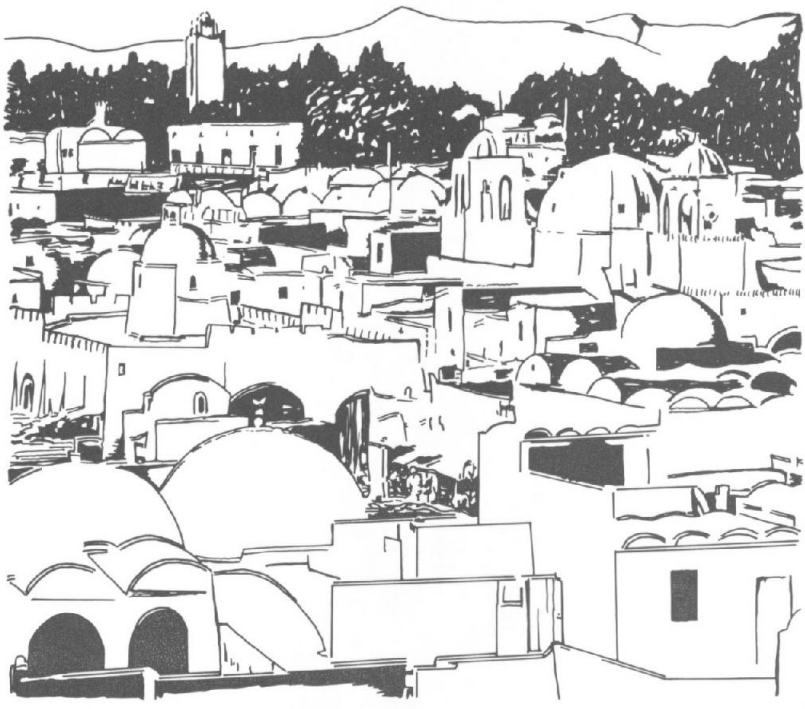
Chapter 2. The Society and Its Environment



Modern domed houses at El Oued in eastern Algeria

ALGERIAN SOCIETY has undergone major changes since the mid-1980s. Urbanization has increased steadily, and in 1990 more than 50 percent of the population lived in urban areas, found primarily near the coast. Furthermore, dislocation caused by the steep fall of oil prices in 1986 and inefficiencies in the public sector caused the government to initiate extensive reforms encompassing the economic, social, and political sectors. The government shifted from its rigid centralized system of decision making to a greater emphasis on market forces. With the help of international organizations such as the World Bank (see Glossary), major transformations began taking place in agriculture, banking, and in price controls, thereby changing Algeria's socioeconomic structure. The government also increased public expenditures in the early 1990s to upgrade education and health care.

Despite those positive changes, the early 1990s have seen a rise in unemployment, a drop in per capita income, critical housing shortages, and other problems. In part, these problems resulted from the policies of previous governments, but they were exacerbated by the sharp downturn in oil prices in the mid-1980s. Further affecting Algeria's progress on the socioeconomic front has been the political turmoil resulting from the confrontation between government forces and Islamists (sometimes seen as fundamentalists). Islamists have sought to redefine Algerian identity to be more Arab and more Muslim and have questioned the legitimacy of the existing political system, which they perceive as too secular and too Western.

Physical Setting

Algeria comprises 2,381,741 square kilometers, more than four-fifths of which is desert. Its Arabic name, Al Jazair (the islands), is believed to derive from the rocky islands along the Mediterranean coastline. The northern portion, an area of mountains, valleys, and plateaus between the Mediterranean Sea and the Sahara Desert, forms an integral part of the section of North Africa known as the Maghrib (see Glossary). This area includes Morocco, Tunisia, and the northwestern portion of Libya known historically as Tripolitania (see fig. 4).

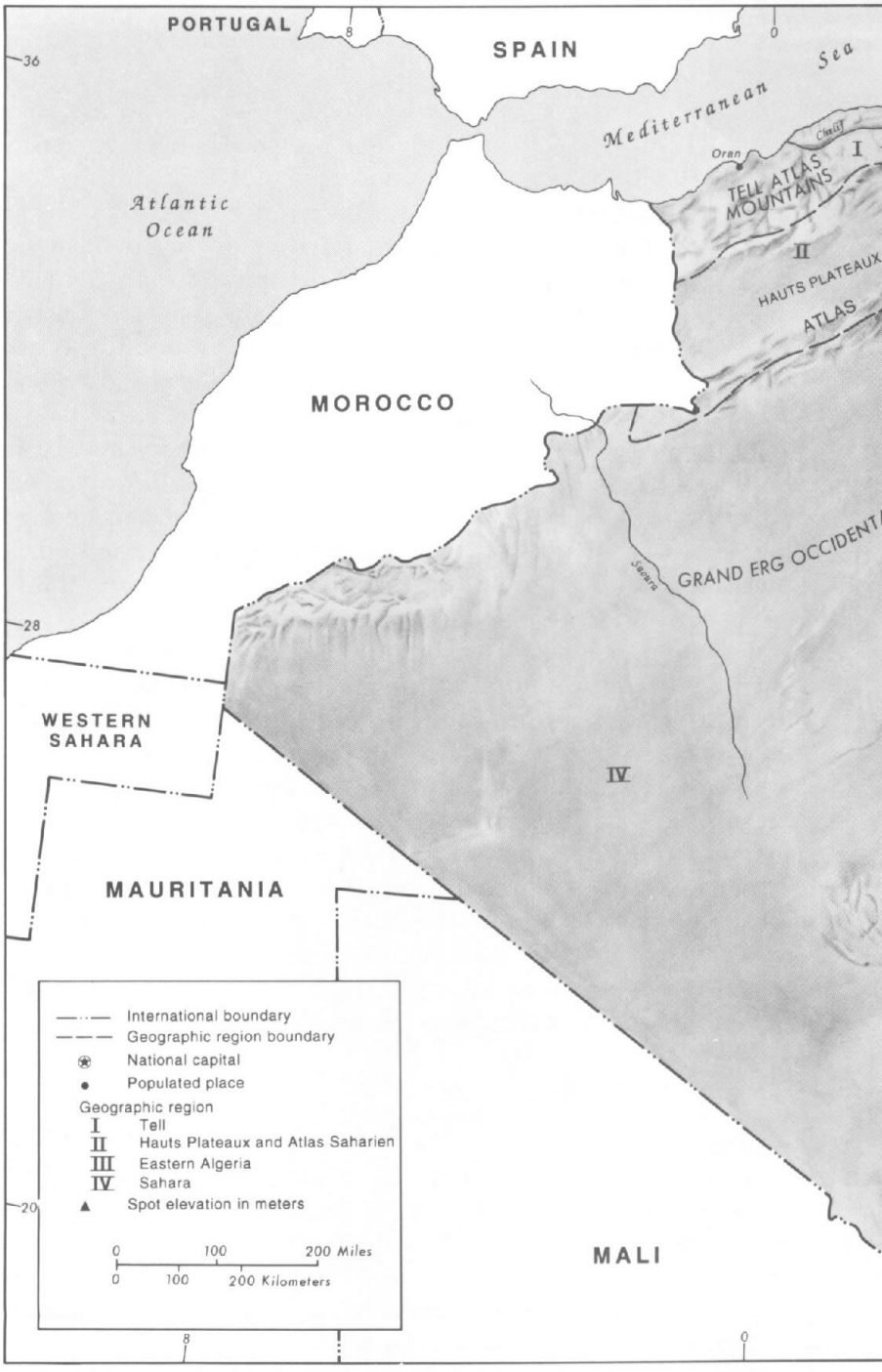
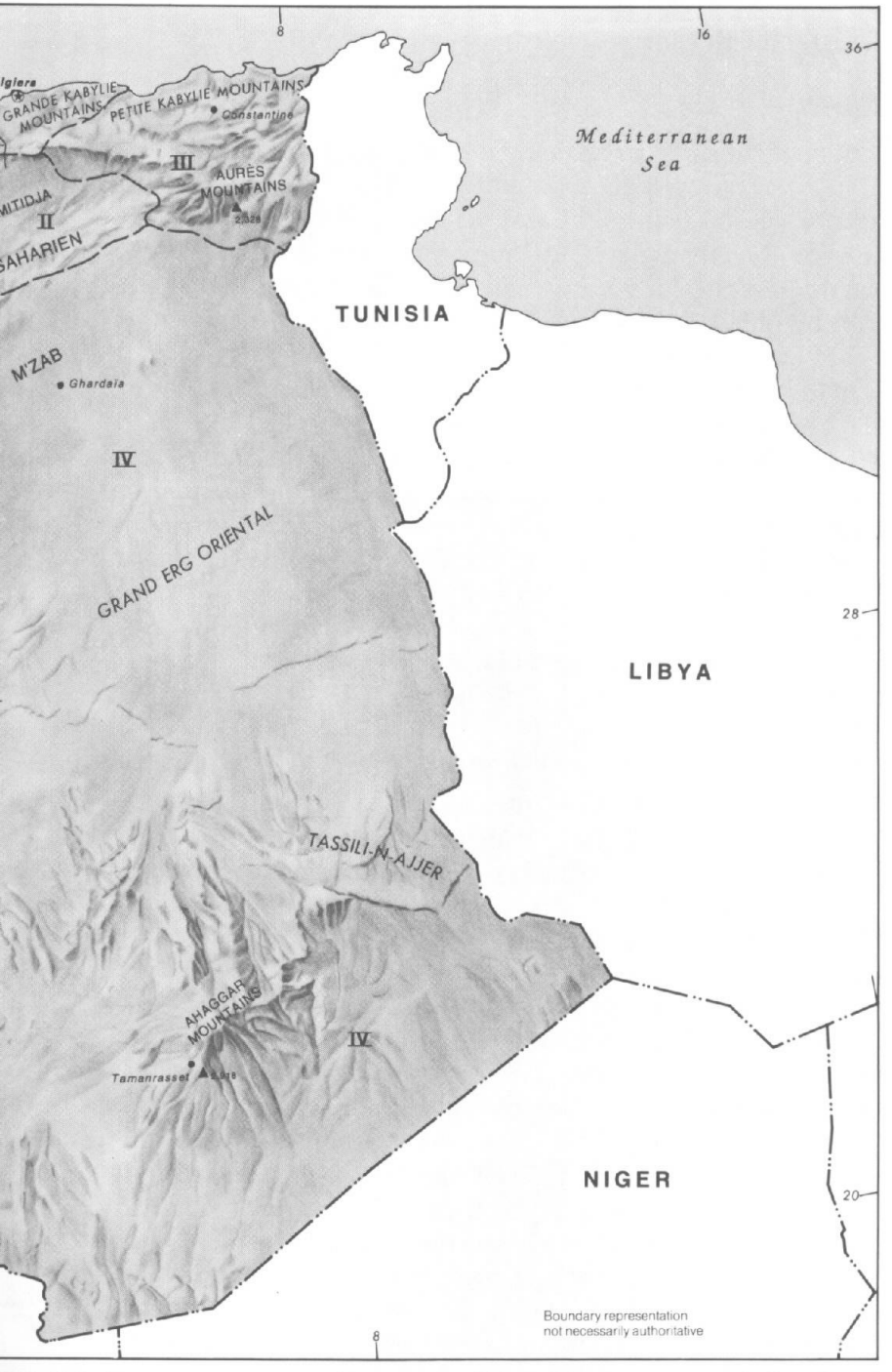


