

The importance of cultural heritage and commonalities in Construction the Algerian-Turkish partnership

أهمية الإرث الحضاري والقواسم المشتركة في بناء الشراكة الجزائرية التركية

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Abstract:

This study discusses the role and importance of cultural heritage and common denominators between Turkey and Algeria in building an Algerian-Turkish partnership, and to what extent can these two factors be invested in to facilitate and accelerate the pace of cooperation?

Algeria and Turkey are linked by deep historical ties that extend to the present day. This is embodied by the two countries signing of agreements in various fields that further strengthen their political, economic, commercial, cultural, and scientific relations, while preserving the interests of both.

Keywords: Algeria; Turkey; Relationships; Ottoman history; civilization, cooperation.

ملخص:

تتناول هذه الدراسة دور وأهمية الإرث الحضاري والقواسم المشتركة بين تركيا والجزائر، في بناء شراكة جزائرية تركية؛ وإلى أي مدى يمكن الاستثمار في هذين العاملين من أجل تسهيل وتسريع وتيرة التعاون؟

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فالجرائر وتركيا كانت تربطهما علاقات تاريخية راسخة تمتد إلى وقتنا الحاضر، وتجسد ذلك في إبرام البلدين اتفاقيات في مختلف الميادين زادت من تعزيز علاقاتهما السياسية والاقتصادية والتجارية والثقافية والعلمية، كما حفظت مصالح كل منهما.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الجرائر، تركيا، العلاقات، تاريخ عثماني، الحضارة، التعاون.

Introduction:

Algeria and Turkey have deep historical relations. The certain reality is that today, the two countries also maintain strong relations that reflect their desire to establish the foundations of a robust partnership fuelled by many common historical denominators between them. The history of Algeria during the Ottoman era is considered a pivotal stage in the history of the two countries. This period was embodied by the cultural fusion of the Ottoman Empire and the great military status that Algeria acquired under Ottoman rule, which colored the Algerian Navy: that deterrent and terrifying force in the Mediterranean whose law prevailed for many years. Strong cultural relations were also established between the two countries, which were remarkably fused into a common identity based on protecting the land of Islam and deterring dangers.

1. The role and importance of cultural heritage and the commonalities between Algeria and Turkey:

1.1- The concept of cultural heritage and its importance:

Cultural heritage is defined as: “All the artistic and literary effects left by the ancestors, as well as cultural patterns and customs transmitted from generation to generation, which are considered precious and valuable in relation to the traditions of the present era.”¹ “It is all that has passed since fifty years or more.”¹

¹- LOULANSKI (Tolina) : « Revising the Concept for Cultural Heritage: The Argument for a Functional Approach », in : International Journal of Cultural Property, Vol. 13, N. 2, (2006), 207–233. Cambridge, USA. p. 208.

Viewpoints and definitions of heritage have multiplied as the number of those interested in it has increased, “which has increased the complexity of its concept and field of study and increased the number of related issues that must be dealt with theoretically and appliedly.”²

The new reality has necessitated the birth of heritage studies, another interdisciplinary field that explores the impact of heritage on the present, and the development of new holistic approaches to address the complexities and challenges of heritage. However, cultural heritage still “lacks a strong disciplined presence and therefore an agreed frame of reference and research”, which can be considered a problem of crucial importance in this field.

It is consistent with what is included in the concept of heritage in its material form, which is reflected in the material remnants left by the ancestors, such as buildings and various collectibles such as clothing, jewelry, utensils, and more. But also, the intangible heritage, which took on a broad moral dimension with the development of the definition of culture, which included various spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional characteristics and the fields of arts and literature. This broader understanding of cultural heritage encompasses diverse aspects of human life systems, values, customs, traditions, and beliefs³.

This heritage, which UNESCO has given great importance to, as its interpretation of it is not limited to material historical monuments, but also includes “living traditions or forms of expression inherited from our ancestors that will be transmitted to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, and occasions.” Additionally, cultural heritage involves ceremonial, knowledge, and practices related to nature and the universe, or knowledge and skills associated with the production of traditional crafts.

