

The stance of Popular Poets on Colonial in Algeria

موقف الشعراء الشعبيين من السياسة الاستعمارية في الجزائر

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Abstract:

The Algerian folk poet was distinguished by his strong connections to all the issues of his homeland and nation, sharing in their joys and sorrows. He contributed with his pen to the support of just national and humanitarian causes, especially during the difficult and critical periods the Algerian nation experienced during the French colonization, which sought to transform the Algerian person into someone detached from his character and national identity. Thus, several folk poems emerged describing the resistors and their heroic stances against the oppressive colonizer.

The aim of the topic is to highlight the role of poets in recording the historical stages of the country and their contributions to preserving the national identity, and concluded The importance of these popular poems lies in their diversity, and there is no popular poet who did not address the brutal colonial policy in their verses and that the poets played a role in supporting the national cause, and their work should be relied upon in historical studies.

Keywords:poetry, poets, popular resistance, colonial policy.

ملخص:

إن الشاعر الشعبي الجزائري تميز بارتباطاته القوية بكل قضايا وطنه وأمته، قاسمها الأفراح والأفراح، وساهم بقلمه في نصرة القضايا الوطنية والإنسانية العادلة خاصة في الفترات الصعبة والحرجة التي شهدتها الأمة الجزائرية أثناء الاستعمار الفرنسي لها، والتي حاولت تحويل الإنسان الجزائري إلى إنسان منسلخ عن شخصيته وهويته الوطنية، فبذلك ظهرت عدة قصائد شعبية تصف المقاومين ومواقفهم البطولية ضد المستعمر الغاشم.

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فهدف الموضوع هو إبراز دور الشعراء في تسجيل مراحل تاريخ البلاد، وإسهاماتهم في الحفاظ على الهوية الوطنية، واستنتجنا أن هذه القصائد الشعبية أنها كانت متعددة، ولا يوجد شاعر شعبي لم يواكب بقصائده سياسة الاستعمار الغاشم، وأن الشعراء دورهم نصره القضية الوطنية، ويجب الاعتماد عليه في الدراسات التاريخية.
كلمات مفتاحية: الشعر؛ الشعراء؛ المقاومة الشعبية؛ السياسة الاستعمارية.

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1. Introduction

Popular poetry is the language of society that expresses its origins. It is considered a form of poetry composed in their own dialect and transmitted orally among them, reflecting the working class that strives to secure its livelihood. Poetry influences and is influenced by the conditions and events that characterize its period of production. It can be affected by political matters and factors, as well as by social events and the religious inclinations of poets. Since the early days in Algeria, popular poetry has been associated with the idea of jihad, recording reality and battles.

Popular poetry has gone through different historical stages in which the poet sang about his popular culture, mentioning the most important events in his life. Poetry has always been the air that the Algerian individual found impossible to give up, as it is part of his life, reflecting his concerns and hopes, and expressing his horizons and future.

The Algerian popular poet did not limit himself to expressing the emotions and feelings of the popular masses; he also played a prominent role in various fields of life. He depicted the social, economic, and political conditions that the nation experienced in its different stages since the foreign invaders set foot on this blessed land. It was imperative for popular poetry to follow these stages, keep pace with their journey, and resonate with the people's suffering and tragedy as they endured the yoke of oppression and tyranny, struggling and fighting for freedom and dignity. This was rooted in the realistic foundations stemming from the pains and wounds of the Algerian people.

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The significance of this topic lies in the fact that these popular poems were numerous and diverse, and there was no popular poet who did not address the brutal colonial policy in their verses. As Abu al-Qasim Saadallah said: "The emergence of Algerian poets heralded good news for the supporters of revival and reform, marking the birth of the pioneering poet of this revival and reform." (Saadallah, 1998, p. 299) The aim of this topic is to highlight the role of poets in documenting the stages of the country's history, noting their contributions to preserving national identity, their focus on jihad and the rejection of colonialism, in addition to the poets' role in raising awareness and calling for the outbreak of the liberation revolution.

Here we pose the following question: What was the stance of the popular poets towards the brutal colonizer's policy in Algeria? And what distinguished their interests and contributions?

