

The Social History of Algerians during the French Occupation: Religious Customs and Traditions as a Model (1830–1962)

التاريخ الاجتماعي للجزائريين إبان الاحتلال الفرنسي " العادات والتقاليد الدينية أنموذجا (1830م . 1962م)

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Abstract:

The social history of nations is considered one among the most prominent fields of knowledge that must be thoroughly examined, due to its great significance in understanding the course of societies and in anticipating their future based on rigorous academic studies. Modern historical studies have expanded beyond the confines of political and military history toward the broader scope of social history, encompassing all its components from the structure and development of the family to the lived reality of the public, and extending to the multifaceted cultural and social heritage. This encompasses a set of customs and traditions carried down through generations. This study seeks to shed light on certain aspects of this social history by focusing on the customs and traditions associated with religious occasions in Algeria, during a particularly sensitive period of its history, namely the era of French occupation from 1830 to 1962.

Keywords: Religious occasions, customs and traditions, French occupation, Algeria.

الملخص:

يعتبر التاريخ الاجتماعي للدول من أبرز الحلقات المعرفية الواجب الإحاطة بها، لما له من أهمية بالغة في فهم سير المجتمعات وكذا الاستشراف لمستقبلها بناء على دراسات أكاديمية دقيقة، وقد عكفت الدراسات التاريخية الحديثة على الخروج من بوتقة التاريخ السياسي والعسكري، إلى رحاب التاريخ الاجتماعي بكل مكوناته من بناء الأسرة و تطورها إلى الواقع المعاش للعامة، وصولاً إلى الموروث الثقافي والاجتماعي المتعدد الأوجه، ومنها جملة العادات و التقاليد المتوارثة بين الأجيال، و تعكف هذه الدراسة على الإحاطة ببعض جوانب هذا التاريخ في نموذج العادات و التقاليد المرتبطة بالمناسبات الدينية في الجزائر، في فترة جد حساسة من تاريخها ألا وهي فترة الاحتلال الفرنسي (1830م . 1962).

الكلمات المفتاحية: المناسبات الدينية، العادات والتقاليد، الاحتلال الفرنسي، الجزائر.

1. INTRODUCTION

Algeria was continuously dominated by different civilizations, resulting in cultural intermingling in multiple aspects of life, particularly terms of society. The period of Ottoman presence in Algeria is considered one of the longest (1519–1830), during which a significant social integration occurred between the Turks and Algerians. Its impact remains apparent today, notably in the surnames of some families, as well as the names of several dishes and clothes.

This was followed by one of the most dangerous phases experienced by Algerians, namely the French colonial occupation, which lasted for 132 years. Wherein the colonial government attempted, through a variety of methods, to eradicate the Algerian component and its identity. Nevertheless, Algerians remained deeply attached to their inherited social patterns passed down from their ancestors beginning with adherence to a conservative family structure, the preservation of religious principles and rituals, and continuing with the maintenance of customs, traditions, and social norms that have survived to the present day.

Research problem:

Based on the preceding, the following research question is posed:

Were Algerians able to maintain their inherited social and cultural patterns, including religious practices and traditions, in the face of French colonial attempts to erase the social and civilizational elements of the Algerian family?

Sub-Questions:

In order to comprehensively address the subject matter, the following sub-questions are raised:

What were these religious occasions, and what were the most remarkable customs and traditions associated with them?

To what extent was the French occupation able to modify Algerian social patterns in light of colonial projects aimed at eradicating aspects of Algerian cultural and civilizational identity?

2. The Concept of Social Customs

1.1 Linguistic Definition:

The singular form is custom (‘āda), which refers to anything that has become habitual to the point of being performed without effort, with the same pattern reoccurring consistently.⁽¹⁾ It also denotes practices to which people have grown accustomed and routinely carry out, repeating them until they become familiar and ingrained through frequent repetition.⁽²⁾

It also refers to (al-daydan), a habitual practice to which one returns frequently. The plural forms are customs (‘ādāt) and ‘aīd (festival/recurring event). It is termed ta‘awwada al-shay (to become accustomed to something), ‘ādahu and ‘āwadahu (to repeat or return to it), mu‘āwadah and ‘awwād (repetition), and i‘tādahu or a‘ādahu, indicating that it has become a habit for a person.⁽³⁾

In general, a custom refers to the familiar routine of daily life practiced by individuals within their society. It encompasses the totality of linguistic practices and colloquial expressions used in everyday life and interacts with patterns of behavior, thereby forming a set of complex social phenomena that scientists frequently find difficult to record, describe, and quantify.