The importance of cultural heritage is evident in its role preserving the cultural diversity of peoples and preserving the

²- MA'ALĀ (Ṭalāl) : *Al-turāth ghayr al-mādī turāth ash-shu'ūb al-hay*, *Silsilat 'awraq Dimashq*, N° 4, Midād, Damas, 2017, p. 5.

³- Id.

characteristics of individuals and societies. This becomes especially crucial within the escalating challenges constantly imposed by the phenomenon of globalization, which reduces the world to a small village that wants everyone to melt and fuse into a common mold and one model. Preserving heritage is preserving identity, memory, history, and most importantly life itself.

Heritage is the cherished treasure and collective memory of people. Yet, no matter how long its lifespan, it is vulnerable to disappearance. Regarding this, the British historian Hubble says: If you want to eliminate a people, you first begin by paralyzing its memory, then eliminate its books, culture, and history, then write only one book for it and attribute to it the culture of this book, and invent a history from this book and withhold any other books from it, then this person will be forgotten. The people were who they were and what they were, and the world forgets them.⁴

1.2- Common denominators between Algeria and Turkey:

Algeria is known for its rich history. On its land, many nations and civilizations took place, preserved by various remains and antiquities in many of its regions. The Ottoman presence in Algeria was among the most important stations that colored Algeria's modern history and chronicled one of the most prosperous periods of Algerian power in the Mediterranean after Algeria's accession to Ottoman rule.

The great credit went to the brothers Oruj and Khair ed-Din Barbaros, who were considered among the most famous and powerful Turkish leaders in establishing the Algerian naval fleet, one of the strongest naval fleets in the Western Mediterranean for nearly three centuries.⁵

⁴- SAMIḤ AL-ZĪN (ʿUmayma) : « al-Tanawu' ath-thaqāfi 'ithrā' 'insānī 'am šidām », Proceedings of the 8th International Conference: Cultural diversity, Tripoli, May 21-23 2015, p. 7.

⁵- For more, see: 'IBRĀHĪM BIK (Ḥalīm) : *Tarīkh ad-dawla al-'uthmāniya al-'aliya*, al-Mukhtār, Cairo, 2004, pp. 136-137.

What must be pointed out is that Reis Khair ed-Din Barbaros⁶ (1466-1546) had a reputation and a standing with the Sublime Porte. It is noteworthy that Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent supported him, forging a close relationship, and even appointing him as one of his closest advisors during his assumption of naval command. Despite the authority of the Grand Vizier and the ministers, they were unable to oppose or reject Khair ed-Din's influence due to his great political acumen. He was very keen on maintaining a good relationship with them and was careful not to clash with them.⁷

Western writings strive hard to falsify the reality of the Ottoman presence in Algeria after the international sovereignty of the Ottomans and their expansion in Europe, especially after their victory over them and the fall of "Constantinople" at the hands of Sultan "Mehmed II", who destroyed the pride and symbol of European power and the position of the Christian Church in particular.⁸

It seems that Europe lacks real knowledge of the Ottoman Empire. According to diplomat D'Ohsson what it knows about it does not exceed the vastness of its area and geographical extension. Its knowledge of it is superficial and it does not have deep knowledge of it. It is ignorant of the "springs" that sprouted and produced this "great machine."⁹

Among these is what Rotalier wrote about the Algerians' relationship with the Ottoman Turks. He said: "Among the Arabs,

⁶- **BELHAMISSI (Moulay)** : *Marine et Marins d'Alger 1518-1830*, T. 1: les navires et les hommes, Bibliothèque Nationale d'Algérie, imprimerie En-Nakhla, Bouzaréah, 1999, pp. 139-144.

⁷- **UJTUNA (Yilmaz)** : *Mawsū'at al-'imbrāṭūtiya al-'uthmāniya as-siyāsī wa al-'askarī wa al-ḥaḍārī*, Tr. 'Adnān Maḥmūd Salmān, Maḥmūd al-Ansārī, Vol. 1, Arab Encyclopedia House, Beyrouth, 2010, p. 289.

