Under 14

Country of Origin	No Elem. School Ed.	HS or Prof. Deg. (CAP, BEP)	GCE	University
Algeria	45	32	8	15
Morocco	53	22	9	16
Tunisia	48	28	9	15
Sub-Saharan Africa	34	24	15	27
Immigrant Population	41	27	11	21

Non-Immigrant Population	21	42	14	23
National Population	22	41	14	23

Source: Population Cencus INSEE 1999

Meanwhile, with the increasing Muslim population in France, the need for Islamic education facilities is increasing. According to regulations, private schools do not get annual operating expenses from the state. Another obstacle is that, at the primary school level, religious studies have not yet gained a place in the school curriculum ([Http://Www.Euro-Islam.Info/Country-Profiles/France/](http://www.Euro-Islam.Info/Country-Profiles/France/), n.d.-b). This will undoubtedly make it difficult for Muslim children to get comprehensive religious education.

For several years, private schools were more often sponsored by private companies concerned with Muslim education. State Law provided for this in 1959. There are two options: a simple contract and an association contract ([Http://Www.Euro-Islam.Info/Country-Profiles/France/](http://www.Euro-Islam.Info/Country-Profiles/France/), n.d.-b). Religious education for Muslim communities is more significantly carried out in Muslim families, mosques, or organizations. This education sector prioritizes teaching and learning the Qur'an outside regular school hours.

Initially, a school was established in Vitrierie, the southern suburbs of Paris. The curriculum is adapted to the French national education curriculum, but there are additional special lessons on local content on Islam, such as Arabic and Islam. Education et Savior is the second school to open in Paris after the Reussite school on the outskirts of Aubervilliers, north of Paris, and the fourth in France. The other two Islamic private schools are Ibn Rushd in the City of Lille, the north of France, and Al-Kindi in the City of Lyon ([Http://Www.Republika.Co.Id/Berita/Dunia-Islam/Islam-Mancanegara/09/07/27/65037-Islam-Di-Prancis-Terbesar-Di-Eropa](http://www.Republika.Co.Id/Berita/Dunia-Islam/Islam-Mancanegara/09/07/27/65037-Islam-Di-Prancis-Terbesar-Di-Eropa), n.d.).

Government Policy towards Islamic Education

Before elaborating further on what the French government's policy towards Islamic education is, in this case, the author first puts forward some

obstacles to worship in France ("Islam in France," an article accessed on 30 March 2015 from <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/france/>) which is a challenge for Muslims, which will directly or indirectly also affect the process of continuity of Islamic education there, among others:

1. Places of worship

There are at least 1,500 Islamic places of worship in France, and although quite a lot, most mosques are not at adequate capacity. Building a new mosque was difficult and often invited protests from local communities and blockages by local authorities. However, there are some signs that things have improved over the past few years.

2. Funeral

In addition to secular burials, local governments have made regulations that have allowed the practice of Islamic burials. However, due to lack of space, the government made regulations to grant the right of funeral only for a certain period. Since this is contrary to the teachings of Islam, the policy has caused an outcry from the public.

3. Halal Slaughter

Kosher slaughter is allowed in the slaughter of designated animals and is at most not tricky in France. However, when the demand for meat is high, the capacity of such conventional slaughter facilities can be diverted to the practice of kosher slaughter in designated places. There are constant problems with the labeling and distribution of halal food. The Muslim Executive Council has promised to address the problem, but many communities are concerned that it will not have broad enough authority to implement its ideas. In 2005, a new fast-food restaurant was opened in Paris that was planned only to provide halal food. In a pun on the French word for Arabic, he is named "Beurger King Muslim".

Hijab

The wearing of the hijab by women in primary school sparked controversy in 1989 in Creil. This situation in 1994 received the government's

attention, but in each case, a solution was achieved through mediation at the local level organized by Hanifa Cherifi, who now serves as inspector general in the Ministry of Education. A case in 1994 involved 300 students and the necessary individual mediation in each case. Some female students agreed to remove their headscarves in the classroom rather than be in conflict with the police. Meanwhile, students who refuse to remove the hijab choose to join a private school or home school. However, on 2 November 1992, the government issued a policy allowing Muslim female students to wear the hijab in public schools. Since then, the appearance of women wearing headscarves has become a new Islamic phenomenon that has made the country known. They are not only present in mosques or other Islamic religious centers but also in public schools, state universities, and other public places ([Http://Www.Republika.Co.Id/Berita/Dunia-Islam/Islam-Mancanegara/09/07/27/65037-Islam-Di-Prancis-Terbesar-Di-Eropa](http://www.Republika.Co.Id/Berita/Dunia-Islam/Islam-Mancanegara/09/07/27/65037-Islam-Di-Prancis-Terbesar-Di-Eropa), n.d.).

Getting a permit for an Islamic school in France is not difficult. At most among the Islamic schools that were hindered when they were founded it was only the Al-Kindi school in Lyon in 2006. The Academy of Lyon, France's highest state education agency, refused its operating license and closed the school because it did not meet hygiene and safety standards. However, the Administrative Court in Lyon overturned the closure in February last year. This meant al-Kindi schools could open new teachings in March 2007. According to Lhaj Thami Breze, Chairman of the Organization of Islamic Unity in France (UOIF), the rejection of Al-Kindi encouraged the Muslim minority in France to open a similar school ([Http://Www.Republika.Co.Id/Berita/Dunia-Islam/Islam-Mancanegara/09/07/27/65037-Islam-Di-Prancis-Terbesar-Di-Eropa](http://www.Republika.Co.Id/Berita/Dunia-Islam/Islam-Mancanegara/09/07/27/65037-Islam-Di-Prancis-Terbesar-Di-Eropa), n.d.).

E. Conclusion

The above description concludes that, first, France is the country that has the most significant growth rate in the number of Muslims compared to other European countries. Second, Islamic education in France initially faced

intense challenges on the part of the government, but this was because the country used a secularistic system of government, so the church objected to the education policy that prevailed there. However, gradually, especially after France became a republic, plus due to the increasing number of Muslims there, Islamic education began to be accepted. Initially, Islamic education existed only in public schools, including several religious subjects. However, eventually private Islamic educational institutions began to stand there and obtained permission from the government.

Third, Muslims face challenges in the context of worship, such as permits for places of worship, funerals, halal food, and hijab issues. However, because Muslims continued to prosecute rights, independence in worship and the use of Islamic symbols eventually began to gain independence in the public sphere (public sphere). For example, Muslim women now do not hesitate to wear the hijab in schools, malls, markets, streets, and other public places.

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