Social customs particularly in the Arab world are reflected in values such as respect for elders, compassion toward the young, feeding the needy, helping the poor, and obedience to

legitimate authority. All of these practices are inspired by the teachings of our noble religion.⁽⁴⁾

1.2 Linguistic Definition:

It refers to everything that an individual acquires in terms of practical and theoretical capabilities, or in ways of working and thinking. Over time, these skills take on an automatic character due to repetition and habituation, becoming distinguished by speed and accuracy in their performance. They also contribute to the individual's adaptation to their environment.⁽⁵⁾

Accordingly, social customs are viewed as possessing social power capable of generating reactions within society, as the cohesion of its members is closely linked to the extent to which these customs are applied. matters may even reach the point of imposing sanctions on those who violate or transgress these customs.⁽⁶⁾

A custom is also defined as the form that emerges from social behaviors that have persisted over a long period of time, thereby acquiring a formal character, the features of which are manifested in individual actions that are reflected in the family and society.⁽⁷⁾

In this manner, Pierre Bourdieu expressed the limitation and narrowness of the concept of habit (*habitude*), that is, the personal social tendency. This concept refers to the process of producing social ideas and then reproducing them as circumstances change.⁽⁸⁾

Between these two perspectives, the habitual practices of individuals acquire great importance in anthropological studies; they assist in shaping action patterns and conceptual models within societies. This includes, but is not limited to, customs related to the celebration of religious and social occasions such as the advent of the month of Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, or the celebration of the Mawlid (the Prophet's birthday) etc. In this way, such practices provide a clear picture of the customs of a particular people or country, thus carrying historical significance that bears a distinctive Heritage Footprint and a specific social character.⁽⁹⁾

It should also be noted that there is a clear distinction between the customs acquired by individuals: some are personal and limited in scope, while others are collective and socially shared.

3. Traditions

3.1 Linguistic Definition:

The plural of tradition (*taqlīd*), derived from the verb (*qallada–yuqallidu–taqlīdan*). It has several meanings, including imitation or falsification, which is, reproducing a work of art or a painting from an original model (an imitation piece). In another sense, it refers to an inherited practice whereby successors emulate their predecessors; thus, a traditional person is one who adheres to the old ways, whereas a non-traditional person is one who does not conform to a custom or convention.⁽¹⁰⁾

In “*Lisān al-‘Arab*” by Ibn Manzūr, it is stated: (“*qalladahu al-amr*”) means he imposed or entrusted a matter to him, which reflects discipline and obligation. (“*Taqlīd al-badana*”) refers to placing a cord around its neck, and thus we say (“*qallada al-mar’a qilādah*”), meaning he placed a necklace around her neck. (“*Qalladahu al-‘amal*”) means he entrusted him with the task, and (“*qalladahu al-amr*”) also means he followed him in it without reflection or independent judgment.⁽¹¹⁾

3.2 Terminological Definition:

It refers to the elements of culture that are transmitted across different generations; that is, all the rules and behavioral patterns that distinguish a particular group or community and are passed down from predecessors to successors. A distinction can be made between customs and traditions in that the latter are considered sacred within different societies, making them difficult to abandon.⁽¹²⁾

Traditions also represent the imitation of ancestral behavior inherited from one generation to another. They provide ready-made and pre-established patterns of behavior to be followed, through which basic needs can be fulfilled. Moreover, they outline modes of conduct and patterns of action that enable cooperation, interaction, and adaptation in various situations. In this sense, traditions regulate individual behavior and exert strong social pressure, which some individuals find difficult to escape.⁽¹³⁾

From another perspective, traditions may be regarded as a trust or legacy; when individuals practice them, they experience a sense of comfort because they have complied with the ways of their ancestors, thereby earning their approval.⁽¹⁴⁾

In general, traditions represent the spirit of the nation and a mirror reflecting the life and lived experience of the ancestors. They play a vital role in the course of individuals' lives, serving as a permanent refuge to which people return in all times to find security and reassurance. They embody a strong bond among individuals and function as a compass that guides behavior. As such, traditions operate as a form of collective law, and anyone who deviates from them is considered to be in violation of, and disobedient to, society. Without these traditions, society would lack a clear identity and defining character.

