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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE PORTRAYAL OF THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE IN SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS AND NATION FORMATION IN MOROCCO

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Abstract

This article investigates the portrayal of the pledge of allegiance in school textbooks of middle school with a focus on nation construction. Drawing on the Ethno-Symbolist approach to nation formation, as developed by Anthony Smith, the school textbooks are analyzed qualitatively. The findings reveal that pledge of allegiance is portrayed as a national symbol that characterizes Moroccan nation formation and persistence over a long durée, from ethnie to pre-modern to a modern entity.

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Introduction:-

The states around the globe usually face the challenge of constructing a nation out of a multi-ethnic society. Smith (2009) compares nationalists to archeologists as they have to rediscover, select and reinterpret the past of a particular community to forge a unified nation. This is done with the help of, among other things, textbooks that can serve as weapons of mass instruction that put the first imprint on our memory (Ingrao, 2009, p. 181). They help in constructing a collective memory of individuals and consequently form what Anderson calls 'Imagined Community' (Anderson, 2006). Morocco seems to encounter a similar challenge as the country is made of distinctive ethnic groups. Amazigh (Berber), Arab and Jewish ethnies form the nation's main ethnic landscape. This article aims at highlighting the role of the pledge of allegiance in the formation and persistence of the Moroccan nation, out of such ethnic diversity and based on school textbooks national narratives. It is important in the sense that it contributes to the scarce literature on the topic of school textbooks and nation formation in Morocco.

Theoretical Framework:

This article mainly draws on an Ethno-Symbolist approach, as developed by Smith (2009), to nation formation as the theoretical framework of the study. He suggests that nations have ethnic origins, and that they develop from ethnie to pre-modern to a modern entity (Sturm, 2006). This continuity can be detected through the existence of certain permanent cultural features that characterize the nation over the long durée. According to Smith (2009), communities may take two different routes on their way to becoming nations. This would take place depending on the ethnic foundations of each nation. Those nations that are built around an entire ethnic community and those that are formed around parts or fragments of one or more ethnies. He further explains the second case when he writes:

In the latter case, we are dealing with migrant communities and settlers, who have split off from the 'mother land' and their fellow ethnic members, whether for economic or religious and political reasons, and have sought a new life as a community, or communities, elsewhere, usually overseas. (p52).

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Smith continues to describe this route by suggesting that the culture and religion of the migrant communities would be brought to the new territory, but they would undergo a gradual transformation because of the new surroundings. A settler ideology would emerge, mainly with the help of 'a religious and racial exclusiveness allied to some kind of providentialist ideology' (p53). A modern nation is firstly characterized by the frequent use of symbols, myths and history in the public places (Smith, 1994).

Literature Review:-

Research on the national narratives of the textbooks in Morocco reveals an Arab-Muslim character of the nation, but stop short of covering issues related to the way the nation came to be formed. The literature does not address the cultural resources that are cultivated to forge a unified nation over long duree. This article fills this gap by highlighting the role of the pledge of allegiance as a cultural symbol in the birth and persistence of the Moroccan nation, as portrayed in the textbooks of middle school.

The research conducted by K.Maye-Saidi (2018) is significant to this study in the sense that it deals with the portrayal of ethnic groups in the textbooks. She analyzed current textbooks of Morocco with regard to the narratives and discourse on the country's national identity, via focusing on the concept of 'other'. The researcher took the Amazighen and Jewish groups as the subject of the study and aimed to find if these groups are represented as a subaltern in the official discourse. She also sought to investigate whether these practices are part of what is regarded as the epistemic violence that is imposed on silenced groups as the process of homogenizing, which post-colonial states implement in order to construct or reconstruct a nation. The findings reveal that the history of the Berbers is incorporated, both in pre-Islamic and post-Islamic eras, in national narratives, and mainly within the context of defending Morocco against European attacks. This is embodied in the portrayal of Amazigh resistance to the Romans and the so-called the Berber Dahir during the French Protectorate in the 1930s. The Berbers also help MlyIdriss establish the first Moroccan Islamic state, which she depicts as the first Islamic collective memory in the discourse of the nationalists. The Berber dynasties of Almoravids and Almohads are depicted as the heydays of the Moroccan state. She therefore suggests that the Berbers are depicted as defenders of Morocco, and she believes this may serve in securing unity of a multiethnic society such as Morocco. The textbooks, as a chapter tells, portray modern Morocco's identity as the Maghreb then Arab orient. The chapter lists all characteristics that embody the country as a modern state that belongs to the Maghreb and Arab orient.

