



L'Algérie et sa représentation parlementaire, 1848–1962

Phillip C. Naylor

To cite this article: Phillip C. Naylor (2019): L'Algérie et sa représentation parlementaire, 1848–1962, The Journal of North African Studies, DOI: [10.1080/13629387.2019.1636479](https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2019.1636479)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2019.1636479>



Published online: 30 Jun 2019.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 1



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

BOOK REVIEW

L'Algérie et sa représentation parlementaire, 1848–1962, by Jacques Binoche, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2018, 204 pp., €20.50 (softcover), ISBN 978-2-343-15252-3

Professor Jacques Binoche presents a concise historical survey of Algerian colonial parliamentarians dating from Algeria's administrative integration with France (1848) until its independence (1962), excluding the eras of the Second Empire and Vichy, when there was no Algerian parliamentary representation.¹ Binoche's mentor, Xavier Yacono (1912–90), originally suggested this topic to him, the result of which was a 2194-page doctoral thesis (Binoche 1987).

Binoche was born in protectorate Morocco and, as a second lieutenant in the French army, deployed in Algeria during its war of independence. The author's biographical details are relevant here, as he believes that experiencing contemporary events – a history lived – enhances historiography (9). He taught at the University of Orléans and the University of the Pacific in Papeete, Tahiti, and has published a complementary book on parliamentarians in the colonies and overseas departments and territories (Binoche 2016), among other works dealing with modern France.

Binoche asserts that the Algerian parliamentarians played an important role in French history, especially concerning the development of French republicanism. A popular but misinformed assumption is that the parliamentarians were a homogeneous political constituency. Binoche portrays them, however, as a diverse group loyal to republican values and a variety of parties, particularly those on the left. The parliamentarians constantly sought, however, to acquire and exercise greater political influence.

The book begins by surveying the history of colonial Algerian parliamentary representation, from the Second to the Fifth Republics. The February revolution of 1848 produced a provisional government that, in April of that year, initially allowed four deputies to participate in the National Constituent Assembly. The subsequent constitution of November 1848 reduced the number to three representatives (one for each recently assimilated department: Algiers, Oran, and Constantine). With the advent of the Second Empire, Algerian parliamentarians lost their representation, despite efforts to gain entry into the Corps Législatif that was instituted by the 1852 constitution. The fall of the Second Empire and proclamation of the Third Republic restored Algerian representation in the fledgling National Assembly, increasing it to six deputies (two per department). The Algerian deputies nevertheless faced an initially conservative (monarchist) metropolitan majority, which reduced their representation to three deputies in 1875 but allocated three senators (one per department). Representation increased to six deputies in 1881 and nine in 1927; Algiers received an additional deputy in 1936.

A dramatic change occurred with the arrival of the Fourth Republic in October 1946. As Algerian Muslims had formally been accorded full French citizenship

earlier that year (via the Lamine Guèye law), they thus acquired representation in the National Assembly. From 1946 to 1958, Algeria possessed 30 seats: 15 for European deputies (Algiers 6, Constantine 4, Oran 5) and 15 for Muslim deputies (Algiers 5, Constantine 7, Oran 3). As for the upper house of parliament, renamed the Council of the Republic in the 1946 constitution, Algeria had 14 representatives, or councillors: 7 for Europeans (Algiers 3, Oran 2, Constantine 2) and 7 for Muslims (Algiers 2, Oran 2, Constantine 3). From 1958 to 1962 – following the proclamation of the Fifth Republic – Algeria (which had been administratively expanded to 15 departments) had 74 deputies in the National Assembly, of which 48 were Muslims (and one Franco-Algerian), and 38 senators in the Senate (which recovered its historic appellation), 27 being Muslims. Three Muslim women were elected, with one, Nafissa Sid Cara, joining Prime Minister Michel Debré's government in 1959 as *Secrétaire d'État auprès du Premier ministre chargée des questions sociales en Algérie et de l'évolution du statut personnel de droit musulman*. Muslim parliamentarians (and their families), it should be said, were targeted by the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN), with two – Senator Chérif Benhabyles and Deputy Djillali Kaddari – being assassinated. Reflecting their political diversity, parliamentarians both opposed and supported President Charles de Gaulle's offer of Algerian 'self-determination'.