Hence, the added value provided by customs and traditions in societies cannot be denied. They constitute a fundamental source of social identity. The family, as a social structure, reflects the outlook, thinking, and behavioral patterns of society's members patterns acquired and inherited from social heritage or collective culture. This heritage has formed a solid barrier that protects relationships and social interactions. For instance—but not limited to— customs and traditions have been among the firm pillars that preserved societal identity and stood as a strong bulwark against attempts at colonial cultural erasure in all its forms.

4. Customs and Traditions in the Mirror of Algerian Society

The symbolism of customs and traditions has formed a moral and value-based standard by which individual behavior is judged and the degree of commitment to social norms is assessed. These norms enable us to distinguish between societies, particularly with regard to the foundations of cultural identity.

On this basis, customs and traditions are considered among the pillars upon which Algerian society was founded and continues to rest. Hence, it can be said that in some regions of the country, the authority of customs and traditions has had a stronger influence than that of formal law, given their role as mechanisms of social regulation. Social customs represent, in practical terms, a major means of protecting solidarity and social cohesion, as each subsidiary social unit works to reinforce solidarity within its own sphere while contributing to the cohesion of the broader collective unit. At the same time, each sub-unit seeks to strengthen the influence of public

morals and specific customs and traditions on the behavior of its members. This is achieved through several processes, the most important of which include:

Instilling Agreed-Upon Behavioral Rules established by the broader community or the subsidiary social unit, so that individuals feel appreciated and respected, sensing the importance of the role these traditions play in group life through conviction and reflection.¹⁵

In light of the value imbalances witnessed recently in Algerian society, particularly the tendency to rebel against customs and traditions, it has become necessary to revive and reinforce them. Society cannot be conceived without social customs and traditions; these constitute a social necessity for organizing interactions among individuals and regulating their relationships. Such customs encompass commands and prohibitions, obligations and permissions, what is allowed and disallowed, and what is considered appropriate or inappropriate. In this way, they curb selfish motives, restrain aggressive tendencies, and limit impulsive behavior. Social customs therefore perform a regulatory function, as they clarify the foundations of social relations and provide society with rules governing interaction among its members, rules that embody norms derived from the collective experience of the group.

If we observe the structure of Algerian society during the period under study namely the period of occupation we observe that French colonialism attempted to replace inherited social customs and traditions with a body of legal legislation intended to substitute the mechanisms of social regulation practiced by Algerians in their tribes (*Aroush*), hamlets (*Madashir*), villages, and even in their cities. The colonial administration recognized the strength of social customs as a means of spiritual and moral reinforcement among individuals, as they strengthened social bonds, unified collective goals, and stirred shared feelings against alien behavioral patterns imposed on society patterns that conflicted with the common public interest of its members.

The colonial administration attempted to impose alternative behavioral patterns to replace inherited customs and traditions, whether in dress, language, interpersonal relations, and other aspects of daily life.⁽¹⁶⁾ In this context, one recalls the spectacle and ostentatious display staged by French colonialism during the centenary of the occupation of Algeria, through which it boasted of having integrated Algerian society and melted it into the so-called French civilization.

The response, however, was a stinging slap from the sons of Algeria, expressed in their pride and steadfast attachment to their cultural and social heritage, which served as a means of steadfastness and continuity in resisting the French colonial advance throughout the 132 years of occupation. This spirit is reflected in the immortal verses of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Ben Badis, in which he expresses the Algerians’ sense of belonging, their commitment to their identity, and their pride in it, as he says:

The Algerian people are Muslim *** And to Arabism, they belong.