K.Maye-Saidi (2018) concludes that the discourse of national identity consists of components from the pre-Islamic past, but it has Arab-Islamic narratives as its roots. Morocco is contextualized within Greater Maghreb and the Arab world, while mentioning that the discourse doesn't adopt a pan-Arabism stance. As for the Jews, textbooks narratives, according to the researcher, appear to exclude Jewish from national history, however, this does not mean they are represented as 'Other'. The textbooks, she found, avoid stressing 'internal plurality' and the national identity is not formed by othering. Though K.Maye-Saidi (2018) significantly addresses the portrayal of ethnic groups in the textbooks, her research falls short of explaining how an Arab-Muslim nation is forged out of such ethnic diversity.

Idrissi analyzed three generations of history textbooks based on the educational reforms that took place in 1970, 1987, and 2002. The first generation textbooks tended to Arabize the history of the country by ascribing an Arab origin to the Amazigh people (the Berbers). Also, the similarities between Berber dialects and ancient Egyptian and Ethiopian languages are claimed. The second-generation avoided addressing the origin of the Berbers while excluding ancient history. The third-generation textbooks no longer arabize history while ancient history is included. Idrissi states that it reveals the pluralistic nature of national identity. Faoubar (2014)²⁷ analyzed French textbooks of Morocco's middle school. His findings reveal that discourse of national identity is not as strong as that of other types of identity such as personal or individual identity. The textbooks do not portray a clear image of religious identity. The researcher further states that a Muslim identity is cultivated in Arabic language textbooks. These articles would show that social studies, mainly part history, textbooks are the ones that address national identity construction on a diachronic basis. The Islamic education and Arabic language textbooks are also essential but as far as synchronic analysis of national narratives is concerned.

Methodology:-

This research adopts a qualitative deductive approach to investigate school textbooks of middle school in Morocco. It deals with textbook research and more specifically product-oriented research. As cited in (Soltan Zadeh, 2012),

Weinbrenner (1990) suggests three categories of textbook research, process-oriented which deals with textbook design and publication, reception-oriented which is mainly concerned with the extent to which textbooks influence teachers and students while product-oriented research addresses the content of textbooks.

This article aims at highlighting nation formation over the long *durée* through the portrayal of the pledge of allegiance. It takes the Ethno-Symbolist perspective to nation formation as the theoretical framework, especially as developed by Smith (2009). The latter believes that nations are developed out of ethnic cultural resources, from ethnic to pre-modern to modern entities. This study analyzes the textbooks qualitatively with a focus on the pledge of allegiance during the aforementioned phases of nation formation. It is selected as the cultural symbol to gauge nation-building in Morocco as depicted by the textbooks, and throughout the three phases of ethnic, pre-modern and modern phase. Also, the role of the pledge of allegiance in the transition from ethnic to a pre-modern nation will be investigated through tracing the route to nation formation as depicted in the textbooks under the study.

The textbooks sample of this study are all approved by the ministry of education in Morocco, and they are used all over the country. Middle school textbooks of social studies are mainly selected because they serve the purpose of the study, especially part history that tends to use a diachronic approach to nation formation in Morocco. To a lesser extent, textbooks of Arabic and Islamic studies are also included as they provide complementary data that help achieve the goal of this study.