Figure 4. Topography and Drainage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16
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GRANDE KABYLIE MOUNTAINS
PETITE KABYLIE MOUNTAINS
Constantine
Mediterranean Sea
III
AURÈS MOUNTAINS
2,328
II
SAHARIEN
TUNISIA
M'ZAB
Ghardaia
IV
GRAND ERG ORIENTAL
28
LIBYA
TASSILI-N-AJJER
AHAGGAR MOUNTAINS
IV
Tamanrasset
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Boundary representation not necessarily authoritative
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Geographic Regions

The Tell

The fertile Tell is the country's heartland, containing most of its cities and population. Made up of hills and plains of the narrow coastal region, the several Tell Atlas mountain ranges, and the intermediate valleys and basins, the Tell extends eastward from the Moroccan border to the mountains of the Grande Kabylie and the Bejaïa Plain on the east. Its eastern terminus is the Soummam River.

The best agricultural areas are the gentle hills extending 100 kilometers westward from Algiers; the Mitidja Plain, which was a malarial swamp before being cleared by the French; and the Bejaïa Plain. The alluvial soils in these areas permitted the French to establish magnificent vineyards and citrus groves. By contrast, in the great valley of the Chelif River and other interior valleys and basins, aridity and excessive summer heat have limited the development of agriculture. The Grande Kabylie is a zone of impoverished small farm villages tucked into convoluted mountains.

The High Plateaus and the Saharan Atlas

Stretching more than 600 kilometers eastward from the Moroccan border, the High Plateaus (often referred to by their French name Hauts Plateaux) consist of undulating, steppelike plains lying between the Tell and Saharan Atlas ranges. The plateaus average between 1,100 and 1,300 meters in elevation in the west, dropping to 400 meters in the east. So dry that they are sometimes thought of as part of the Sahara, the plateaus are covered by alluvial debris formed when the mountains eroded. An occasional ridge projects through the alluvial cover to interrupt the monotony of the landscape.

Higher and more continuous than the Tell Atlas, the Sahara Atlas range is formed of three massifs: the Ksour near the Moroccan border, the Amour, and the Oulad Nail south of Algiers. The mountains, which receive more rainfall than those of the High Plateaus, include some good grazing land. Watercourses on the southern slopes of these massifs disappear into the desert but supply the wells of numerous oases along the northern edge of the desert, of which Biskra, Laghouat, and Béchar are the most prominent.

Northeastern Algeria

Eastern Algeria consists of a massif area extensively dissected into mountains, plains, and basins. It differs from the western portion of the country in that its prominent topographic features do not parallel the coast. In its southern sector, the steep cliffs and long ridges of the Aurès Mountains create an almost impenetrable refuge that has played an important part in the history of the Maghrib since Roman times. Near the northern coast, the Petite Kabylie Mountains are separated from the Grande Kabylie range at the eastward limits of the Tell by the Soummam River. The coast is predominantly mountainous in the far eastern part of the country, but limited plains provide hinterlands for the port cities of Bejaïa, Skikda, and Annaba. In the interior of the region, extensive high plains mark the region around Sétif and Constantine; these plains were developed during the French colonial period as the principal centers of grain cultivation. Near Constantine, salt marshes offer seasonal grazing grounds to seminomadic sheep herders.

The Sahara

The Algerian portion of the Sahara extends south of the Saharan Atlas for 1,500 kilometers to the Niger and Mali frontiers. The desert is an otherworldly place, scarcely considered an integral part of the country. Far from being covered wholly by sweeps of sand, however, it is a region of great diversity. A characteristic is the *erg*, or desert area of shifting sand. Such areas occupy about one-quarter of the territory. The largest such region is the Grand Erg Oriental (Great Eastern Erg), where enormous dunes two to five meters high are spaced about forty meters apart. Much of the remainder of the desert is covered by rocky platforms called *humud* (sing., *hamada*), and almost the entire southeastern quarter is taken up by the high, complex mass of the Ahaggar and Tassili-n-Ajjer highlands, some parts of which reach more than 2,000 meters. Surrounding the Ahaggar are sandstone plateaus, cut into deep gorges by ancient rivers, and to the west a desert of pebbles stretches to the Mali frontier.

The desert consists of readily distinguishable northern and southern sectors, the northern sector extending southward a little less than half the distance to the Niger and Mali frontiers. The north, less arid than the south, supports most of the few persons who live in the region and contains most of the desert's

oases. Sand dunes are the most prominent features of this area's topography, but between the desert areas of the Grand Erg Oriental and the Grand Erg Occidental (Great Western Erg) and extending north to the Atlas Saharien are plateaus, including a complex limestone structure called the Mzab where the Mzabite Berbers have settled. The southern zone of the Sahara is almost totally arid and is inhabited only by the Tuareg nomads and, recently, by oil camp workers. Barren rock predominates, but in some parts of Ahaggar and Tassili-n-Ajjer alluvial deposits permit garden farming.

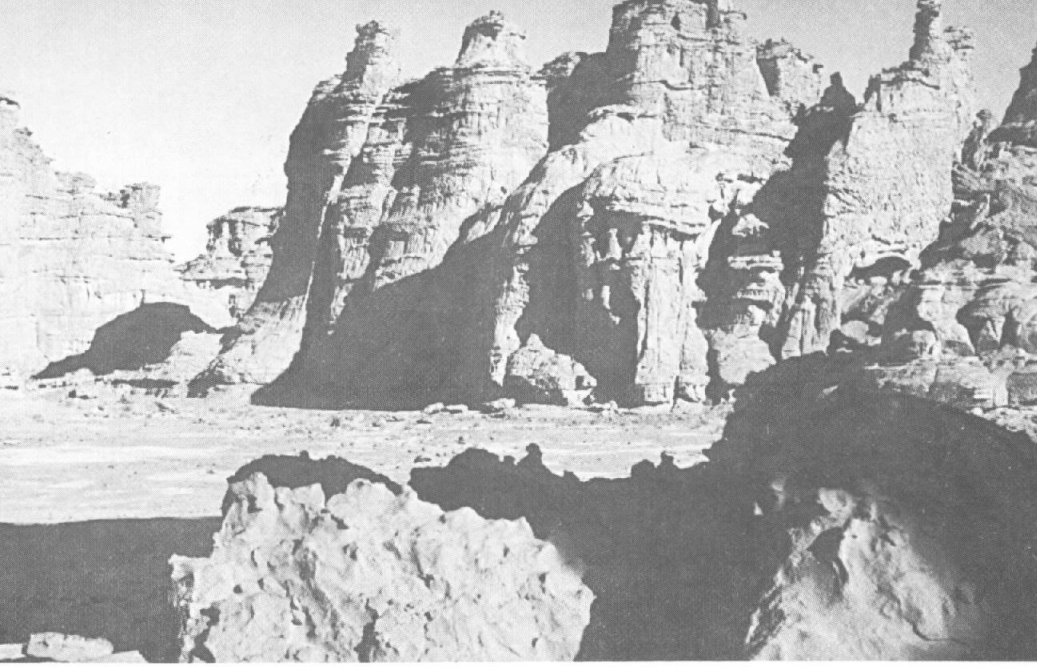
Climate and Hydrology

Northern Algeria is in the temperate zone and enjoys a mild, Mediterranean climate. It lies within approximately the same latitudes as southern California and has somewhat similar climatic conditions. Its broken topography, however, provides sharp local contrasts in both prevailing temperatures and incidence of rainfall. Year-to-year variations in climatic conditions are also common.

In the Tell, temperatures in summer average between 21°C and 24°C and in winter drop to 10°C to 12°C. Winters are not cold, but the humidity is high and houses are seldom adequately heated. In eastern Algeria, the average temperatures are somewhat lower, and on the steppes of the High Plateaus winter temperatures hover only a few degrees above freezing. A prominent feature of the climate in this region is the sirocco, a dusty, choking south wind blowing off the desert, sometimes at gale force. This wind also occasionally reaches into the coastal Tell.

In Algeria only a relatively small corner of the Sahara lies across the Tropic of Cancer in the torrid zone, but even in winter, midday desert temperatures can be very hot. After sunset, however, the clear, dry air permits rapid loss of heat, and the nights are cool to chilly. Enormous daily ranges in temperature are recorded.