Whoever says they have swerved from their roots *** Or says they have died, has surely lied.

And whoever seeks their assimilation *** Has sought a goal that is impossible.⁽¹⁷⁾

5. Manifestations of Social Customs Associated with Religious Occasions

Algerian society is considered one of the most affluent in customs and traditions. Almost no occasion or celebration goes by without being interwoven with traditions that appear magnificent at times and peculiar at others. These traditions carry within them a local heritage blended with

the cultures and civilizations that have succeeded one another in our country, Algeria. Among the most prominent customs that Algerians still preserve today are those of a religious nature, including:

5.1 Ramadan Customs:

The month of Ramadan holds great sanctity for Muslims compared to the other months of the year; it represents the fourth pillar of Islam as established by our true Sharia (*Shari'atu'na al-Hanifa*). Consequently, Algerians have striven to distinguish the arrival of this great month with a set of customs, most of which remain consistently practiced to this day.

Anyone familiar with these customs will find that they date back to the Ottoman era and their flame did not flicker out, despite the hardship and meager living conditions during the French colonial period. Successive generations sought to pass down the traditions of their ancestors. This begins with the announcement of Ramadan's arrival via cannon fire. Everyone from the elderly to young children strives to fast the holy month, abstaining from food, drink, and smoking after the dawn call to prayer (*Adhan al-Fajr*), as well as refraining from the use of perfumes and fragrances.⁽¹⁸⁾

The fast is not broken until sunset, which is also announced by a cannon shot.⁽¹⁹⁾ This practice was noted by Maltzan, who stated: "...In the month of Ramadan, the French government graciously places a cannon shot at the disposal of the Muslims, by which the end of the fast is announced. Every evening, between six and seven o'clock, the sound of the cannon is heard..." In later years, this was replaced by a siren in some regions of the country.⁽²⁰⁾

Here, we draw attention to a highly distinctive custom that accompanies the first day on which young members of the family observe fasting. This occasion is celebrated to encourage the child and strengthen their resolve to continue and grow accustomed to fasting. Generally, when an Algerian child begins to fast, they are given a drink of water mixed with orange blossom water (*Ma'zhar*) at their first Iftar, followed by a single date. The child is not forced to eat a specific meal; rather, they are given the freedom of choice, and the parents simply fulfill their requests.

The manner of celebrating a child's first fast varies by region. In the Algerian South, it may escalate to slaughtering sheep and hosting a banquet for family and relatives, during which the boy or girl wears special clothes purchased specifically for the occasion. In the Sétif region, the child's Iftar begins with a glass of milk containing a gold coin as a gift. As for the Amazigh (Berbers), they choose to have Iftar on the rooftops, symbolizing their son or daughter reaching a stage of maturity and "ascension."

During the French colonial period, specifically in the capital, and despite the hardships, families in the ancient Casbah neighborhood would gather children fasting for the first time for a special celebration. Iftar would take place on the rooftops of the houses known as "Douira." The distinct and essential dish present at this memorable Iftar was eggs, serving as the centerpiece of that enduring memory.⁽²¹⁾

Among the customs that characterized Algerians during this holy month was the food. Every family strove to adorn their tables with the best available fare, led by Couscous, which remains a staple in every home during Ramadan. Other traditional dishes varied by region, such as Harira soup in Western Algeria and Bourek (or *Brik*) in the East.

Another distinguishing feature of the Algerian table was the setting of two separate tables: one for the younger children (not yet fasting) and another for the fasting adults. The adults' table differed from the children's a subtle message to encourage the young ones to eventually perform the duty of fasting.⁽²²⁾

Throughout Ramadan, Algerians were keen to avoid music, idle talk, and debauchery, dedicating themselves to the worship of God through prayer and remembrance (*Dhikr*). During the month, the entire Quran and Sahih al-Bukhari were completed in mosques and homes, accompanied by traditional supplications and recitations common to the people of Algeria.⁽²³⁾

European writings particularly focused on Ramadan nights—the festivities, late-night gatherings, and visiting relatives. The streets of Algiers would see people out for walks or watching acrobatic performances and listening to storytellers (*Qawwalin*) and praise-singers (*Maddahin*), while cafes were lit with candles and lamps.