Findings And Discussion:-

The Ethnic Phase

This article suggests that the pledge of allegiance is introduced by the textbooks before the national narratives, which is an indication to the potential existence of ethnic origins of the nation. Social studies lessons of middle school, part history, start with ancient middle East, followed by the birth of Islam in Arabia. Although the historical appearance of Amazigh (Berber) Kingdoms is older than the emergence of Islam, the textbooks prioritized the former over the first. Starting the lessons with ancient Arab history is significant in the sense that the students would be introduced to the history of Islam as a religion that first emerged amid an Arab ethnic community, and most importantly to a religion that brought the concept of the pledge of allegiance. This would help in ascribing ethnic origins to the nation, and further highlight the role of the pledge of allegiance in achieving unity among Arabs.

The pledge of allegiance that emerged in the Arabian Peninsula, as introduced by the textbooks, embodies a sort of a myth of missionary election, which Smith (2009) describes as a God-given mission. Peoples or kingdoms are entrusted to:

convert the heathen and infidel, to expand the borders of the righteous kingdom, even to conquer the whole world for the one, true God. (p93)

Textbooks make missionary election myth clearly articulated through the task undertaken by members of the Arab ethnic community to convert adherents of other religious beliefs and preach the new divine revelation of Islam as well as stretching the borders of the Muslim state. The prophet Mohamed was divinely selected to be the messenger of the only one God, in a mission to save his community, and later the whole of Arabia and the rest of the world, from the shackles of 'ignorance' and 'wrong doings' (Erbihi et al, 2016, p28). It is the concept of *Bayaa* or the pledge of allegiance that serves as the embodiment of an Arab missionary election myth as presented in Middle school textbooks. A social studies textbook provides the students with a definition of Bayaa when it writes,

An Islamic concept dates back to the era of prophet Muahmmed; it is founded on a contract between those who pay allegiance and those who receive it. (Ederbouche et al. 2017, p.8)

However, it is through Islamic Education textbooks that the pupils would be exposed to the context that can best explain the emergence of the first and the second pledge of allegiance at Alaqaba or *BayaatAlaqaba*. This shows the complementary role of different school textbooks in constructing national narratives. During his attempt to preach Islam secretly, Echfiri et al (2017) narrate the prophet Muhamed gathering with twelve men from Yatrib at the Aqaba Mountain, hence the first Bayaa at Alaqaba; it is stated that he recited some verses of the Quran and they consequently converted to Islam.

A narration of Ubaida is displayed as he reported the prophet saying,

"Come along and give me the pledge of allegiance that you will not worship anything besides Allah, will not steal, will not commit illegal sexual intercourse will not kill your children, will not utter; slander, invented by yourself, and will not disobey me if I order you to do something good. Whoever among you will respect and fulfill this pledge, will be rewarded by Allah. And if one of you commits any of these sins and is punished in this world then that will be his expiation for it, and if one of you commits any of these sins and Allah screens his sin, then his matter, will rest with Allah: If He will, He will punish him and if He will, He will excuse him." So I gave the pledge of allegiance to him for these conditions. (Sahih Bukhari, Book 63, Hadith 118) (Echfiri et al, 2017, p23)

The second Bayaah took place a year later when a number of seventy-two people from Yatrib asked the prophet about the basis on which their oath of allegiance would be built and he said,

"On the grounds of listening and being loyal in a vigorous but lazy situation, on the grounds of *nafqah* (ready to spend) during easy or difficult times, on the grounds of seeking goodness and avoiding what is forbidden. On the grounds of development in order to uphold the religion of Allah without fear of being reproached by persons who reproach. On the grounds of providing assistance to me and protecting me when I come to you as how you protect yourself, your wife and your children, if you do it, surely you will be afforded heaven". (Ahmad bin Hanbal, 1995: 347-348) (Echfiri et al, 2017, p23)

In both the first and the second pledge of allegiance or Bayaa, faith in God and obedience and loyalty to the prophet are necessary elements, with stress on readiness to defend religion and the prophet in the second one. Fellow Arabs are promised to go to heaven if they protect the messenger of God as they would do if their own families are threatened.