Rainfall is fairly abundant along the coastal part of the Tell, ranging from forty to sixty-seven centimeters annually, the amount of precipitation increasing from west to east. Precipitation is heaviest in the northern part of eastern Algeria, where it reaches as much as 100 centimeters in some years. Farther inland the rainfall is less plentiful. Prevailing winds that are easterly and northeasterly in summer change to westerly and northerly in winter and carry with them a general increase in



Landscape in Saharan area of Tassili-n-Ajjer contains needle-like rocks and petrified sand in shapes of castles and cathedrals. Courtesy LaVerle Berry

precipitation from September to December, a decrease in the late winter and spring months, and a near absence of rainfall during the summer months.

Terrain

Clearing of land for agricultural use and cutting of timber over the centuries have severely reduced the once bountiful forest wealth. Forest fires have also taken their toll. In the higher and wetter portions of the Tell Atlas, cork oak and Aleppo pine grow in thick soils. At lower levels on thinner soils, drought-resistant shrubs predominate. The grapevine is indigenous to the coastal lowlands, and grasses and scrub cover the High Plateaus. On the Saharan Atlas, little survives of the once extensive forests of Atlas cedar that have been exploited for fuel and timber since antiquity.

The forest reserves in Algeria were severely reduced during the colonial period. In 1967 it was calculated that the country's forested area extended over no more than 2.4 million hectares of terrain, of which 1.8 million hectares were overgrown with brushwood and scrub. By contrast, woodlands in 1830 had covered 4 million hectares. In the mid-1970s, however, the govern-

ment embarked on a vast reforestation program to help control erosion, which was estimated to affect 100,000 cubic meters of arable land annually. Among projects was one to create a *barrage vert* (green barrier) more or less following the ridge line of the Saharan Atlas and extending from Morocco to the Tunisian frontier in a zone 1,500 kilometers long and up to twenty kilometers wide.

The *barrage vert* consists principally of Aleppo pine, a species that can thrive in areas of scanty rainfall. It is designed to restore a damaged ecological balance and to halt the northern encroachment of the Sahara. By the early 1980s, the desert had already penetrated the hilly gap between the Saharan Atlas and the Aurès Mountains as far as the town of Bou Saâda, a point well within the High Plateaus region. The *barrage vert* project was ended in the late 1980s because of lack of funds.

Population

Demographic Profile

Algeria's population in January 1990 was 25.1 million, of whom 12.4 million were female and almost 12.7 were male. The figure compared with 12 million recorded in the 1966 census, 8.7 million on the eve of the War of Independence in 1954, and 4 million at the turn of the century. During the first twenty years after independence in 1962, the population doubled. The United States government estimate of Algeria's population in 1993 was 27.4 million, and projections were that there would be 32.5 million people in the country by the year 2000.

Various French censuses conducted during the colonial period were inexact surveys relying on such techniques as counting tents and multiplying by six to determine the number of nomads. The surveys were enough, however, to paint a picture of a quickening rate of population growth, the average annual rate of increase rising from 0.5 percent between 1900 and 1910 to 2.7 percent between 1950 and 1955. During the period of hostilities that extended from 1954 to 1962, the population grew at a greatly reduced rate because of the number of people killed in the war. The exact number of deaths is not known; French officials estimated it at 350,000, but Algerians placed it at 1.5 million.

Population growth resumed at the end of hostilities, and in 1966 the annual growth rate was estimated at 3.3 percent. Subsequently, the rate rose to 3.4 percent before subsiding to 3.2

percent in the late 1970s, 3.1 in the early 1980s, and 2.8 percent for the 1990s, according to World Bank projections.

The crude birth rate per 1,000 inhabitants fell in 1989 to 34.3 from 45 in 1985, 48.8 for the 1970 to 1975 period, and 50.4 for the 1960 to 1965 period, as estimated by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations (UN) and by the World Bank. Under progressively improving conditions of health and sanitation, the crude death rate declined from twenty-four deaths per 1,000 in the period from 1950 to 1955 to eighteen per 1,000 in 1965, three years after independence. By 1990 it had fallen to eight per 1,000. Life expectancy at birth rose from forty-two years for males and forty-four for females in the 1950 to 1955 period, to forty-nine years for males and fifty-one years for females in 1965, to sixty-five years for males and sixty-six for females in 1990, a marked improvement reflecting the major transformations in the health sector.

From the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, the average Algerian woman produced seven to eight children. The figure rose to slightly more than nine for women who married before the age of eighteen, but fell to nearly seven in the case of females who married after the age of twenty-one. The birth rate was only slightly lower in urban than in rural areas. In 1990 it was estimated that the total fertility rate had fallen to 5.1 children per woman, a considerable decline.

The 1966 census showed that the population was very young; some 48.2 percent of Algerians were under the age of fifteen. The 1977 census confirmed this pattern, although the age-group under fifteen declined slightly to 47.9 percent of the population. By 1990, only 40.6 percent of the population (10.6 million Algerians) were under the age of fifteen. The proportion of the population under nineteen also showed signs of decline. In the mid-1980s, official sources reported that about 57 percent of the population was under age nineteen, but by 1990 that age-group constituted just over one-half the population, or 51.2 percent, a drop of almost 6 percentage points in five years.

In terms of age structure, detailed data showed that in 1990 males were slightly more numerous than females at birth and through the forty- to forty-four age-group. Thereafter, women predominated in all age categories because of the somewhat higher death rates for men than for women in the higher age-groups (see fig. 5).

Migration

Two major external migratory movements have reshaped the settlement pattern since World War II: the abrupt departure of most of the European colonists in 1962 and 1963 and the flow of Algerian workers to the European continent—chiefly to France. In 1945 Algerian workers and their families in France numbered about 350,000, and in 1964 they numbered an estimated 500,000. By the early 1980s, they totaled 800,000, according to official French figures. About 350,000 were male workers, the remainder being women and children under seventeen years of age. Many were from the Kabylie, a poor agricultural region that suffered severely during the War of Independence. In addition to these migrants, 400,000 *harkis* (Algerians who served with the French army in the War of Independence) resided permanently in France, mostly in the south.

In 1968 the Algerian and French governments set a quota on migrants of 35,000 per year, which was reduced to 25,000 in 1971. Although Algeria suspended all migration to France in 1973, an estimated 7,000 Algerians nonetheless continued to migrate illegally each year at the end of the 1970s. In the mid-1970s, both France and Algeria offered incentives to migrants to return home, one of them being guaranteed housing. Although figures were hard to obtain, it appeared that few responded to these gestures.

The economic crisis in Europe in the aftermath of the Arab oil embargo of 1973 led to a recession that affected Algerians as well as other North Africans working in Europe, primarily in France. Because of rising unemployment, French trade unions began to agitate against migrant workers, claiming that they took jobs from French men and women. Governments in France and other European countries instituted new policies to control migration from North Africa and other parts of the developing world.

The impact of those new policies had a paradoxical effect on Algerian and other North African migrants in France. They had been quite content until then to move back and forth between France and their homeland, never quite settling in France, and generally keeping their families in Algeria, Tunisia, or Morocco. After the new policies were instituted, migrants feared that they might never be able to return to France if they went home to visit their families. Rather than risk losing their residence abroad, many migrants opted to bring

their families to Europe and set up more permanent forms of residence there.

French trade unions reacted by formulating policies that restricted the rights of migrant workers even more than before. By 1980 Algerians and other North African workers had lost their union rights and benefits, and by 1984 the unions that had sprung up to represent the migrants were no longer insisting that they have the same economic and social rights as the indigenous work force. Whereas in 1974 French trade union resolutions stated that migration had to be contained, a decade later they had taken the position that migration had to be stopped.

To make matters worse, Algerians and other migrants from the Maghrib were always perceived as migrant workers and so were rarely naturalized in France. The majority, therefore, in the early 1990s had no voice in the French political system and did not represent a political force or even an interest group that could exert pressure to defend its rights. Their visibility and vulnerability, however, made them an easy target for those who wished to find scapegoats for the problems ailing European economies.

Urbanization and Density

Data from the World Bank's *World Development Report, 1992* indicated that in 1990 about 52 percent of the Algerian population lived in urban regions. By comparison, in 1981 the UN estimated the urbanized segment of the population at 44 percent, up from 41 percent in 1977 and 30 percent in 1960. Urbanization has occurred in part through population growth, which has converted villages into towns and towns into cities, but urban migration has played at least as important a role. During the decade of the 1970s, unofficial estimates held that 1.7 million peasants settled in Algiers, Oran, Constantine, and Annaba, a continuation of the enormous shift in population from the countryside to the cities that began at independence. The largest cities attracted many of these migrants, but the 1977 census showed that many smaller towns and cities grew even faster, probably because of economic and administrative decentralization efforts during the 1970s. Algiers remained the largest urbanized area. A city of fewer than 500,000 people with a predominantly European population in 1954, it increased to nearly 1 million inhabitants by 1966 despite the loss of most of its European inhabitants. In 1987 census figures showed that

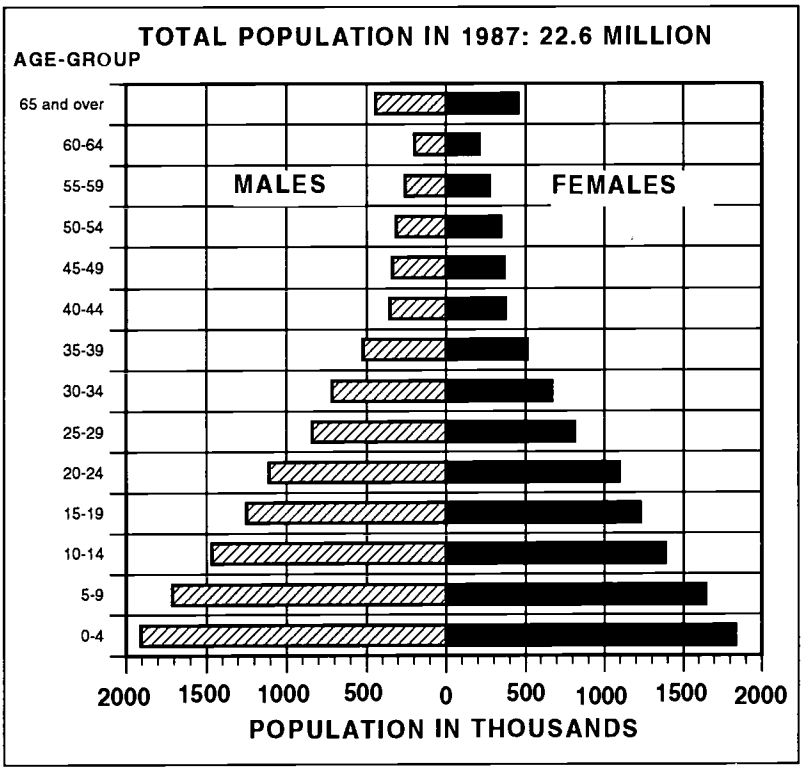


Figure 5. Population by Age and Gender, 1987

Source: Based on information from United Nations, *Demographic Yearbook, 1991,* New York, 1992, 152–53.