Ramadan also features the distinct custom of Laylat al-Qadr (The Night of Power), coinciding with the 26th night. Algerians mark this night with traditions that continue to this day, most notably circumcision. Many families choose this blessed night for their sons' circumcision, holding simple family celebrations characterized by quietude rather than noise; dancing and music were rare, and the gatherings focused on meals and conversation.⁽²⁴⁾

Laylat al-Qadr was also marked by completing the Quran and distributing prizes to its memorizers, alongside helping the poor and needy. Despite the harsh conditions imposed by the colonial administration, scenes of synergy, solidarity, and mercy spread across the country, each according to their means.⁽²⁵⁾

It is worth noting that the colonial administration did not respect this sacred rite. They did not prevent bars or brothels from their inappropriate activities; loud parties and indecent behavior persisted. They did not punish those who publicly violated the sanctity of Ramadan; on the contrary, they encouraged it by forcing cafes and nightclubs to remain open and providing them with girls. They also did not hesitate to disrupt prayers in mosques or prevent worshippers from performing their duties.⁽²⁶⁾

However, all these methods failed against the arsenal of values and principles upon which Algerians were raised. These values formed an impenetrable fortress against the French colonial attempts at civilizational distortion and cultural erasure.

5.2 Customs Associated with the Pilgrimage (Hajj)

The performance of the Hajj pilgrimage for Algerians was associated with a host of customs that were as much social as they were religious. Despite the high costs of Hajj and the difficulty of travel compounded by the array of obstacles imposed by the colonial administration Algerians were not deterred from sharing the joy of this obligation with the pilgrims. Expressions of delight and happiness were manifold; women and children would apply henna as a traditional manifestation of joy when bidding farewell to the pilgrims.

A "Wa'da" (vow/banquet) would also be held for the pilgrims a feast prepared both before their departure and after their return. The entire community would cooperate in its preparation and cost, and sometimes specific endowments (*Awqaf*) were dedicated to these feasts. Upon their

return, the pilgrim would bring gifts to distribute among relatives, acquaintances, neighbors, and the tribe. Another tradition involved gathering at a specific location in a region where families would bid them farewell with chants of "Tahlil" (La ilaha illa Allah) and "Takbir" (Allahu Akbar) until the caravan set off toward the Holy Lands. This heritage is still practiced today in the M'zab region, the gateway to the Algerian Sahara.⁽²⁷⁾

The pilgrims' journey was also characterized by seeking blessings (*Baraka*) by visiting the shrines of certain righteous saints (*Awliya*). An example of this is the route taken by the pilgrims of Tlemcen, who would head to the shrine of the righteous saint Sidi Boumediene al-Ghowth to visit and seek blessings for their journey to the Holy Lands.⁽²⁸⁾

It must be noted that the Hajj journey was not easy, particularly when considering the collection of laws enacted by the colonial administration to restrict the movement of Algerians, both within and outside the country. A prime example is the Indigent (Native Code) dated June 28, 1881, which included Articles 16 and 17 specifically restricting the movement of the Algerian natives.⁽²⁹⁾ As for the specific procedures the colonial administration established for Hajj, they included: The law of December 10, 1894, mandated that any Algerian native wishing to perform this duty must pay a sum of money as a security deposit and obtain a special Hajj passport.

In 1907, further mandatory conditions were issued, such as obtaining a passport from the prefectural authorities, proving the possession of 1,000 francs, and providing a guarantor capable of settling debts. Additionally, the applicant had to prove that their family was not in financial need during their absence.⁽³⁰⁾ Despite this, Algerians maintained the performance of this sacred rite regardless of the hardship and suffering involved, presenting the finest example of preserving the components of Arab-Islamic identity in defiance of colonialism

5.3 Customs Associated with Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha

The celebration of religious festivals is considered one of the enduring social values among Algerians. Eid holds a profound sanctity and a distinctive character that encourages Algerians to devote themselves fully to its observance. During the days of Eid, scenes of joy, happiness, compassion, and mutual forgiveness become widespread, strengthening the bonds of social relations between families and individuals. The significance of Eid within Algerian families is reflected in numerous manifestations and specific preparations, ranging from the preparation of traditional dishes and special Eid sweets to the wearing of traditional or new clothing, each according to their means and region.