⁸- Another event rich in its results, in the year 1453, the Turks took control of Constantinople, and they had been setting foot in Europe for a long time. They became a European power that destabilized Christianity. However, France found in Turkey an unexpected ally against the Habsburg Empire. For more: **BAINVILLE (Jacques)** : *Histoire de France (1879-1936)*, Arthème Fayard, Paris, 1924, p. 82.

⁹- **MOURADGEA D'OHSSON (Ignatus)** : *Le tableau général de l'Empire Ottoman*, T. 2, Imprimerie de Monsieur, Paris, 1788, p. 2.

only a small number of them were allies of the Turks, while the rest were completely subject to their hegemony.” He also said: “The Turks displayed more than 60 heads on walls and statues dripping with blood in a way that befits and reflects the brutality of their barbaric countries”.¹⁰

In the same way, Defontin-Maxange gave a similar description of them, saying: “The Barbary pirates (talking about the Turks in the Mediterranean) pounce on their prey. They kill, burn, rape, and ravage, and then disappear, leaving behind smoke on the ruins and a terrible silence.” He adds: “They looted and set fire to several neighborhoods, and burned the most beautiful churches, after they remained there for three days, during which they destroyed everything.” Then he complainingly wonders: “How did Christianity not unite against the 'scourge of humanity'?” (This means Turkish and Algerian piracy¹¹).

The Ottoman rule in Algeria had a clear cultural impact on society, enriching the country’s features and beauty. The fusion of Andalusian and Ottoman characteristics added a unique dimension to Algerian culture, which was reflected in the various aspects of urbanization and the various customs and traditions that still date from that period to the present day.

The British doctor William Davis, who was captured in Algeria, expressed his admiration for its beauty and the strength of its fortifications: “It is a joyful and powerful city ruled by the Turks. It is located on the right side of a hill and has a strong presence of military sites, castles, and sidewalks with large, armed caves.”¹²

Algeria and Turkey share many diverse aspects of their cultural heritage encompassing both material and intangible manifestations. This heritage is evident in the tangible evidence of monuments, urban

¹⁰- **DE ROTALIER (Charles)** : Histoire d'Alger et de la piraterie des Turcs dans la Méditerranée, T. 2, Polain, Paris, 1841, p. 154.

¹¹- **DEFONTIN-MAXANGE (Dominique)** : Alger avant la conquête Euldj. Ali, Corsaire barbaresque, Beglierbey d’Afrique et Grand-amiral, A. Pédone, Paris, 1930, pp. 1-5.

¹²- **SPENCER (William)** : Algiers in the Age of the Corsairs, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1976, p. 51.

remains, and other material artifacts, while the intangible manifestations can be demonstrated by the moral evidence that is seen in various aspects of “living expression” such as music, folklore, myths, folk tales, proverbs, and related words, etc. All of which reflect the extent of influence in Algerian society, as all these aspects overlap within its features and characteristics.

During the Ottoman era, Algeria gained a great status distinguished by several characteristics that reflected the reality that prevailed in the Islamic Maghreb and the Mediterranean, particularly during the sixteenth century. William Spencer confirmed this position when he said, “The city of Algiers, as the capital of a strong, stable state in North Africa, represented, along with Tunisia and Tripoli, the decisive Ottoman Islamic force engaged in wrestling with the Crusaders like a sharp blade penetrating deeply into the Islamic world.”¹³

Algeria was known for its power and prestige, and was distinguished by its “economic wealth, the abundance of its trade and its popularity abroad, and the extension of its interior to the heart of the continent beyond the Sahara Desert”¹⁴, which enabled it to build profitable and broad trade relations with its geographical surroundings.

This unique leadership distinguished Algeria from “the other vice royals of Morocco,” forcing the European countries to pay taxes to it and offer gifts to gain its affection and avoid its hostility after they recognized that leadership represented by its strong naval fleet and the nature of its soldiers, led by the captains of the sea, who became known as “the terror of the naval fleets crossing the White Sea.” Notable figures such as Khair ed-Din Pasha “Barbaros” (1520-1546), Hassan Pasha bin Khair ed-Din (1544-1552), Hadj Hussein “Mezomorto” (1683-1688), Uluj Ali (1571-1586), Salih Reis (1552-1556), and others, solidified Algeria's dominance in the region.”