Algiers proper contained 1,483,000 inhabitants and was still growing. Algeria's other major cities also grew between 1977 and 1987: Oran's population increased from 490,000 to 590,000; Constantine from 344,000 to 438,000; Annaba from 240,000 to 310,000; Batna from 102,000 to 182,000; Sétif from 129,000 to 168,000; and Blida from 138,000 to 165,000.

In the mid-1980s the pace of urbanization, estimated unofficially at 5.6 percent per year, was causing concern to planning authorities, who were endeavoring to slow its tempo if not stop it altogether. Government-sponsored agrarian reform programs and investment in rural housing were initiated to improve the quality of farm life and thus to stabilize the rural population. It was hoped that these same measures would

relieve the acute pressure on urban housing, a by-product of massive urbanization.

According to Algerian government figures, 87 percent of the population resided on 17 percent of the nation's land. The population density, averaging 10.5 inhabitants per square kilometer in mid-1990, varied enormously from 2,500 per square kilometer in Algiers to less than one per square kilometer in the mid-Sahara. All major cities and most of the rural population occupied a quadrilateral that extended about 100 kilometers from the coast and stretched from Morocco to Tunisia. Within this area, there was a difference in the way the land was used. In the west, formerly the area of French vineyards and citrus groves, was a region of socialized *autogestion* (see Glossary) farms. A short distance east of Algiers, the land rises toward the Kabylie and Aurès mountain zones of eastern Algeria. In an area only about two hours distant by highway from Algiers, a densely packed rural population continues to live in remote mountain areas, sheltered from outside influences and maintaining Berber languages and customs in their purest forms.

In the heavily populated northern part of the country, the average population density does not change substantially from west to east. Farther inland the population density declines progressively southward through the High Plateaus and the Saharan Atlas mountains, averaging from forty-nine persons down to ten people per square kilometer. Within the Sahara, the same trend of diminishing population from north to south is evident. In the northern half of the Sahara, road distances between populated oases seldom exceed 170 kilometers. The southern half of the Algerian Sahara, however, is peopled by only a few thousand Tuareg. The only town of any importance is Tamanrasset, deep in the Ahaggar highlands.

Ethnic Groups and Languages

The Peoples

The origins of the Berbers are unclear; a number of waves of people, some from Western Europe, some from sub-Saharan Africa, and others from Northeast Africa, eventually settled in North Africa and made up its indigenous population. Because present-day Berbers and the overwhelming majority of the Arabs largely descend from the same indigenous stock, physical distinctions carry little or no social connotation and are in most instances impossible to make. The term *Berber* is derived

from the Greeks, who used it to refer to the people of North Africa. The term was retained by the Romans, Arabs, and other groups who occupied the region, but is not used by the people themselves. Identification with the Berber or Arab community is largely a matter of personal choice rather than of membership in discrete and bounded social entities. In addition to their own language, many adult Berbers also speak Arabic and French; for centuries Berbers have entered the general society and merged, within a generation or two, into the Arab group.

This permeable boundary between the two major ethnic groups permits a good deal of movement and, along with other factors, prevents the development of rigid and exclusive ethnic blocs. It appears that whole groups slipped across the ethnic "boundary" in the past—and others may do so in the future. In areas of linguistic contiguity, bilingualism is common, and in most cases Arabic eventually comes to predominate.

Algerian Arabs, or native speakers of Arabic, include descendants of Arab invaders and of indigenous Berbers. Since 1966, however, the Algerian census no longer has had a category for Berbers; thus, it is only an estimate that Algerian Arabs, the major ethnic group of the country, constitute 80 percent of Algeria's people and are culturally and politically dominant. The mode of life of Arabs varies from region to region. Nomadic herders are found in the desert, settled cultivators and gardeners in the Tell, and urban dwellers on the coast. Linguistically, the various Arab groups differ little from each other, except that dialects spoken by nomadic and seminomadic peoples are thought to be derived from beduin dialects; the dialects spoken by the sedentary population of the north are thought to stem from those of early seventh-century invaders. Urban Arabs are more apt to identify with the Algerian nation, whereas ethnic loyalties of more remote rural Arabs are likely to be limited to the tribe.

The major Berber groups are the Kabyles of the Kabylie Mountains east of Algiers and the Chaouia of the Aurès range south of Constantine. Smaller groups include the Mzab of the northern Sahara region and the Tuareg of the southern Ahaggar highlands, both of which have clearly definable characteristics. The Berber peasantry can also be found in the Atlas Mountains close to Blida, and on the massifs of Dahra and Ouarsenis on either side of the Chelif River valley. Altogether, the Berbers constitute about 20 percent of the population.

In the hills north of the Chelif River and in some other parts of the Tell, Berbers live in villages among the sedentary Arabs, not sharply distinguished in their way of life from the Arabic speakers but maintaining their own language and a sense of ethnic identity. In addition, in some oasis towns of the Algerian Sahara, small Berber groups remain unassimilated to Arab culture and retain their own language and some of their cultural differences.

By far the largest of the Berber-speaking groups, the Kabyles, do not refer to themselves as Berbers but as Imazighen or, in the singular, as Amazigh, which means noble or free men. Some traces of the original blue-eyed and blond-haired Berbers survive to contrast the people from this region with the darker-skinned Arabic speakers of the plains. The land is poor, and the pressure of a dense and rapidly growing population has forced many to migrate to France or to the coastal cities. Kabyles can be found in every part of the country, but in their new environments they tend to gather and to retain some of their clan solidarity and sense of ethnic identity.

Kabyle villages, built on the crests of hills, are close- knit, independent, social and political units composed of a number of extended patrilineal kin groups. Traditionally, local government consisted of a *jamaa* (village council), which included all adult males and legislated according to local custom and law. Efforts to modify this democratic system were only partially successful, and the *jamaa* has continued to function alongside the civil administration. The majority of Berber mountain peasants hold their land as *mulk*, or private property, in contrast to those of the valleys and oases where the tribe retains certain rights over land controlled by its members.

Set apart by their habitat, language, and well-organized village and social life, Kabyles have a highly developed sense of independence and group solidarity. They have generally opposed incursions of Arabs and Europeans into their region, and much of the resistance activity during the War of Independence was concentrated in the Kabylie region. Major Kabyle uprisings took place against the French in 1871, 1876, and 1882; the Chaouia rebelled in 1879.

Perhaps half as numerous as the Kabyles and less densely settled, the Chaouia have occupied the rugged Aurès Mountains of eastern Algeria since their retreat to that region from Tunisia during the Arab invasions of the Middle Ages. In the north they are settled agriculturalists, growing grain in the

uplands and fruit trees in the valleys. In the arid south, with its date-palm oases, they are seminomadic, shepherding flocks to the high plains during the summer. The distinction between the two groups is limited, however, because the farmers of the north are also drovers, and the seminomads of the south maintain plots of land.

In the past, the Chaouia lived in isolation broken only by visits of Kabyle peddlers and Saharan camel raisers, and relatively few learned to speak either French or Arabic. Like their society, their economy was self-sufficient and closed. Emigration was limited, but during the War of Independence the region was a stronghold of anti-French sentiment, and more than one-half of the population was removed to concentration camps. During the postindependence era, the ancient Chaouia isolation has lessened.

Far less numerous than their northern Berber kin are the Mzab, whose number was estimated at 100,000 in the mid-1980s. They live beside the Oued Mzab, from which comes their name. Ghardaïa is their largest and most important oasis community. The Mzab are Ibadi (see Glossary) Muslims who practice a puritanical form of Islam that emphasizes asceticism, literacy for men and women, and social egalitarianism.

The Mzab used to be important in trans-Saharan trade but now have moved into other occupations. Some of their members have moved to the cities, where in Algiers, for example, they dominate the grocery and butchery business. They have also extended their commerce south to sub-Saharan Africa, where they and other tribal people trade with cash and letters of exchange, make loans on the harvest, and sell on credit.

Of all Berber subgroups, the Tuareg until recently have been the least affected by the outside world. Known as "the blue men" because of their indigo-dyed cotton robes and as "people of the veil" because the men—but not the women—always veil, the Tuareg inhabit the Sahara from southwest Libya to Mali. In southern Algeria, they are concentrated in the highlands of Tassili-n-Ajjer and Ahaggar and in the 1970s were estimated to number perhaps 5,000 to 10,000. They are organized into tribes and, at least among the Ahaggar Tuareg, into a three-tiered class system of nobles, vassals, and slaves and servants, the last group often being of negroid origin. Tuareg women enjoy high status and many privileges. They do not live in seclusion, and their social responsibilities equal those of men.