Therefore, the topic of my presentation focused on an overview of the origins of folk poetry, in addition to the key stages that folk poets went through in their contributions to preserving national identity, mentioning the interests of folk poetry and popular resistance in jihad and fighting colonialism, and the roles that poets distinguished themselves in raising awareness and calling for the outbreak of the liberation revolution, concluding with the most important results I reached.

We also followed the historical and descriptive methods in our study.

2. The emergence of folk poetry:

Talking about the emergence of popular poetry manifold paths is difficult to determine, but we will try to adjust it through the opinions of some researchers, where almost unanimously most scholars that the poetry that reached us dates back in its origins to the Andalusian muwashahat (urban poetry) and crescent poems (Bedouin poetry) as Rabeh Bonar (Zriouh, 2008, p. 19) says "The popular poetry that descended to us from our past poets is divided into two types: Bedouin poetry, a type of crescent poetry, has its characteristics and features, and urban poetry, which is a type of muwashahat and azjal, and also has its characteristics and advantages"(Zriouh, 2008, p. 19), and this is confirmed by Ahmed Taher, where he also distinguished between two types of poetry are in saying:

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"Sectional poetry strophique, which is very related to the Andalusian muwashahat and azjal, and poetry based on isometrique symmetry, which is very close to the form of the vertical Arabic poem in traditional Arabic poetry (Bouraïou, 2007, p. 51), while Abdullah Rakibi mentioned in his book religious poetry Algeria Hadith "It is difficult to determine a specific era for the emergence of this poetry in Algeria and in other Arab countries, some researchers attribute the emergence of colloquial poetry to ancient times to those Arabic dialects, some of which may have appeared in the pre-Islamic era." (Rkibi, 2009, p. 365)

This dialect entered Algeria in the period of the Islamic conquests and spread more with the entry of the crescents and Bani Salim to Algeria carrying with them several dialects, mixed in turn with the Amazigh dialect through intermarriages between Arabs and Amazighs, which led to its difference from one region to another, Algeria did not become independent on a unified policy due to the division in a previous period, which was that the eastern region belonged to the Aghlabids and the Hafsids, while the western region was aNet belongs to the Zayanids, in another period the eastern region belonged to the Hammadis Senhaji, and the western region was for the Almoravids, Marnids and Idriss, and this is one of the main reasons for the lack of unification of Algeria politically, culturally and socially..... Therefore, folk poetry known in Algeria is evidence of the influence of Arab and Islamic civilization, because its source is Andalusian Zajal, but its name salt poetry may differ in significance between the concept in the seventh century and salt poetry at the present time, considering that the first is called the poetry circulating in civilization, while the second is Bedouin poetry circulation, and far from the terms that are called folk poetry, folk poetry can be defined as: "The memory of the people that stores their worries and longings, which is the true image of their living reality, accompanies them in their joys, expressing the casual euphoria that shakes them, as they take a share of their life from joy, and keep pace with their daily struggles, as they warn, harvest and struggle with the rock in the mountains, storms and seas."(Hani, 1972, p. 175)

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We can also distinguish between popular poetry and other literary forms with the specificity of it is oral poetry enormous author A to sing and compose transmitted from one generation to another through oral narration, has been characterized by Talli bin Sheikh popular poetry property melody it sees that there is no special and general between the types of popular literature in addition to that it concerns pronunciation in particular. (Sheikh, 1983, p. 372)

Thus, we say that popular poetry is a depiction and expression of the conscience of the people, because it reflects its suffering, pain, hopes and various issues, and uses language that drops the expression, shelf and non-Arabs, and this is what he talked about by the Arab Dahou, saying: "If the issue was special grammar and morphology, it would have been possible to deny this name for this poetry or we could count some poets teachers among the popular poets, that grammatical and morphological errors do not concern poetry alone, as they do not concern popular poets alone, but teachers are involved in them and the populists." (Dahou L. , 1988, p. 26)

3. Popular poets and their interest in preserving the Arab national identity:

The popular poets have believed in the cause of defending the homeland and they have dedicated and instilled it in generations, and this is evident through their popular poems (Al-Tunis, 2016, p. 327), the popular poet Abdelhamid Ababsa (Belghith, 2012, p. 269) poem entitled "From my soul is an Arab Muslim" and says in its verses:

From my soul, I am a Muslim Arab,

From my origins, my mother is Arab.

From my blood, I am a Muslim Arab,

Arab, Arab, forever Arab.