5.3.1 Customs of Eid al-Fitr

Eid al-Fitr is one of the religious occasions that carries profound social significance for Muslims in general, and Algerians in particular. It is a unifying occasion for families and a means of preventing disputes and conflicts. To achieve this, the celebration of Eid al-Fitr has long been accompanied by distinctive customs, dating back to the Ottoman period and continuing throughout the era of French occupation despite harsh living conditions and economic hardship. These customs were thus transmitted as a socio-cultural heritage to the generations that followed independence.

Eid al-Fitr occurs following the confirmed sighting of the new moon marking the first day of Shawwal. The festival has been known by several names, including al-ʿīd al-ṣaghīr (the small

Eid), 'Īd al-Sukkar (the Sugar Festival), or Seker Bayram (Şeker Bayramı). This designation derives from the widespread practice of exchanging gifts and sugar-based sweets prepared specifically for this occasion. The celebration traditionally involves a three-day work stoppage, while festivities may extend for up to eight days, during which people devote themselves to customs associated with the holiday, especially "Silat al-Rahim» the strengthening of kinship ties and mutual visits among relatives and loved ones.⁽³¹⁾

Preparations for Eid begin several days in advance, as Algerian families engage in a set of social and religious practices that have become customary with the approach of this religious occasion. The process typically begins with women of the household, who undertake extensive cleaning and decoration of homes, both inside and outside. They also prepare various types of sweets, with certain confections being especially associated with Eid al-Fitr. These sweets vary from one region of the country to another;⁽³²⁾ however, one particular pastry has become emblematic of the festival: Baklawa. Originally of Turkish origin, it is made from walnuts, almonds, and raisins, and a rich, buttery pastry soaked in honey.⁽³³⁾

On the day of Eid, men leave their homes before sunrise to perform the Eid prayer, chanting *Tahlil* and *Takbir* religious invocations that continue to be observed to this day prior to the prayer. Following the Eid sermon (*Khutba*), people exchange congratulations and blessings in a vivid display of compassion and solidarity among society members, despite the restrictions imposed by French soldiers on worshippers and their unchecked punishment of them.⁽³⁴⁾

This day is also characterized by Algerians wearing their finest clothes, particularly children, who roam streets and alleys joyfully celebrating the arrival of Eid while chanting traditional songs and expressions associated with the festival.⁽³⁵⁾

While discussing these customs of Eid al-Fitr and the joy and happiness they convey, the reader might imagine that Algerians were living in a period of comfort and prosperity. In reality, these practices took place during one of the darkest periods in Algerian history the era of French occupation, which affected all aspects of life. Consequently, the practice of these customs was not hidden from the eyes of the colonial administration. French colonial authorities viewed Eid al-Fitr not merely as a religious event, but as a unifying social occasion that could carry potential political and national dimensions, particularly within a Muslim society where religion constituted a core element of identity and doctrinal background for struggle (Jihad).

As a result, the colonial administration adopted a stance characterized by caution and constant surveillance, manifesting a form of superficial tolerance. This apparent tolerance was reflected in allowing official holidays or issuing formal greetings, while simultaneously enforcing real repression against any independent religious or social activity. Measures such as curfews, inspection campaigns, and bans on gatherings were imposed, driven by fears that the Eid celebrations might be exploited to organize clandestine meetings or acts of resistance (Fida'iya).⁽³⁶⁾

Despite suffering and harsh conditions, Algerians did not lose the spirit of Eid al-Fitr during the Liberation Revolution. Instead, they transformed it into an occasion for strengthening national cohesion and sustaining the struggle for independence. Eid was a symbol of steadfastness, where

the takbīrāt of the Eid blended with the sounds of resistance, for there was no true joy except in achieving freedom and independence.