Tuareg tribesmen dancing
Courtesy ANEP

A Kabyle woman
Courtesy Nadia Benchallal and
Middle East Report

In the past, the Tuareg were famed as camel and cattle herdsmen and as guides and protectors of caravans that plied between West Africa and North Africa. Both occupations have greatly declined during the twentieth century under the impact of colonial and independent government policies, technology, and consumerism associated with the hydrocarbon industry and, most recently, drought. The result has been the breakup of the old social hierarchy and gradual sedentarization around such oases as Djanet and Tamanrasset.

Although of considerable importance before independence, the non-Muslim minorities have shrunk to a mere fraction of their former size. Immediately after independence, approximately 1 million Europeans, including 140,000 Jews, left the country. Most of the Europeans who left had French citizenship, and all identified with French rather than Arab culture and society. During colonial times, the Algerian and European groups had effectively formed two separate subsocieties having little social interaction or intermarriage except among highly Europeanized Algerians.

In the early 1980s, the total foreign population was estimated at roughly 117,000. Of this number, about 75,000 were Europeans, including about 45,000 French. Many foreigners worked as technicians and teachers.

Languages: Arabic and Berber

Except for Europeans, ethnic communities in Algeria were distinguished primarily by language. Before the arrival of Arabic-speaking invaders, Berber was the language of the indigenous population. Arabic encroached gradually, spreading through the areas most accessible to migrants and conquerors. Berber remained the mother tongue in many rural areas.

Arabic, the language of the majority and the official language of the country, is a Semitic tongue related to Hebrew, Aramaic, and Amharic. The dominant language throughout North Africa and the Middle East, Arabic was introduced to the coastal regions by the Arab conquerors of the seventh and eighth centuries A.D. (see Islam and the Arabs, 642–1830, ch. 1). Arabic language and culture had an even greater impact under the influence of the beduin Arabs, who arrived in greater numbers from the eleventh century onward.

Written Arabic is psychologically and sociologically important as the vehicle of Islam and Arab culture and as the link with other Arab countries. Two forms are used: the classical

Arabic of the Quran and Algerian dialectical Arabic. Classical Arabic is the essential base of written Arabic and formal speech throughout the Arab world. It is the vehicle of a vast religious, scientific, historical, and literary heritage. Arabic scholars or individuals with a good classical education from any country can converse with one another.

In classical Arabic as in other Semitic scripts, only the consonants are written; vowel signs and other diacritical marks to aid in pronunciation are employed occasionally in printed texts. The script is cursive, lending itself to use as decoration.

There has been considerable borrowing of words between Berber and Arabic. In some Arabic-speaking areas, the words for various flora and fauna are still in Berber, and Berber place-names are numerous throughout the country, some of them borrowed. Examples of Berber place-names are Illizi, Skikda, Tamanrasset, Tipasa, and Tizi Ouzou.

Berber is primarily a spoken language, although an ancient Berber script called *tifinagh* survives among the Tuareg of the Algerian Sahara, where the characters are used more for special purposes than for communication. Several Berber dialect groups are recognized in modern Algeria, but only Kabyle and Chaouia are spoken by any considerable number. The Chaouia dialect, which is distinguishable from but related to Kabyle, bears the mark and influence of Arabic. Separate dialects, however, are spoken by the Tuareg and by the Mzab.

Arabization

Of all Arab countries subject to European rule, Algeria absorbed the heaviest colonial impact. The French controlled education, government, business, and most intellectual life for 132 years and through a policy of cultural imperialism attempted to suppress Algerian cultural identity and to remold the society along French lines. The effects of this policy, which continued to reverberate throughout Algeria after 1962, have perhaps been most evident in the legacy of a dual language system.

French colonial policy was explicitly designed to "civilize" the country by imposing French language and culture on it. A French report written on the eve of the French conquest noted that in 1830 the literacy rate in Algeria was 40 percent, a remarkable rate even by modern standards. Quranic schools were primarily responsible for literacy in Algeria, as reading meant being able to learn the Quran. Twenty years later, only

half the schools continued to operate as a result of the French colonial policy of dismantling the existing education system and replacing it with a French system.

As a result, education was oriented toward French, and advanced education in literary Arabic declined drastically. Dialectical Arabic remained the language of everyday discourse among the vast majority of the population, but it was cut off from contemporary intellectual and technological developments and consequently failed to develop the flexibility and vocabulary needed for modern bureaucratic, financial, and intellectual affairs.

The better schools and the University of Algiers aimed at comparability with French institutions and prepared students for French examinations. Gradually, a small but influential French-speaking indigenous elite was formed, who competed with European colonists for jobs in the modern sector. Berbers, or more specifically, Kabyles, were represented in disproportionately large numbers in this elite because the French, as part of their "divide and rule" policy, deliberately favored Kabyles in education and employment in the colonial system. As a result, in the years after independence Kabyles moved into all levels of state administration across Algeria, where they remained a large and influential group.

In reaction to French cultural and linguistic imperialism, the leaders of the War of Independence (1954–62) and successive governments committed themselves to reviving indigenous Arabic and Islamic cultural values and to establishing Arabic as the national language. The aim was to recover the precolonial past and to use it, together with Arabic, to restore—if not create—a national identity and personality for the new state and population. Translated into an official policy called arabization, it was consistently supported by arabists, who were ascendant in the Algerian government following independence. Their goal was a country where the language (Arabic), religion (Islam), and national identity (Algerian) were free, as far as practical, of French language and influence.

Culturally, the emphasis was on developing the various forms of public communication and on cultivating Algerian themes that could then be popularized through these media. The major effort, however, centered on language, and it was the quest for a "national" language that became the hallmark of arabization and that has aroused the most controversy and outright opposition.

Beginning in the late 1960s, the government of President Houari Boumediene decided upon complete arabization as a national goal and began the first steps to promote Arabic in the bureaucracy and in the schools. Arabization was introduced slowly in schools, starting with the primary schools and in social science and humanities subjects; only in the 1980s did Arabic begin to be introduced as the language of instruction in some grades and some subjects at the secondary level (see Education, this ch.).

The problems inherent in the process of language promotion immediately came to the fore. One of the most obvious involved literary Arabic, a language in which many Algerians were not conversant. Qualified Arabic teachers were almost totally lacking. Other obstacles included the widespread use of French in the state-run media and the continued preference for French as the working language of government and of urban society. It soon became obvious to students who obtained an education in Arabic that their prospects for gainful employment were bleak without facility in French, a fact that contributed to general public skepticism about the program.

Important as these problems were, the real opposition came from two main quarters: the "modernizers" among bureaucrats and technocrats and the Berbers, or, more specifically, the Kabyles. For the urban elite, French constituted the medium of modernization and technology. French facilitated their access to Western commerce and to economic development theory and culture, and their command of the language guaranteed their continued social and political prominence.

The Kabyles identified with these arguments. Young Kabyle students were particularly vocal in expressing their opposition to arabization. In the early 1980s, their movement and demands formed the basis of the "Berber question" or the Kabyle "cultural movement."

Militant Kabyles complained about "cultural imperialism" and "domination" by the Arabic-speaking majority. They vigorously opposed arabization of the education system and the government bureaucracy. They also demanded recognition of the Kabyle dialect as a primary national language, respect for Berber culture, and greater attention to the economic development of Kabylie and other Berber homelands.

The Kabyle "cultural movement" was more than a reaction against arabization. Rather, it challenged the centralizing poli-

cies the national government had pursued since 1962 and sought wider scope for regional development free of bureaucratic controls. Essentially, the issue was the integration of Kabylie into the Algerian body politic. To the extent that the Kabyle position reflected parochial Kabyle interests and regionalism, it did not find favor with other Berber groups or with Algerians at large.

Long-simmering passions about arabization boiled over in late 1979 and early 1980. In response to demands of Arabic-language university students for increased arabization, Kabyle students in Algiers and Tizi Ouzou, the provincial capital of Kabylie, went on strike in the spring of 1980. At Tizi Ouzou, the students were forcibly cleared from the university, an action that precipitated tension and a general strike throughout Kabylie. A year later, there were renewed Kabyle demonstrations.

The government's response to the Kabyle outburst was firm yet cautious. Arabization was reaffirmed as official state policy, but it proceeded at a moderate pace. The government quickly reestablished a chair of Berber studies at the University of Algiers that had been abolished in 1973 and promised a similar chair for the University of Tizi Ouzou, as well as language departments for Berber and dialectical Arabic at four other universities. At the same time, levels of development funding for Kabylie were increased significantly.

By the mid-1980s, arabization had begun to produce some measurable results. In the primary schools, instruction was in literary Arabic; French was taught as a second language, beginning in the third year. On the secondary level, arabization was proceeding on a grade-by-grade basis. French remained the main language of instruction in the universities, despite the demands of arabists.

A 1968 law requiring officials in government ministries to acquire at least minimal facility in literary Arabic has produced spotty results. The Ministry of Justice came closest to the goal by arabizing internal functions and all court proceedings during the 1970s. Other ministries, however, were slower to follow suit, and French remained in general use. An effort was also made to use radio and television to popularize literary Arabic. By the mid-1980s, programming in dialectical Arabic and Berber had increased, whereas broadcasts in French had declined sharply.

The arabization issue developed political aspects as well. For example, in 1991 when political parties were allowed to form

and run in national elections, the Front of Socialist Forces, headed by Hocine Ait Ahmed, representing the Kabyle people, ran on a secular and culturally pluralist platform. Another party, also representing the Kabyle, was the Rally for Culture and Democracy, which ran on a platform defending Kabyle culture and opposing the exclusive use of Arabic at the official level and all programs of arabization.

Structure of Society

As is true of other peoples of the Maghrib, Algerian society has considerable historical depth and has been subjected to a number of external influences and migrations. Fundamentally Berber in cultural and racial terms, the society was organized around extended family, clan, and tribe and was adapted to a rural rather than an urban setting before the arrival of the Arabs and, later, the French. An identifiable modern class structure began to materialize during the colonial period. This structure has undergone further differentiation in the period since independence, despite the country's commitment to egalitarian ideals.