Heroes of Islam are my masters,
Leaders of the Arabs are my ancestors.
From my soul, my blood, and my heart,

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I cherish the Arab roots with all my parts.(Ababsa, 2002, p. 496)

The Arabs conquered mighty lands,

From Asia to Africa, under their hands

They brought with them the Islamic creed,

Teaching us to worship one God indeed.(Ababsa, 2002, p. 496)

Based on these verses, it is clear that the poet attempted to instill Arab national identity in the hearts of generations, and to prepare a new generation that understands Islam and cares about the issues of Arabism and citizenship (Al-Tunis, 2016, p. 327), which represent the fundamental basis. As the poet Abdelhamid Ababsa says in his poem "We Are Proud of Algeria, My Country":

We take pride in Algeria, my homeland,

My hope for victory calls upon you to stand.

Oh, my mother and the mother of my land,

My identity is deeply tied to your strand.

Oh, land of my fathers and forebears,

With my blood and soul, I vow to care.

Oh, cradle of the free and the revolution,

A glory to nations seeking liberation.

Your history shines, renowned and bright,

The hearts of the free long for your lig(Ababsa, Al-Malhoun Poetry , 2002, p. 103)

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As for the poem by the folk poet "Lakhder Messaoudi," he said:

Oh, lovers of beauty, today I've come to ask,

Have you forgotten her, or is it you she left in the past?

The rose that once bloomed has withered at last,

The oleander's branch, bitter did you plant it steadfast(Messaoudi, 2011, p. 88)

We saw trenches in the streams, but no water flowed,

And with clear water, my masters, you let it erode

The daughter of the house, once a beacon of pride,

Strong in knowledge, her proof you certified.

And the youth, once dwelling deep in our hearts,

A vision of beauty her hand you gave to depart.

Oh, wise ones, between them emerged noble men

The first of November, a name you did pen.

The daughter of Algiers stands as an example,

The beloved youth, a son proud and ample.

The rose knew the arms of a loyal dreamer,

And betrayal, too heavy a price for the schemer.

The oleander's branch oh, wise ones, take heed,

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A traitor you let lead, and still, you feed the seed.

The trench I describe speaks of battles dire,

The criminal tires but is caught in the fire.

The clear water will remain, still and pure,

Though oppression abounds, some will endure

The lovers who recall those heroes so grand

Ask the veteran they'll help you understand.

The poet in this poem tried to praise the lovers of this homeland who were instrumental in liberating it and defending it from the brutal colonization. As for the poem by the poet (Al-Tunis, 2016, p. 328) Shabo Ben Hamadi titled "How Much We Think of Algeria," he says in its verses:

How much I think of Algeria, it stirs my soul,

Where the youth's blood spilled, filling every knoll

The blood of the young, poured across every land,

Neither erased nor shed without a noble stand.

It flowed for justice, coursing through every way,

Soaked into the earth, east to west, for freedom's sway.

Look at the destruction, even beasts dare not speak

France raided the villages, killing women and the weak.

Look at the landlord, living like it's the past,

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Calm in her home, her wealth amassed.

She once ruled with arrogance, taking by force,

While the fighters resisted, holding their course.

The martyrs fell, defiant, unshaken in their creed,

While the betrayers of faith fled, claiming a nationalist deed.(Dahou A. , 2008, p. 477)

From this standpoint, the French authorities exiled many popular poets and removed them from their homeland. Among these poets was Mustafa Ben Brahim (Saadallah, 1998, p. 322), who was exiled to the Moroccan city of Fez (Dahou A. , 2008, p. 477). We notice in these poetic verses contributed by these popular poets that they point to the dangers of colonial policy on one hand and emphasize sacrifice, love for the homeland, and the preservation of national identity on the other hand.