This covenant is considered as paying allegiance to God according to the following verse of the Quran

Indeed, those who pledge allegiance to you, [O Muhammad] - they are actually pledging allegiance to Allah. The hand of Allah is over their hands. (Fath, 10).

It can be therefore said that this is what makes the concept of Bayaa a sort of an Arab myth of missionary election because it was Arabs who would be firstly entrusted by Allah to fulfill the conditions of faith and fight for His sake.

Textbooks would go on portraying how the enactment of God's covenant became the turning point that affected positively Arabs' social and religious life, and the students are instructed to pay closer attention to the positive changes that affected the life of Arabs after converting to Islam. Arab tribes, according to the textbooks, lived in darkness and chaos before the new age of Islam. This era is referred to as *Aljahiliya* or Ignorance, which is believed to be an era of brutality and paganism. A history lesson depicts the life of the tribes this way,

The Arabs before Islam lived a life known as Jahiliyyah or Ignorance. It is characterized by the worship of idols, the cutting off of wombs, and the infidelity of girls. (Bahu et al. 2017, p44)

An Arabic textbook further stresses the chaotic kind of life Arabs were leading during Aljahiliya,

Some Arab tribes before Islam were chasing their daughters out of fear of shame, and killing their children for fear of poverty. (Assou et al, 2013, p72)

A revolutionary reaction of converts to their old religious practices, according to Erbihi et al (2016, p. 28), as '*The Arabs of the island had rejected idols and smashed them*'. They would adopt Islam as a new religion and their conditions will be completely changed, from chaos to order and from paganism to the worship of the one God. The people of Arabia came out of the darkness of Aljahiliya. The covenant between God and Arabs would be further enacted through battles of the prophet and his companions. The history lesson features a map that depicts several conquests. These include different conquests that were launched against unbelievers, be it Arabs or Jews, or Christians (Bahou et al 2017, p45).

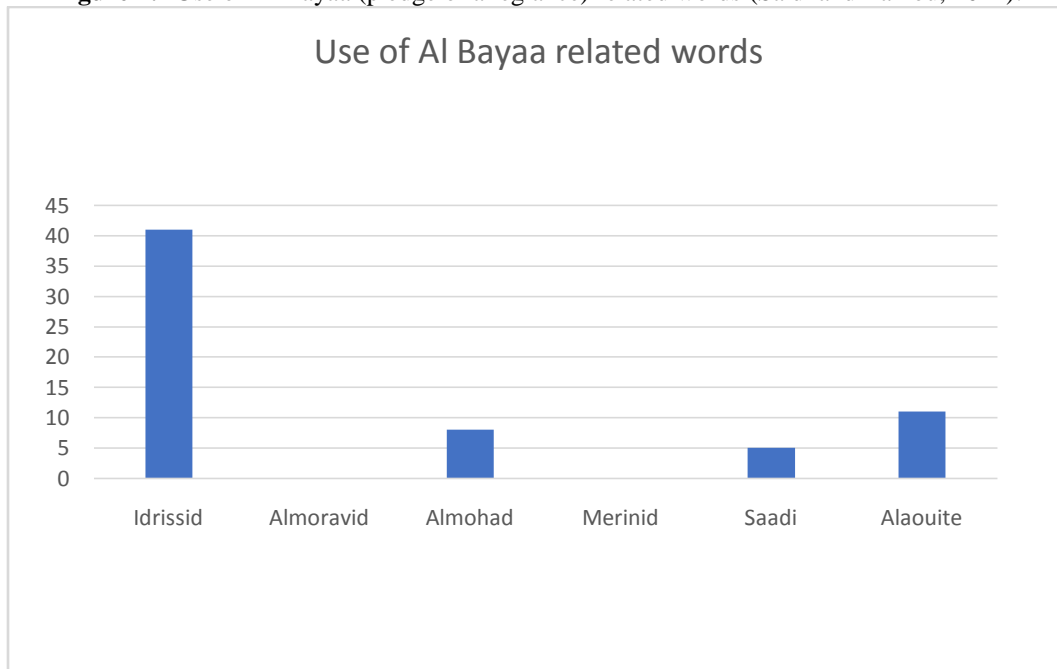
It follows that the presence of the pledge of allegiance in the textbooks before the national narratives would lie the foundation for the genesis of a pre-modern Moroccan nation. The emergence of Al Bayaa amid the Arabian Peninsula made it a cultural symbol of an Arab ethnic community. This same cultural feature would be narrated to be adopted