Preindependence Society

During the Ottoman period, before the coming of the French in 1830, the people were divided among a few ancient cities and a sparsely settled countryside where subsistence farmers and nomadic herdsmen lived in small, ethnically homogeneous groups. Rural patterns of social organization had many common features, although some differences existed between Arabs and Berbers and between nomads and settled cultivators. The groups did not form a cohesive social class because individual behavior and action were circumscribed by the framework of tribe or clan.

In this period, 5 to 6 percent of the population lived in cities. The cities were the location of the principal mosques and the major sharia (Islamic law) courts and institutions of higher Islamic learning. Various Islamic legal schools, such as the Hanafi (see Glossary) and Maliki (see Glossary) as well as the Ibadi schools, also had their mosques in the cities. In addition, cities had public baths and markets, where goods coming from various parts of the world were traded. Local military forces were housed in citadels that towered over urban centers, and the houses and administrative offices of the Ottoman ruling

elite were also located in some of the principal cities, such as Algiers.

The cities were divided into quarters that were self-contained and self-sufficient. For security they could be closed off at night and during times of crises, and their own leading citizens managed the internal affairs of the quarters.

The heterogeneous population of the cities included men of mixed Turkish and Algerian descent called Kouloughli Moors, a term coined by the French to refer to descendants of Andalusian refugees; Christian slaves from around the Mediterranean captured by Barbary Coast pirates; and African slaves who worked as laborers and domestics. The cities also had small Jewish communities that would become more important under the French colonial system. Many cities had small groups of Mzab who owned grocery and butcher shops and operated the public baths, and Kabyles who came briefly to the cities before returning to their areas of origin.

In the rural areas, social organization depended primarily on kinship ties. The basic kinship unit was the *ayla*, a small lineage whose members claimed descent through males from a common grandfather or great-grandfather. The male members of such a group maintained mutual economic obligations and recognized a form of collective ownership of pastoral or agricultural lands. More than one *ayla* formed the larger lineage, whose members traced their origin to a more remote male ancestor. Beyond these lineages were the patrilineal clans called *adhrum* by the Kabyles and *firq* by the Arabs, in which kinship was assumed and the links between individuals and families were close. The largest units consisted of tribes that were aggregations of clans claiming common or related ancestors or of clans brought together by the force of circumstance. Sharing a common territory, name, and way of life, member units of a tribe, particularly among the Berbers, had little political cohesion and tended to accept the authority of a chief only when faced with the danger of alien conquest or subjugation. Tribal confederations were rare in the modern era but were more common before the nineteenth century.

Among settled and nomadic Arab groups, tribes and their components were arranged along a gradient of social prestige. The standing of an individual depended on membership in a ranked group; tribal rank depended on the standing of the highest-ranking lineage of each tribe. The *shurfa* (nobles allegedly descended from the Prophet Muhammad) and

marabouts, venerated for their spiritual power, held the highest ranks. Affairs of mutual interest to all clans were administered by the clan heads under the leadership of a *qaid* (tribal chief), who exercised nearly absolute authority.

Settled Berber groups were democratic and egalitarian. The community, an aggregation of localized clans consisting of a cluster of hamlets or a village inhabited by a single clan, was governed by a *jamaa* composed of all adult males. Social stratification of the kind found in Arab groups did not exist in Berber villages.

The typical Kabyle villages in the Aurès Mountains and the Atlas Mountains around Blida were always built above cultivated lands, on or close to mountain tops. They were enclosed by walls with doors that opened inward. The slopes were often terraced to allow the Kabyles to cultivate olive and fruit orchards and to grow wheat and barley. The animals kept by the Kabyles grazed on the vegetation that grew on rocky slopes unsuitable for agriculture.

French rule and European settlement brought far-reaching social changes. Europeans took over the economic and political life of the country, monopolizing professional, large-scale commercial, and administrative activities, exploiting agricultural and other resources of the land, and remaining socially aloof. The small Algerian middle stratum of urban merchants and city artisans was squeezed out, and landowners of the countryside were dispossessed.

The European population increased rapidly in the nineteenth century, more than quadrupling from 26,987 in the early 1840s to 125,963 a decade later, and reaching almost 2 million by the turn of the century. This population growth, coupled with the appropriation of cultivated and pastoral lands by colonials, which increased sharply in the early twentieth century, created tremendous pressures on the cultivable land. Displaced villagers and tribesmen flocked to towns and cities, where they formed an unskilled labor mass, ill-adapted to industrial work, scorned by Europeans, and isolated from the kinship units that had formerly given them security and a sense of solidarity. This urban movement increased after World War I and after World War II. At the same time, large numbers of Algerians migrated to France in search of work. The Kabyles were the principal migrants; during the 1950s, as many as 10 percent of the people of the Kabylie region were working in

France at any one time; even larger numbers were working in cities of the Tell.

Europeans constituted a separate sector of society, and the European-Algerian dichotomy was the country's basic social division. The settlers who came to Algeria in the nineteenth century included not only French but also large numbers of Italians and Spaniards who could not find work in their home countries and came in search of new opportunities. The expression *pieds noirs* (black feet), used to refer to settlers, was allegedly based on the barefoot condition of many of the impoverished European settlers.

The top echelon of the country included a few Algerians who had amassed land and wealth, as well as some respected Arabic scholars and a few successful professionals. An indigenous landowning aristocracy of any importance had never existed, however, and French colonials did not want an Algerian middle class competing with them for jobs and status. Moreover, the Algerians lived in quarters of the cities separate from the Europeans and seldom intermarried with them.

In the early twentieth century, a new Algerian merchant group began to intermarry with the old upper-stratum families. Their children were educated in French schools, at home or in France, to become a new Western-oriented elite composed of lawyers, physicians, pharmacists, teachers, administrators, and a small scattering of political leaders. The opportunity for social mobility for these Westernized Algerians, or *évolués*, however, remained extremely limited; on the eve of the revolution, only a scattering of jobs requiring professional or technical skills were held by Algerians.

The peasant migrants to the cities tended to gather in separate quarters according to their ethnic origin, and certain peoples became associated with specific occupations. But overcrowding and housing shortages often forced persons of a given tribe or village to scatter throughout a city, and the solidarity of migrant groups decreased. Nevertheless, many migrants retained contact with family members.

Nomadic clans no longer holding sufficient flocks or territory were obliged to accept the humiliation of sedentary existence. The process of sedentarization usually started with the settling of a few nomadic families on the outskirts of a town with which they had maintained trading relations. Accepted eventually as part of the community by the original clan inhabitants, the former nomads often assumed as their own one of

the traditional ancestors or marabouts of the community. Residential propinquity usually did not, however, overcome the social distance between traditional cultivators and former herders because each looked down on the way of life of the other.

The Revolution and Social Change

After generations of gradual change under the French, the War of Independence struck Algerian society with cataclysmic force, and victory introduced other major social changes. The influence of the war permeated the society in both country and city and at the personal, familial, and local levels.

In response to the conflict, individuals developed new perceptions of themselves, their abilities, and their roles through wartime activities. Women, accustomed to a sheltered and segregated life, found themselves suddenly thrust into revolutionary militancy. For many, the war offered the first opportunity for independent activity in the world beyond the home. Many young people struck out independently of their families and their elders, and new leaders emerged, chosen more for personal traits than for social position.

The often brutal fighting, stretching across much of the country for nearly eight years, disrupted or emptied many rural villages. The deliberate French policy of resettlement of rural populations gathered more than 2 million villagers in French-built fortified settlements under a *regroupement* program. The total number of Algerians displaced by the war cannot be accurately known, but Algerian authorities place the figure at more than 3 million permanently or temporarily moved. In 1965 about 2 million people remained in the centers. By 1972 their numbers had decreased markedly and some of the centers closed; several centers, however, became permanent settlements.

As a result of these displacements, a sizable portion of the population lost its ties with the land on which ancestors had lived for generations and consequently with the social groups the land had supported. Families found themselves separated from fellow clan members and extended family members. The housing supplied by the French was suitable for the nuclear family rather than the traditional extended household, and persons who had formerly lived by subsistence farming became accustomed to functioning in a cash economy.

The disappearance of small communities of kin eliminated the social control by reputation and gossip that had formerly

existed. Instead, residents of the French relocation centers began to develop feelings of solidarity with strangers who had shared a common fate. The destruction of the old communities particularly affected the lives of women, sometimes in contradictory ways. Despite being released from the restraints imposed by family scrutiny, women from rural villages, where wearing the veil was rare, adopted the veil voluntarily as a means of public concealment.

Traditional relations between generations also were overturned, and class differences were submerged. The young could adapt to the new ways, but the old were ill-equipped for change and so relinquished much of their former prestige and authority. In addition, rural people became more interested in comfort and consumption, which began to replace the frugality that had characterized traditional village life.

Toward a Modern Society

At independence Algerian society differed greatly from its condition at the beginning of the struggle for liberation. The exodus of Europeans in 1962–63, left a society composed primarily of illiterate peasants and sizable numbers of urban laborers. It was estimated that less than 1 percent of the 1964 population had belonged to the middle and upper classes during the 1950s. Educated persons remaining in the country were insufficient to staff all the positions in government and industry vacated by the Europeans. A criteria of prestige stemming from the war had also entered the social reckoning; those who had participated actively in the fighting or suffered loss because of it became eligible for special benefits or consideration.

During the colonial period, the country's most significant social distinctions had been those that separated Europeans from Algerians. Europeans had ranged from great industrialists through middle-class businesspeople, professionals, and farmers to unskilled workers. The Algerian population had also covered a range from well-to-do business and professional families to landless rural laborers. Distinctions, however, were blurred by the disabilities and discrimination suffered during the war by all Algerians and by the ideological emphasis on the unity of the Algerian people.