Binoche describes the evolution of the Algerian electorate. The Crémieux Decree of 1870 receives particular attention. It not only gave Algeria's indigenous Jews full French citizenship – and thus the franchise – but also provoked virulent anti-Semitism, particularly in Algeria's European population. The Naturalization Law of 1889 bestowed French citizenship on second-generation European immigrants in Algeria (mainly from Italy, Malta, and Spain). Algeria's parliamentarians ensured the failure of the 1936 Blum-Viollette *projet de loi* that aimed to extend the suffrage to some 30,000 Muslims without them losing their personal status. Binoche points out the paradox of the Algerian parliamentarians' patriotic attachment to French political ideals contrasting with their apprehension and repression of the colonised Muslims (as reflected in the punitive *Code de l'Indigénat* and the separate electoral college for voters juridically covered by Muslim personal status law).

One equates French colonial expansion with Eugène Étienne (a deputy/senator/minister from Oran) and the *parti colonial*. Étienne's expensive imperial ambitions and initiatives nevertheless received little or no endorsement from his fellow Algerian parliamentarians regarding French expansion in Tonkin, Dahomey, Soudan, and Madagascar. They questioned the takeover of Tunisia, although some eventually viewed it positively. Parliamentarians refrained from debate regarding Morocco but voted for the Franco-German Accord of 1911 that led to the Treaty of Fez and the official declaration of a protectorate in 1912. They were principally concerned with protecting Algerian interests. After World War II, on the other hand, they backed the proposed takeover of Libya's Fezzan.

Parliamentarians worked toward legalising the expropriation of Muslim land, e.g. the so-called Warnier Law of 1873 (named after an Algerian deputy, Auguste Warnier). At the turn of the century, the parliamentarians supported

the inauguration of the Délégations Financières, which gave Algeria financial autonomy. After World War II and particularly when the War Independence commenced, parliamentarians advocated Algeria's accelerated, albeit eleventh hour, economic development.

The parliamentarians also endeavoured to limit European Algerians' military service to one year. Despite the parliamentarians' opposition, Europeans' service eventually aligned with that of the metropolitan French: two years in 1905 and three years in 1913. The parliamentarians were not opposed to Muslims' military service so long as it did not lead to citizenship acquisition and equal rights. During World War I, between 18,530 and 22,000 Europeans perished and between 19,075 and 25,000 Muslims (142). European and Muslim Algerian troops fought with the Free French in World War II, leading to consequential political and institutional reforms, most notably Muslim representation in the National Assembly and Senate. In addition, given the geopolitical context of the Cold War, parliamentarians (European and Muslim) did not dispute French atomic testing in the Algerian Sahara.

The book concludes by recalling how, for a brief moment in 1958, the longed for political integration – 'a French-Algerian country' (176) – seemed possible following de Gaulle's 4 June speech at the Forum in Algiers, his 'Peace of the Brave' initiative, and the aforementioned elections. But by that time, it was too late. Binoche recounts that in 1946, the newly elected Ferhat Abbas, hoping for reform, appealed to his fellow deputies in the National Assembly: 'Be generous'. Nevertheless, 'France [did] not respond' (176). Twelve years later, the FLN was also unreceptive, creating the Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Algérienne, thus confirming its uncompromising pursuit of full independence.

Professor Binoche offers an erudite narrative and a prosopography. Portraits and appended lists of deputies and senators are included. Biographical profiles appear throughout the book of the more notable parliamentarians, such as Eugène Étienne, Émile Morinaud, Gaston Thompson, René Mayer, the Bachaga Saïd Boualam, Paul Cuttoli, and Nafissa Sid Cara.

The book is not only a succinct, but detailed, study of Algerian parliamentarians and French republicanism, but also a history of colonial Algeria. It especially invites further examination of colonial French and Muslim governing elites. It is a valuable and welcomed contribution and reference for students and scholars.

Note

1. A shorter version of Jacques Binoche's book has been published under the title *Histoire de l'Algérie et ses parlementaires (1848–1962)* (Saint-Denis: Éditions Edilivre, 2018).

References

- Binoche, Jacques. 1987. "Le rôle des élus de l'Algérie et des colonies au Parlement sous la Troisième République (1871–1940)." thèse d'État, Université de Poitiers, 7 vols.
- Binoche, Jacques. 2016. *Les parlementaires d'outre-mer*. Saint-Denis: Éditions Edilivre.

Phillip C. Naylor
Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI, USA
 phillip.naylor@marquette.edu

© 2019 Phillip C. Naylor
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2019.1636479>