5.3.2 Customs of Eid al-Adha:

Muslims celebrate the ritual of Eid al-Adha on the tenth day of Dhu al-Hijjah each Hijri year, following the pilgrims' standing at Mount Arafat, in commemoration of the Sunnah of Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him). On this day, the Eid ram is slaughtered as an act of devotion to Almighty God, in emulation of the pilgrims of the Sacred House. Eid al-Adha is considered one of the most sacred and joyous religious occasions, carrying traditions that remain inherited to this day.

One of the most notable features of this occasion is its name, as Eid al-Adha is commonly called "the Great Eid" to distinguish it from the other Muslim feasts, due to its profound religious and social significance. Regarding its importance, William Shaler notes: "Eid al-Fitr, which crowns the month of fasting for Muslims, like Eid al-Adha which follows it by two months and ten days, is a solemn occasion announced by the resounding firing of cannons, during which Muslims give free rein to joy and happiness."⁽³⁷⁾

Among the customs most closely associated with Eid al-Adha is the sacrifice (*Udhiya*), as Algerians strive to purchase an animal to be slaughtered on the day of Eid, each according to their means. This usually takes place several days before Eid, and the sacrificial animal becomes a source of joy and delight, especially for children, who play with it and proudly show it off to their peers.⁽³⁸⁾ Another inherited custom still practiced is dyeing the sacrificial animal with henna, as an expression of joy and celebration.

Similar to the atmosphere of Eid al-Fitr, work comes to a halt and shops close on Eid al-Adha so that people can fully devote themselves to the rituals of this blessed day, the slaughter of the sacrifice, and the exchange of visits. On the second day of Eid and the days that follow, women visit cemeteries. They also cook liver and offal dishes on the first day.⁽³⁹⁾

Among the dishes most closely associated with Eid al-Adha is couscous, which is considered the most famous dish in Algerian society, reflecting its ethnic and cultural diversity. It is traditionally hand-rolled into small grains in a wooden bowl *Qas'a*, then steamed in a steamer ("*Keskas*"). It may be served with broth and vegetables, or with boiled eggs, or even with sweet herbs. It is delicious and highly nutritious. Poor families who cannot afford meat prepare it with olive oil or butter, while the working class may content themselves with bread and oil whenever available.⁽⁴⁰⁾ Hamdan Khodja also mentions, during his visit to the city of El Kalaa (The Kalaa of Beni Hammad), that he was served couscous topped with sugar.⁽⁴¹⁾

Another custom associated with Eid al-Adha is the hanging of the ram's horns in a high place in the house or on fruit trees, based on the belief that this practice drives away evil spirits, protects against the evil eye, and contributes to the abundance of fruit harvests.⁽⁴²⁾

These practices thus represent images of Algerian society's customs during Eid al-Adha, reflecting Algerians' attachment to their cultural heritage and their determination to preserve it. Some of these customs have remained continuous and well preserved, while others have been lost over time, either through forgetfulness or because they were abandoned by later generations.

5.3.3 Customs of of the Mawlid al-Nabi (The Prophet's Birthday):

Despite the differing views within Algerian society regarding the legitimacy of celebrating the Mawlid Prophet's Birthday, this occasion has, over time, acquired a distinctive and special character among Algerians, marked by joy and delight at the birth of the best of mankind, our master Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him). Numerous customs became associated with this occasion, practiced by Algerians and handed down from generation to generation.

In mosques, the biography of the Prophet (*Sira*) is recited, and prophetic praise (*madīh nabawī*) is chanted, including famous poems such as *al-Burda* and *al-Hamziyya* by al-Busiri, beginning ten days before the Mawlid. On the day of the Mawlid itself, the celebration concludes with a complete recitation (*khatma*), marking the end of the festivities.⁽⁴³⁾

From one region to another, the features of celebration vary. In southern Algeria, celebrations continue for a full week starting from the day of the Prophet's Birthday, known as *al-Sbu'* (The Seventh Day). During this period, women and children adorn themselves with henna, food is prepared and distributed as charity (*Sadaqa*), and men wear white garments while chanting popular songs accompanied by gunpowder shots. On this occasion, communal feasts (*wa'dāt*) (communal banquets) are also organized, during which food is distributed and poems praising the Noble Prophet ﷺ are recited.⁽⁴⁴⁾

In the city of Constantine, children go out into the streets rejoicing in the occasion, sprinkling passers-by with scented water and awaiting gifts in return. Women are also known for preparing traditional dishes such as *chakhchoukha*, *rfiss*, *mesffouf*, and other foods associated with the celebration.