The removal of the European community permitted the appearance of the rudiments of a modern class system in which probably the most influential group consisted of French-

trained technocrats, civil servants, army officers, and senior functionaries of the National Liberation Front (Front de Libération Nationale—FLN). The few indigenous industrialists lacked great influence, but the bureaucrats and technocrats who managed the government and its expanding enterprises began to form a conspicuous and highly influential group that was to contribute upper-echelon personnel for public administration and state enterprises. Education, more than any other single factor, became the criterion for membership in the new elite.

Houari Boumediene, who was president from 1967 to 1978, headed a government that was dedicated to furthering Islamic socialism and held that, because early Islam in Algeria had its own egalitarian tendencies, no contradiction was involved. The pursuit of socialism since the 1960s, however, has produced its own rich assortment of social contradictions and tensions.

The Boumediene government at times has been criticized for its state capitalist tendencies because of its single-minded pursuit of industrialization, which led to the emergence of a prosperous and reasonably competent elite. After 1968 Boumediene gradually brought more and more educated young bureaucrats and technocrats into government service; by the late 1970s, they formed part of an administrative and managerial elite who staffed the government ministries and planned and operated the state industrial sector. Largely in control of the country, the new social group nonetheless shared status and influence with the army and functioned under the supervision of senior political officials. Although the explicit ideology of the government discouraged the formation of social classes, this relatively wealthy and powerful elite seemed to represent an important barrier on the road to an egalitarian society.

The technocrats and bureaucrats tended to be modernizers influenced by Western ideas. In general, they subscribed to the modernist view of Algerian society and believed that all members of society, including women, should participate actively to change the environment to suit the needs of society and its members. In socialist-oriented Algeria, the concepts of the nation-state, self-determination, and state planning came to the fore among members of the elite; local loyalties and family ties declined in importance as the society became more modern, urban, and educated.

Aside from the bureaucratic and technocratic elite, the middle class consisted of employees of state industrial and service

enterprises; small businesspeople and shopkeepers; professionals, such as teachers, physicians, and lawyers; and artisans. Except for businesspeople, this stratum increased greatly after independence, moving to help fill the void created by the departure of the French and by the demand for services and skilled labor in the postindependence economy. Residing mostly in the cities and larger towns, the middle class was by Algerian standards relatively well-off.

An urbanized working class had similarly come into being over the previous few decades, finding employment, for example, in state and private industries, construction, public works, and transportation. As with the urban middle class, this group grew steadily in size after 1962 as a consequence of economic expansion. Another sizable group also found in the cities consisted of the unemployed. A substantial number of the unemployed were young males, many of them migrants from rural areas, who were often forced to settle in squalid housing. Usually monolingual in Arabic, lacking job skills, and possessing only a primary education, the migrants and the unemployed survived on the largesse of the state welfare system. Finally, there were the rural agricultural workers, including small and medium-sized landowners, landowning and landless peasants, and those who worked on large state farms. Some members of this class benefited from land distribution in the 1970s and early 1980s. Others, such as medium-sized landowners who survived land redistribution and the formation of large agricultural enterprises, reportedly were enjoying a measure of prosperity and favored government investment in roads and services in rural areas.

As the nation continued to modernize in the 1980s and early 1990s, millions of Algerians were torn between a tradition that no longer commanded their total loyalty and a modernism that did not satisfy their psychological and spiritual needs. This dilemma especially affected the nation's youth. Educated young women were torn between the lure of study and a career and the demands of their husbands and fathers. Young men faced conflicting models of cultural behavior and achievement, conflict between demands for fluency in modern Arabic and fluency in French, and conflict between devotion to Islam and the secularism of modernization. Above all loomed the reality of youth unemployment, which reached a staggeringly high 41 percent in the early 1990s (compared to 30 percent for the overall working-age population). With no solution in sight,

unemployment was a prime factor accounting for the boredom, frustration, and disillusionment that characterized the younger generation. Many young people became major supporters of the Islamic Salvation Front(Front Islamique du Salut—FIS) whose groups were located on campuses and in major cities throughout the country. Young people contributed to the clashes with government forces ongoing since the late 1980s and to the general political instability.

To strengthen a sense of national pride in the country's culture, in 1970 an officially sponsored "cultural revolution" was launched to restore historic monuments and to develop the means to communicate cultural themes via radio, television, the press, libraries, and museums. In realms such as economics and politics where the past offered no guidance, new structures were to be devised in keeping with the theory of the 1962 Tripoli Program. This program rejected capitalism, which it associated with Western colonial powers, and disavowed an economic system that would make it dependent on the West. Instead, it favored a socialist system that allowed for state control both of the means of production and of the plan for national development. The program opted for a one-party political system that would represent the aspirations of the rural and urban masses. Other aspects of the cultural revolution included substituting Arabic for French and eliminating foreign teachers and foreign influence from the educational establishment—all part of a policy of constructing an Algeria distinctive in personality and proud of its heritage and achievements.

The cultural revolution was fifteen years old in 1985; beyond language and education development, however, its achievements were hard to measure. The program had suffered from neglect and lack of funds for projects involving monuments and archeological sites, museums, the arts, and the publishing industry. A national seminar on the history of the Algerian Revolution was successfully organized in 1981, however, and in late 1983 Chadli Benjedid (president, 1979–92) issued a renewed call for serious attention to cultural affairs and to the study of Algerian national history.

The Individual, the Family, and the Sexes

In the early 1990s, the tradition of strong family life still dominated most areas of the country. A basic social principle

affecting both the individual and the family was a kind of division between the sexes that made gender one of the most important determinants of social status. Seclusion of women was not universally practiced, but men and women constituted largely separate societies in public life. In private they were bound by the same culture, values, traditions, and beliefs and the same closeness between generations found in other parts of the Middle East.

The War of Independence and the impetus given to education by the socialist governments of Ahmed Ben Bella (1962–65), Boumediene, and Benjedid led to a change in the position of women in Algerian society. Girls were sent to school in large numbers; later, many continued their studies in university and then pursued professional lives, especially in urban centers.

Family and Household

Before independence the basic Algerian family unit, particularly in the countryside, was the extended family consisting of grandparents, their married sons and families, unmarried sons, daughters if unmarried or if divorced or widowed with their children, and occasionally other related adults. The structure of the family was patriarchal and patrilineal, with the senior male member making all major decisions affecting family welfare, dividing land and work assignments, and representing it in dealings with outsiders. Each married couple usually had a separate room opening onto the family courtyard and prepared meals separately. Women spent their lives under male authority—first that of their fathers, then of their husbands—and were expected to devote themselves entirely to the activities of the home. Children were raised by all members of the group, who passed on to them the concept and value of family solidarity.

Members of a single patrilineage lived in one compound and shared the work on the family's common land. The lineage expressed solidarity by adhering to a code of honor that obligated members to provide aid to relatives in need and even in the clinging together of members who had gone to the city to find work. Among Berber groups, the honor and wealth of the lineage were so important that blood revenge was justified in their defense.

Since independence there has been a trend toward smaller family units consisting only of a husband and wife and their

unmarried children. Upon marriage a young man who can afford to do so sets up a household for himself and his bride, and on the death of the head of an extended family, male members and their dependents break off into separate households.

The trend toward the smaller nuclear family has affected the extended family structure in both urban and rural areas, although it is more pronounced in the former. The nuclear family is fast becoming the prevalent family structure. This change has occurred gradually in response to many factors, including increased urbanization and the development of wage labor.

In the early 1990s, younger and better educated Algerians tended to favor smaller families than did previous generations. They preferred to live in separate quarters, have fewer children, and run their lives independently. Familial ties of loyalty and respect were not in question, although they tended to loosen. Rather, family relationships were rearranged with respect to living space and decision making.

Marriage is traditionally a family rather than a personal affair and is intended to strengthen already existing families. An Islamic marriage is a civil contract rather than a sacrament, and consequently, representatives of the bride's interests negotiate a marriage agreement with representatives of the bridegroom. Although the future spouses must, by law, consent to the match, they usually take no part in the arrangements. The contract establishes the terms of the union and outlines appropriate recourse if they are broken. In the early 1990s, Algeria continued to have one of the most conservative legal codes concerning marriage in the Middle East, strictly observing Islamic marriage requirements.

Men and Women

In Algeria, as in the rest of the Middle East, women are traditionally regarded as weaker than men in mind, body, and spirit. The honor of the family depends largely on the conduct of its women; consequently, women are expected to be decorous, modest, and discreet. The slightest implication of impropriety, especially if publicly acknowledged, can damage the family's honor. Female virginity before marriage and fidelity afterward are considered essential to the maintenance of family honor. If they discover a transgression, men are traditionally bound to punish the offending woman. Girls are brought up to

believe that they are inferior to men and must cater to them, and boys are taught to believe that they are entitled to the care and solicitude of women.

The legal age for marriage is twenty-one for men, eighteen for women. Upon marriage the bride usually goes to the household, village, or neighborhood of the bridegroom's family, where she lives under the critical surveillance of her mother-in-law. Much marital friction centers on the difficult relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law.

Because a woman begins to gain status in her husband's home when she produces sons, mothers love and favor their boys, often nursing them longer than they do the girls. The relation between mother and son remains warm and intimate, whereas the father is a more distant figure.