4. The role of folk poetry and popular resistance in jihad and fighting colonialism:

The role of popular poetry and popular resistance in jihad and fighting colonialism:

The Algerian popular poet has always been connected to the issues of his homeland and nation, sharing in both joys and sorrows. He contributed through his poetry to the support of just national and humanitarian causes, especially during the critical and difficult periods that the Algerian nation went through. Popular poets across the country organized ranks and mobilized people to fight the occupiers, fostering solidarity, compassion, and participation in financing and supporting the resistance. As mentioned in the book "Cultural History of Algeria," when Mohamed Mouloud Zaribi returned to his country, he found colonialism rampant, the people asleep, and ideas stagnant. His anger was stirred, and he called for revival and resistance against colonialism...(Saadallah, 1998, p. 297)

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The popular poet played an important role in this field, documenting various events that Algeria witnessed and recording them in memory. In this context, we can mention the poem by the poet "Abdelkader El-Wahrani," which depicts the fall of the city of Algiers into the hands of the French occupier, composed in 1846. The poet says in some of its verses:

The days, my brothers, pass with fleeting hours,

And time turns, turning with the winds of power.

Once, the land of the blessed was ours,

But now, its joy is lost, swept by foreign powers,

Its people scattered on land and sea,

Once strong, now weakened, a tale of misery(Ouahrani, 1969, p. 74)

The poem depicts the occupation of Algeria and the locals' resistance against the occupier with great courage and valor. In this regard, the poem is considered a distinguished document in its field. It is characterized by its overwhelming national sentiment, its religious fervor, and the accuracy of the historical information it contains. Thus, it is not merely a text glorifying resistance but also a historical and social document that testifies to the tragedy of the occupied people and the brutality of the ruthless occupier. Additionally, the poet Abdelkader El-Wahrani calls upon the people in the same poem to resist the occupier and to strive in the way of God, saying:

Here are people who rise, their news now known,

Death in jihad is better than living alone.

The angels in paradise sing with their sound

The gates of bliss are open to the faithful, unbound.

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Death is upon us, and our hearts grow strong,

With patience as our guide, we fear not for long(Mertad, 2003, p. 86).
As for the poet Ali bin Bilal describing the practices of the oppressive occupier that resulted in many victims, he said:

Seven and a half years, we lived in despair,

The people tasting both sweetness and bitter fare.

Year after year, through nights and days,

Families displaced, enduring in endless ways.

The prisons filled, overflowing with souls,

Some passed away, their suffering untold.

Under torture, many breathed their last,

While silence shrouded the horrors of the past.

Others were sentenced to death without mercy,

The enemies of God, their hearts as hard as stone, unworthy(Al-Aqrib Naima, 2019, p. 01)

Many poems have reached us that chronicle the popular resistance, such as the resistance of Sheikh Bouamama. Emir Abdelkader,

Where Mohamed Belkheir, a contemporary of the Sheikh Bouamama revolution, among which is the poem "O Knight, I Am Ashamed of You," in which he says:

Oh, noble knight, your honor fills the air,

What of the brave leader, the chieftain so rare?

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Have you come with tidings from Sultan Bashar,

Is the Sheikh rebuilding, or does ruin still mar(Achour, no date, p. 149)

And he also said:

Bouamama(Saadallah, 1998, p. 329), descendant of the beloved Ansar,

His lineage traces back to the Prophet's sacred core.

Bouamama recites praises and invocations afar,

Bouamama, his secret among the people is lore.(Achour, no date, p. 150)

As for the poetry sung by the women in their gatherings, especially in the Kasour region in the southwest:

Sheikh Bouamama moves twice, and two hundred fall,
Sheikh Bouamama moves twice, scattering them like flies, one and all.
Sheikh Bouamama, crusher of horns and bane of foes,
A destroyer of enemies wherever he goes.(Al-Aqrib Naima, 2019, p. 01)

As for the poem composed by Sheikh Al-Mahnali:

Console me, oh people, for the leader of the tribes,

My grief and solace lie in the key to my prayers and scribes.

My eyes weep for him as long as time shall span,

Through all my life, tears stream down my cheeks again.

My eyes weep for him, the key to eloquence divine,

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A pillar of mercy, guiding all to what is kind.

The earth and sky weep, along with the beasts,

And the mountains echo their mourning, never at peace.

The wild creatures, the birds, and the fish in the seas,

All join in lament, from great herds to lone entities.

Whoever has lost you, Sheikh Bouamama, feels the ache,

Fields wither, their crops barren, their roots left to break (Al-Aqrib Naima, 2019, p. 01).

As for the resistance of the Sons of Sidi Sheikh, one of the poets mentioned, describing the Battle of Chellala, he said:

Oh, those present, recall the tales and what befell,

Of the day of Shalala, a moment in time to retell.