in Morocco by Idriss I, who is reported to be the first person who brought the concept of the pledge of allegiance to the country. He would be the founder of the Idrissid dynasty, which is reported to be the first Islamic state in Morocco. It is argued that this state marks the transition of the textbooks narratives, from the ethnic phase to a pre-modern nation.

The Pre-modern Phase

The pledge of allegiance appears to be the main catalyst that contributes to the emergence and persistence of a pre-modern Moroccan nation. Social studies textbooks of middle school made the Idrissid dynasty the first Moroccan state. It can be argued that it marks the transition of the textbooks narratives from the ethnic phase to a pre-modern nation, mainly through the concept of Al Bayaa or pledge of allegiance. Just as it was the case for the unification of Arabs during the ethnic phase, the pledge of allegiance allowed for the genesis of a pre-modern nation in Morocco through contributing to the communion of an Amazigh (Berber) tribe and the Arab Idriss I, who escaped from Arabia in fear of persecution.

Figure 1:- Use of Al Bayaa (pledge of allegiance) related words (Saidi and Lahlou, 2021).



The above figure shows that the pledge of allegiance does not only continue to emerge in the pre-modern era, which covers from the 8th century to the 17th century, but also stressed especially during the rule of the first and the last dynasties that are referred to as Moroccan states (Saidi and Lahlou, 2021). Idriss I is narrated to have received Al Bayaa from the Amazigh tribe of Aouraba, which is significantly depicted as the largest Berber tribe.

The route to a pre-modern Moroccan nation formation seems to follow to a great extent the same pattern as suggested by Smith (2009), making the pledge of allegiance the main cultural feature that allows such formation to take place. Idriss I migrated from the Arabian Peninsula in fear of persecution, as the textbooks narrate that he escaped following the battle of *Alfakh or the Trap* against *the Abassids*, which took place in 786 AC (Edrbouche, 2017, p8).

A reading of the event reveals that the battle was religiously motivated. He would be welcomed by the Berbers, and later culture of the homeland ethnics of Idriss I would be introduced mainly through the pledge of allegiance that would allow for the implementation of Islamic Sharia and Arabic language. The Idrissid dynasty is then recorded as the first Islamic state in Morocco, while the establishment of Al Qarawiyyin is narrated (Edrbouche, 2017, p11). The founding of the latter mosque would be as further empowerment of the Islamic religion and Arabic that were transmitted from the home ethnics of the Arabian Peninsula. This would be possible only through the enactment of pledge of allegiance which read,

Idriss Ben Abdellah (Ben Lhassan Ben Ali Ben Abi Talib) was given allegiance in the city of Volubilis in 172 H. Amazigh tribes of Aouraba were the first who paid allegiance for being in charge of their affairs, prayers, conquests and provisions. (Mehrouch, et al, 2014, p 9)

The two other textbooks of the second-year social studies also narrate that the Amzigh(Berber) tribe of Aouraba, which is depicted as a large tribe, paid allegiance to Idriss I (Edrbouche, 2017, p8), (Meatella et al. 2015 p7).

Al Bayaa would be stressed throughout the lessons that are devoted to the different dynasties that happened to rule the country starting from the 8th century, with a focus on the first and the last dynasty. As it has been found in the pre-modern phase, the school textbooks would continue to place the pledge of allegiance at the heart of the national narratives during the modern era of the Moroccan nation.