¹³- **NAÏT BELKACEM (Mouloud Kacem)** : *Shakhṣīyat al-Jazā'ir al-duwaliya wa haybatuha al-'ālamīya qabla sanat 1830*, T. 2, Dār al-Ba'th, Algiers, 1985, p. 339.

¹⁴- **BOUAZIZ (Yahya)** : *'Alāqāt al-Jazā'ir al-khārijīya ma'a duwal wa mamālik 'ūrūbā 1500-1830*, Dār al-baṣā'ir, Algiers, 2009, p. 22.

“Algeria was acting as part of the Ottoman Caliphate, that is, as an integral part of the comprehensive whole in times of distress, but in normal circumstances it dealt even with the Ottoman Empire - in addition to other countries - with complete independence and sovereignty, and Algeria was keen to strictly enforce respect for this complete independence.” This is complete sovereignty with all determination, severity, firmness, and intensity.¹⁵

There are also many images attesting to the Ottoman sultans' appreciation, interest, and trust in Algeria's military leaders. These leaders were often preferred for the maritime jihad over the rest of the Ottoman leaders in exchange for their skill and will, which became frightening to everyone who passes through the waters of the Mediterranean. Countries of all kinds courted Algeria for the safety of their naval fleets or their trade in the Mediterranean. This demand led to substantial payments and gifts being offered to Algeria by various nations for this security.¹⁶

Some European writings acknowledge the independence that characterized the Ottoman rule of Algeria. Although the Sublime Porte had not dominated Algeria for a long time, the province of Algiers never dared to declare its independence from the Ottoman Empire. On the contrary, it freely recognized the Sultan's sovereignty over it without obeying his orders when it deemed necessary.¹⁷

One of the images of that beauty, strength, and stability that distinguished the city of Algiers during the Ottoman era is what a French nobleman said, in the year 1619 AD, that: “The city of Algiers is that whip that is drawn over the Christian world, because it is the terror of Europe, the bridle of Italy and Spain, and the ruler of the islands”.¹⁸

This also includes what Zebiri mentioned, explaining the nature of the Ottoman rule in Algeria during the era of the deys: “...and when it was the era of the deys, the relationship between Algeria and the

¹⁵- **NAÏT BELKACEM** : op. cit., p. 82.

¹⁶- **UJTUNA** : op. cit., p. 286.

¹⁷- **DE GRAMMONT (H.-D.)** : *Histoire d'Alger sous la domination turque (1515-1830)*, Ernest Leroux, Paris, 1887, p. 396.

¹⁸- **SPENCER** : op. cit, p. 14.

Sublime Porte became the relationship of master with master, so Algeria, whenever a new dey was appointed, would send a messenger to Istanbul who would bring the decree and send with him a gift, and the price for this would be The gift does not exceed the value of 250 quintals of wheat, and in return, the Sublime Porte provides the Eyalet every time with assistance in the form of military equipment and ready-made boats”¹⁹.

On the other hand, the Algerian people have inherited, generation after generation, those deep feelings and historical commonalities that link them to the Turks and the dimensions of the common Islamic identity have become entrenched in them. Despite the historical estrangement that characterized Turkey’s policy towards the Arab countries after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923 AD, the bonds between Algerians and Turks have remained resilient and enduring.

2. The civilizational dimension in Algerian-Turkish relations:

The cultural similarities between Algeria and Turkey are many, varied and reflected in the physical and material monuments that still bear witness to that civilizational presence and cultural and social influence that date back to an important period in Algeria’s history. Unfortunately, Western writings have often attempted to distort and shroud with many inaccuracies and lies this shared history in the hope of building a gap and disagreement between the two countries.