Blessed was the day of Shalala when the camp arose,

The cavalry came, and no courage they chose to oppose. (Saadallah, 1998, p. 325)

he also said:

O descendants of Hamza, steadfast in their reign,

They held their lands with loyalty, unwavering and plain.

The Lord of Glory called, and Muhammad and Suleiman came,

To liberate the people from hardship, spreading the faith's flame.

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And he also said:

The eagle feasts while terror lurks within,

And the hawks fly westward, sharp and keen.

The hyena, flayed, hides its skin in vain,

Justice reigns, stored deep within the ravines.(Salman, n.d, pp. 143-144)

The poet Ahmed El-Kroumi from the city of Béchar condemned the inhumane actions of the colonizer, saying:

The tribes of Shaânaba are warriors of honor,

Ghannama and Amour stand united with us.

All the tribes are fearless and steadfast,

Charging forward on the day of strife.

France brought reinforcements,

But their armies rose only to be met by our resistance.

He also said:

In forty-five, the battle began,

The Sétif uprising remains a testament.

They killed so many of our men,

With no mercy shown such despicable deeds!

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Tears stream down, soaking my cheeks,

In Kherrata and Guelma, the fires raged fiercely.(Sheikh, 1983, p. 64)

In addition to another poet who called for jihad, Boukhir Ould Farhat, who recorded the events of May 8th in all their brutality and the blood of its martyrs, saying:

The tale of Sétif's day, what sorrow it holds,

Still buried deep within the hearts, untold.

Fierce trials we witnessed, unshaken we stood,

As they struck in darkness, merciless and cold.

The tale of Sétif's day will forever be retold.

5. Contributions of folk poets in raising awareness and calling for the outbreak of the liberation revolution

The poem that aimed to instill enthusiasm among individuals to ignite the revolution, Al Turki Bo Sha'ir said in one of his poems:

My brothers, oh my people,

wake from this slumber,

In the year of shame,

let us not be deceived.

The traitors among us trade away our honor,

And seek to destroy the faith of Muhammad we heed.

He also said:

Oh Muslim, awaken, even for a moment,

Do not plead to the enemy, for that is to concede.

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And he further declared:

From France, their helicopters descend,

Carrying men to suppress and offend.

Landing in every valley and bend,

While hospitals for our wounded are nowhere to attend.(Dahou L. , 1988, p. 133)

Also among the poems that called for struggle, revival, and awakening is the poem:

O sincere one, rise for unity,

Our people thrive through solidarity.

Expose and confront the corrupt hearts,

For the corruptor is a destroyer of our country.

Those who worship bribes and greed,

Have brought our land to greater ruin indeed.

Our homeland will live through our unity,

Led by the sincere who guide us with clarity.(Ababsa, Al-Malhoun Poetry , 2002, p. 95; Ababsa, Al-Malhoun Poetry, 2002)

As for the poet Ibn Sahnoon, he called for "popular unity" and said:

We are but a nation of noble lineage,

With divine ties that no force can sever.

Descendants of the mighty Atlas, who,

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When faced with adversity, stand strong forever.

When one calls from Tozeur, a brother answers,

From Djurdjura, unyielding, to no false endeavor.(Al-Tunis, 2016, p. 330)

Ahmed El-Karoumi reflects on the November Revolution:

In '54, we shook the enemy's fortress,

Our country's youth rose, taking the mountains by storm.

November 1st, a date of great pride,

The Liberation Army was named to crush the foes.

A mighty blow in Batna created a great uproar,

This is the truth arise, people, to bear witness!(Tayeb, 2020, p. 45)

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we say that the popular poets contributed and fought with their poems to preserve this homeland, which had realistic origins stemming from the pains and wounds of the Algerian people due to the oppression and deprivation of the brutal colonization. One of the most important conclusions reached through this study is that the sole aim of these popular poets was:

Supporting the national cause, preserving the national identity rejecting colonialism and fighting corruption and tyranny in all its forms and manifestations, contributing to awareness and vigilance

Therefore, popular poetry played an important role in documenting the various events that Algeria has experienced since the onset of colonialism on its soil, and the role of popular poets was to express the human essence of Algerian society.

So, popular poetry is an important historical source that should not be underestimated, and it must be relied upon in all historical studies.

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