The Modern Phase

In the following, it is argued that school textbooks narratives represent the pledge of allegiance or Bayaa as a permanent symbol that molds the character of a modern Moroccan nation. It is this attitude that highlights the striking similarity between the pre-modern and modern nation, and further shows the role of ethnic symbols in securing the persistence of the nation. In a lesson devoted to the modern Moroccan state, it is stated that the pledge of allegiance is: one of the pillars of establishing political authority in Morocco, and it is a pact and a contract between the Sultan and the subjects in order to maintain religious affairs and run the state (Mehrouch, et al, 2014, p144)

During the modern stage of the nation, Bayaa would become the basis for the transition of power in Morocco similar to the change in political and religious leadership in earlier periods of history. The school textbooks narratives stress the central role of Bayaa in shaping the character of Modern Moroccan nation through images of the ritual, especially during the rule of the current king Muhammed VI. A textbook of Arabic devotes a full page to a picture of the king on a horseback during the throne day, in which the ritual of Bayaa is celebrated (El Asri et al, 2006, p. 42). The social studies textbook features a significant picture in which the ritual of Bayaa is depicted following the ascendance of king Muhammed VI to the throne (Mehrouch et al, 2014, pp. 144-145). Several royal family members, as well as high ranking officials, were around the king. In this part of this civic lesson, the students are required to prepare journalistic research about the king, from his birth to becoming the leader of the country. They are supposed to search about, among other things, the allegiance paid to the king and '*its significance with regard to Morocco's ancient history*'. This activity raises the pupils' awareness on the development of the modern nation out of previous historical eras through the omnipresent character of Bayaa. It is through these historical bonds between the king and his subjects, which is embodied in the ritual of Bayaa, that the textbooks' national narratives stress the continuation of a Moroccan nation in its modern form. Under the aforementioned photo, it is stated that Muhammed VI was "*given allegiance by all Moroccan people in the royal palace in Rabat*". Significantly, the textbook states that this loyalty is renewed through the celebrated Day of Throne every July 30th. This means that Bayaa in its modern form takes place yearly, which is not the case during previous historical eras.

This change, though not the only one, suggests that symbols are not only selected but also reinterpreted to suit the modern character of the nation. Another significant shift in the pledge of allegiance that characterizes the modern nature of the nation is the tasks of Amir Al Mouminine, or Commander of the Faithful, who becomes more focused on religious tolerance and civic rights. The late King Hassan II is featured in a textbook of Arabic as he hosted the Pope. Mohamed VI is significantly portrayed in a picture with Moroccan women parliament members. It follows that the pledge of allegiance continues to be portrayed by the textbooks as a national symbol of a modern Moroccan nation, just as it has been depicted during the ethnic and the pre-modern periods of the nation. The following table shows the presence of the pledge of allegiance in all the phases of Moroccan nation-building in the country's textbooks.

Table 1:- Al Bayaa or the Pledge of Allegiance and nation formation in Morocco as depicted by the textbooks.

| Leaders who received Pledge of Allegiance | The three phases of Moroccan nation formation | Centuries |
|---|---|-------------------------|
| Prophet Muhammed | Ethnic Phase | 7 th century |
| Idriss I | Pre-modern Phase | 8 th century |

Muhammed VI
century

Modern Phase

20th

Conclusion:-

This article has been an attempt to investigate the portrayal of the pledge of allegiance in the textbooks of middle school in Morocco. It is suggested that the pledge of allegiance is depicted as the national symbol that characterizes the nation formation in Morocco over long durée. From ethnie, to pre-modern to modern nation, the pledge of allegiance is found to be a permanent cultural feature that represents the formation and the persistence of the nation. During the ethnic phase, it is introduced as an Islamic concept that firstly emerged among Arab ethnic community. At the pre-modern era, it serves as a crucial element that helped the transition of Morocco from ethnie to a unified nation when Berbers of Aouraba would pay allegiance to Idriss I who escaped from Arabian Peninsula. During the modern era, the pledge of allegiance would be celebrated in public space on a yearly basis while it underwent some changes in order to suit the modern nature of the nation.

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