While many Western authors and historians promote the bloodiness of the Ottoman invasion of Algeria and the bad conditions that prevailed within the province of Algiers as a result of the violent practices with which the Ottoman rulers treated the subjects, William Spencer provided a brilliant and different description of the reality of the province of Algiers under Ottoman rule, saying: “...it was There is a high standard of living, and its territory, although it was never the total size that France occupied and annexed to French Algeria, was homogeneous, well-administered and constituted a cooperative and effective social mix, which is completely contrary to the situation that

¹⁹- **ZEBIRI (Mohamed Larbi)** : *Madkhal 'ilā tarīkh al-Maghrib al-'arabī al-ḥadīth*, S.N.E.D, Algiers, 1975, p. 66.

the country experienced during the one hundred and thirty years of French control”²⁰.

Perhaps the Algerian cultural heritage is one of the most prominent areas affected by the Ottoman influence, as it still bears witness to the depth of the relations between the Turks and the Algerians, and to the historical ties between them. This relationship, the features, and characteristics of which are still clear in the social and cultural life of Algerians, as the Algerian people have inherited these deep feelings from generation to generation.

The various material monuments that are still standing despite the passage of years, such as mosques, scientific schools, corners, waterways, and gardens... are valuable evidence of the Ottoman presence in Algeria. Add to it the Ottoman decoration, which is considered one of the most beautiful decorations that Algerian buildings still retain, and which mainly decorated the wooden ceilings and ceramic squares of the palaces of the beys and officials...²¹.

This era dates back the construction of the first beautiful palaces known to the city of Algeria, as well as baths and mosques. Urban development flourished in this era, and marble slabs imported from Italy and Sicily were used to beautify palaces, mosques, and bathrooms.”²²

4- The importance of investing in cultural heritage and commonalities in building a strong Algerian-Turkish partnership:

Turkey's orientation towards the Islamic world reflected positively on it due to various dealings between Turkey and various Arab and Islamic countries. This engagement extends to tourism, with Turkey, especially Istanbul, emerging as a top destination for travelers as it contains many historical and artistic monuments that

²⁰- SPENCER : op. cit, pp.14-15.

²¹- ‘ISĀWĪ (Zuhra), MAṬRUḤ (‘Um al-khīr) & NĀSHĀR (Khadīja) : *Al-zakhrafa al-mi‘māriya fī al-‘ahd al-‘uthmānī*, Publications of the Ministry of Culture, Algiers, 2007, p. 13.

²²- AL-MĪLĪ (Muḥammad Mubārak) : *Tārīkh al-Jazā‘ir fī al-qadīm wa al-ḥadīth*, T. 3, Dār al-nahḍa al-‘arabiya, Algiers, 1964, p. 122.

have remained well established. It stands tall and bears witness to the strength and greatness of the Ottoman Empire, which brought together the countries of the Islamic and European world alike in its rule for more than six centuries.

The Algerian was not exempt from this trend, and Turkey became his primary choice in his movements and dealings as well. Whether as researchers, tourists, businessmen, or civil activists, everyone finds a common ground in selecting Turkey as their destination of choice instead of other countries.

In previous years, it has been observed that Algerian researchers have shown a keen interest in Turkey, particularly in the fields of history and archaeology. Turkey contains a very rich archive related to Algeria due to their historical connection for three centuries. Therefore, only a specialized researcher was allowed to return to these documents and archives for a pure scientific research study in order to extract information from it that could enrich his topic and lead him to new facts and knowledge.

Today, Turkey has become a destination for various Algerian researchers in various specializations to benefit from the Turkish experience in the field of scientific research, teaching curricula, etc. Turkish universities have also attracted a number of Algerian students in various scientific and literary specializations, and Algerian universities have also received Turkish student delegations to practice their education there. This is done within the framework of knowledge exchange and scientific networking between the two countries. In this context, other trends have emerged to open multiple horizons for cooperation between various scientific and research institutions, including the opening of the Turkish Yunus Emre Cultural Center, the Turkish Knowledge Endowment School, and cultural centers in Algeria and Istanbul.²³

²³- Al-Quds Al-Arabi : “Türkiye and Algeria... deep-rooted relations and rising momentum”, 21 July 2023:

<https://www.alquds.co.uk/%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%83%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%B1-%D8%B9%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%AA->

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Today's talk about Turkey has become closely tied to the economic boom that it experienced a few years ago and the total economic and commercial transactions that have reached double levels with various countries, including Algeria. Since signing a friendship and cooperation treaty in 2006, Algeria has emerged as Turkey's first partner on the African continent. The level of transactions between the two countries in 2013 reached approximately 4.5 billion dollars, and the Turks aspire to reach 10 billion US dollars in the future.