As for customs of an official nature, mention should be made of those practiced during the state of Emir Abdelkader al-Jazairi, founder of the modern Algerian state and leader of the Algerian resistance against French occupation (1832–1847). He commemorated the Prophet's Birthday, as mentioned by his son in the book *Tuhfat al-Zā'ir* (The Visitor's Masterpiece), which describes how Emir Abdelkader celebrated this occasion under the title "*The Emir's Celebration of the Prophet's Birthday and the Two Eids*." The Emir observed the Mawlid in a grand manner, offering exemplary images of jihad-oriented and educational spirit. He linked religious celebrations to the reinforcement of Islamic identity and jihad, rather than to innovated rituals.

On the day of the noble Mawlid, the Emir, along with his entourage and army commanders, would go out to a vast open field. The soldiers would stage a mock battle: organized infantry would form a square fortress, placing gunpowder and ammunition at its center, with two cannons positioned at each corner. A cavalry unit would then surround the fortress. A detachment would emerge from the fortress to repel the cavalry, advancing some distance while firing gunpowder at the opposing horsemen. The cavalry would then charge, firing until close, prompting the detachment to retreat without ceasing fire until it reentered the fortress and resumed its position. The infantry would then fire successive shots at the cavalry, and one or two cannons would be discharged from the nearest corner, forcing the cavalry to withdraw. This process would be repeated from the other sides in turn. The entire display would last about two hours, leaving observers delighted, hearts uplifted, and tongues full of praise.⁽⁴⁵⁾

Algerians were keen to commemorate the Mawlid despite colonial attempts to erase Islamic

rituals. The celebration thus became a symbolic expression of adherence to Islam and Arab-Islamic identity in the face of Frenchification policies. Scholars and reformers such as the scholars of the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulama, also used the occasion for religious and national awareness-raising. At their head was Shaykh Abdelhamid Ben Badis, who seized this opportunity to organize cultural activities aimed at spreading religious and national consciousness. For this purpose, large groups of scouts, including the *Raja* ' and *al-Sabah* troops, attended these events in 1937.

6. CONCLUSION :

In light of our study titled "**The Social History of Algerians During the French Occupation: Religious Customs and Traditions as a Model (1830–1962)**," we have reached a set of conclusions summarized as follows:

- Algerian society is considered one of the richest in terms of social and cultural heritage, encompassing the norms, customs, and traditions associated with various social and religious occasions.
- Customs and traditions exert a significant influence on social life; they express the community's identity and its continuity. Furthermore, they act as an unwritten "constitution" that no member can easily deviate from. They serve as the moral and value-based compass that judges the extent of an individual's commitment, not to mention their role in documenting bonds and strengthening connections between members of society.
- Algerian society is distinguished by a wide range of customs linked to the arrival of various religious occasions such as Ramadan, the pilgrimage (Hajj), Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, and the commemoration of the Prophet's Birthday (peace be upon him) (Mawlid), among others not covered in this study. These traditions vary in content from one region to another, and even within the same city. They represent a form of cultural resistance adopted by members of Algerian society across all walks of life to preserve their national identity.
- Algerians succeeded in preserving their civilizational and cultural identity, as well as the components of their collective memory, despite numerous projects and unjust laws aimed at erasing the features of this identity. The colonial administration did not hesitate to restrict the livelihoods and lives of Algerians in a desperate attempt to distance them from the customs and traditions of their ancestors. However, these attempts failed; to this day, Algerians remain firmly committed to their customs in celebrating various religious occasions. These practices reflect the cohesion of bonds among society members, standing strong against the campaigns of distortion and misrepresentation that have targeted and continue to target the civilizational and cultural identity of Algerians.

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