During the visit of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in November 2014, an extension of an agreement ending in 2014 was signed, according to which Algeria would supply Turkey with liquefied gas for an additional ten years, doubling these quantities by 50%, according to the Algerian News Agency.

Algerian-Turkish relations have been characterized by a clear upward trend in the recent period, covering various fields, especially after Mr. Abdelmadjid Tebboune assumed the presidency of the country at the end of 2019. This development was confirmed by the pace of activity of the various economic projects concluded between the two countries, crowned by these official visits by the leaders of the two countries and their ministers. This is what was stated by Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, the former Turkish Foreign Minister, after his visit to Algeria in 2022, "the number of Turkish companies in Algeria exceeded 1,400 companies and the total investment exceeded 5 billion dollars..." He also explained, "We are working together to increase not only our trade but also, our investments here have reached the level of 10 billion dollars."²⁴

With the increase in Turkish "incursion" and economic activity, Algerian-Turkish relations were able to reach unprecedented levels, which established a new and fruitful trend for Algeria towards finding alternative economic partners beyond its traditional alliances,

<https://www.aps.dz/ar/algerie/147185-2023-07-20-20-25-10>

²⁴- Algérie Presse Service: Algeria-Türkiye: relations rooted in history and a sustainable and integrated partnership: <https://www.aps.dz/ar/algerie/147185-2023-07-20-20-25-10>

particularly with France. Despite the global recession crisis impacting international trade, the trade exchanges between Turkey and Algeria have reached 5.3 billion dollars this year alone. Furthermore, the presence of over 1,550 Turkish companies operating in Algeria across various sectors, including industry, construction, public works, and irrigation, serves as compelling evidence of the importance of the development and strength of these relations.

Conclusion:

Algeria and Turkey have sought to establish strong relations between them, based on common interests (win-win), and historical ties have played a role in activating and smoothing this. The two countries were able to achieve partnerships and conclude many and varied agreements in various fields, and the economic aspect had the largest share as it is the main driver of international interests.

The period of the Ottoman presence in Algeria is also considered an important historical milestone in the country's history, as it reached the level of sovereignty following the successful defense of its naval fleet against threats to the security and stability of the Maghreb region, and specifically the province of Algeria. Historians and diplomats have attested to the strength of its army and the allure of its natural beauty and charm during this time.

To this day, Algerian society retains many elements of the Ottoman civilization that are still evident in that diverse heritage. Alongside the Andalusian style, the Ottoman legacy constitutes one of the most beautiful manifestations of cultural and social diversity in Algeria. This influence is evident in the various aspects of urbanization, characterized by a brilliant artistic style, as well as in the diverse forms of clothing and cuisine that reflect the luxurious artistic taste of this cultural blending.

The importance of the cultural heritage and commonalities that unite Algeria and Turkey lies in building a bilateral partnership that extends beyond mere economic cooperation. A relation that encompasses various areas of life including cultural, social, and

scientific fields, as well as other areas of mutual interests to both countries.

Investing in the cultural components of the Republic of Algeria and the Republic of Turkey, along with their intertwined history, holds the promise of advancing cooperation between the two nations. This endeavor requires dedicated efforts based on a sound and objective examination of their respective histories, as well as an active collaboration among researchers, academics, and other specialists within the framework of multiple partnerships that contributed to this civilizational project.

The restoration operations carried out by Turkey on some Ottoman monuments in Algeria through the Turkish Cooperation Agency - TICA, which in June 2022 launched a scientific laboratory for research and development, is a positive and important step through which it aims to revive the Ottoman urban heritage in Algeria, on one hand, but also, represents an important platform for strengthening the ties of cooperation and partnership between it and Algeria. An example of this is the restoration of the Ketchawa Mosque in 2018.

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