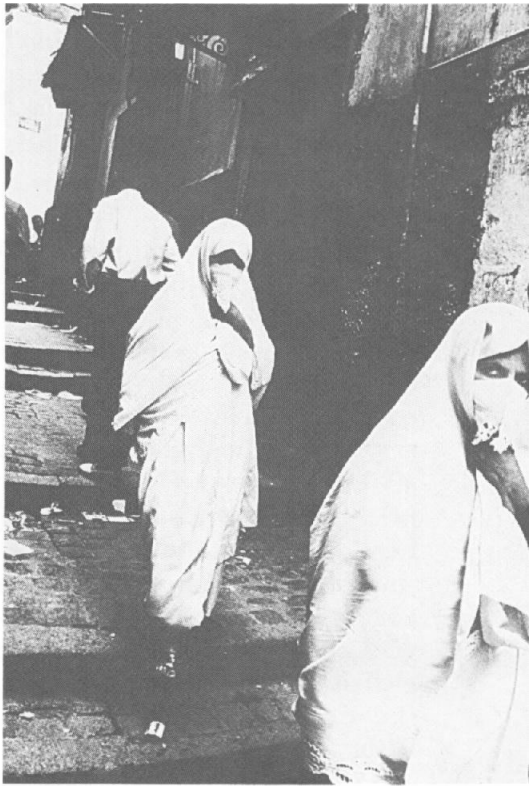
Traditionally, concern for the purity of women led to a marked restriction of their activities. Women spent most of their adult lives behind their courtyard walls or visiting other women in similar courtyards. It was considered improper for a woman to be seen by men to whom she was not related, and in many areas women were veiled in public.

French colonizers actively opposed veiling because they viewed it as a symbol of national and religious values and beliefs that they sought systematically to undermine. In reaction to French pressure, Algerians stubbornly clung to the practice and after independence actually increased its use. Paradoxically, however, this development also resulted from the increased freedom enjoyed by women. The veil provides mobile seclusion, and the more frequent entry of women into public situations called for an increased incidence of veiling.

Within the confines of the traditional system, there was considerable variation in the treatment of women. In Arab tribes, women could inherit property; in Berber tribes, they could not. In Berber society, Kabyle women seem to have been the most restricted. A husband could not only divorce his wife by repudiation, but he could also forbid her remarriage. Chaouia women fared much better because they were allowed to choose their own husbands.

During the War of Independence, women fought alongside men or, at the least, maintained the household in their absence. They thus achieved a new sense of their own identity and a measure of acceptance from men that they had not enjoyed before. In the aftermath of the war, some women maintained their new-found emancipation and became more

Men sharing snuff in downtown Algiers
Courtesy Anthony Toth and Middle East Report



Women in traditional garb on the street
Courtesy Nadia Benchallal and Middle East Report

actively involved in the development of the new state, whereas others returned to their traditional roles at home.

After 1962 the status of women began improving, primarily because of the increased education of family members, broader economic and social development, and the willingness or necessity for ever-larger numbers of women to seek gainful employment. In the mid-1950s, about 7,000 women were registered as wage earners; by 1977 a total of 138,234 women, or 6 percent of the active work force, were engaged in full-time employment. Corresponding figures for the mid-1980s were about 250,000, or 7 percent of the labor force. Many women were employed in the state sector as teachers, nurses, physicians, and technicians.

Although by 1989 the number of women in the work force had increased to 316,626, women still constituted only a little over 7 percent of the total work force. The number of women in the work force, however, may be much higher than official statistics suggested. Women in the rural work force were not counted; only 140 were listed in official statistics. Among the reasons for their omission was their position as unpaid family members; culturally, heads of households in a patriarchal society did not acknowledge publicly or to census workers that the women of their household were workers. In fact, the majority of rural women work full time and should be considered part of the Algerian work force.

Family Code

The real battleground over the status and rights of women has been the family code, a set of legal provisions regulating marriage and the family. Debated between those who wanted family life organized along Western secularist lines and those who favored a family structure conforming to Islamic principles and ethics, the code was proposed, discussed, and shelved at least three times over a period of two decades before being adopted into law in 1984. In one instance, in 1981, the code's provisions provoked vehement opposition from female members of the National People's Assembly and street demonstrations by women in Algiers, both almost unprecedented events in Algeria.

Although some of the 1984 code's provisions are more liberal than those of the 1981 version, the code essentially reflects the influence of Islamic conservatives. The family unit is "the basic unit of society"; the head of the family is the husband, to

whom the wife owes obedience. According to the sharia, a Muslim woman may not marry a non-Muslim; polygyny is permitted under certain conditions (although it is rarely practiced); and women do not inherit property equally with men. A woman cannot be married without her consent, and she may sue for divorce in specified circumstances, including desertion and nonsupport. Custody of children under age seven in divorce cases passes to the wife but reverts to the husband when the children are older. Divorce rates have risen steadily since independence, but divorce remains much easier for men than for women.

Family Planning

Before 1980 Algeria lacked an official birth control program, in contrast to other Arab countries, nearly all of which had some kind of family planning program or a policy of limiting population. To a large extent, this situation reflected the conviction that Algeria was not overpopulated, given the vast empty expanse of the Sahara and the High Plateaus and the scattered population clusters even in the Tell. There was also a desire to make up the alleged 1.5 million population loss in the War of Independence and the conviction of many parents that their well-being lay in producing as many children as possible, a common view held by peasants. Despite an employment problem arising from overpopulation, Boumediene favored economic growth over birth control as the solution to overpopulation and unemployment. His policy received the blessing of the Islamic religious establishment.

At 1980 growth rates, Algeria's population would have risen from 18.3 million to more than 35 million by the year 2000. Faced with a demographic explosion that threatened to inhibit further social and economic development, if not obliterate what had been achieved, the Benjedid government reversed directions and devised a cautious family planning policy that took into account Islamic sensitivities. The new program referred to "birth spacing" rather than "birth control" and emphasized the improvement in the health of the mother and children and the well-being of the family that would occur if births were spaced and families were smaller. The goal was voluntary participation on the part of women of childbearing age. The program also aimed at creating the infrastructure within the Ministry of Public Health that would enable it to provide birth control services, educate the population about family

planning, and conduct research on the relationship between population growth and economic development.

To implement the program, Maternal and Infant Protection Centers (PMICS) were established to dispense advice and contraceptives. In 1980 there were about 260 centers. An educational campaign was also launched, using television, billboards, and handbills to point out the consequences of unrestrained demographic growth and to advertise the services of the PMICS. A major effort was made to reconcile family planning with the dictates of religion. Religious scholars found birth spacing and the use of contraceptives compatible with Islam as long as participation was voluntary and practices such as abortion and sterilization were proscribed.

By the mid-1980s, family planning had begun to meet with some success. The number of PMICS had risen to 300, and the demand for information about the program reportedly outstripped supply in some areas. It was estimated that about 10 percent of the population of childbearing age was using some form of contraception, and the government was increasing its publicity to encourage still greater participation.

In 1986 the government created the National Committee on Population. Its charter promoted a balance between social and economic development needs on the one hand, and population growth on the other. Three years later, in 1989, the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) launched a US$8 million program to support maternal and child health care, help create a center for the production of oral contraceptives, and develop an effective education system to inform the general population on the use of contraceptives. The UNFPA program also supported demographic research and advised the government on population strategies and policies. In 1989 it was estimated that 35 percent of Algerian women of childbearing age used some form of contraception. This percentage would account in part for the sharp drop in population growth from 3.1 percent in the mid-1980s to 2.8 percent in 1990.

Islam

Islam, the religion of almost all of the Algerian people, pervades most aspects of life. It provides the society with its central social and cultural identity and gives most individuals their basic ethical and attitudinal orientation. Orthodox observance

Celebration of the circumcision of a young boy
Courtesy ANEP

of the faith is much less widespread and steadfast than is identification with Islam.

Since the revolution, regimes have sought to develop an Islamic Arab socialist state, and a cabinet-level ministry acts for the government in religious affairs. Although the Boumediene regime consistently sought, to a far greater extent than its predecessor, to increase Islamic awareness and to reduce Western influence, the rights of non-Muslims continued to be respected. The Benjedid government pursued a similar policy.

Early History

During the seventh century, Muslim conquerors reached North Africa, and by the beginning of the eighth century the Berbers had been for the most part converted to Islam. Orthodox Sunni (see Glossary) Islam, the larger of the two great

branches of the faith, is the form practiced by the overwhelming majority of Muslims in Algeria. Shia (see Glossary) Islam is not represented apart from a few members of the Ibadi sect, a Shia offshoot.

Before the Arab incursions, most of the Berber inhabitants of the area's mountainous interior were pagan. Some had adopted Judaism, and in the coastal plains many had accepted Christianity under the Romans. A wave of Arab incursions into the Maghrib in the latter half of the seventh century and the early eighth century introduced Islam to parts of the area.

One of the dominant characteristics of Islam in North Africa was the cult of holy men, or maraboutism. Marabouts were believed to have *baraka*, or divine grace, as reflected in their ability to perform miracles. Recognized as just and spiritual men, marabouts often had extensive followings locally and regionally. Muslims believed that *baraka* could be inherited, or that a marabout could confer it on a follower.

The *turuq* (sing., *tariqa*, way or path), or brotherhoods, were another feature of Islam in the Maghrib from the Middle Ages onward. Each brotherhood had its own prescribed path to salvation, its own rituals, signs, symbols, and mysteries. The brotherhoods were prevalent in the rural and mountainous areas of Algeria and other parts of North Africa. Their leaders were often marabouts or shaykhs. The more orthodox Sunni Muslims dominated the urban centers, where traditionally trained men of religion, the ulama, conducted the religious and legal affairs of the Muslim community.

Tenets of Islam

The *shahada* (testimony) states the central belief of Islam: "There is no god but God (Allah), and Muhammad is his Prophet." This simple profession of faith is repeated on many ritual occasions, and recital in full and unquestioning sincerity designates one a Muslim. The God preached by Muhammad was not one previously unknown to his countrymen because Allah, rather than a particular name, is the Arabic for God. Muhammad denied the existence of the many minor gods and spirits worshiped before his ministry and declared the omnipotence of the unique creator, God. "Islam" means submission, and the one who submits to God is a Muslim. Muhammad is the "seal of the Prophets"; his revelation is said to complete for all time the series of biblical revelations received by Jews and Christians. God is believed to have remained one and the same

throughout time, but humans strayed from God's true teachings until set right by Muhammad. Muslims recognize the prophets and sages of the biblical tradition, such as Abraham and Moses, and consider Jesus to be another prophet. Islam accepts the concepts of guardian angels, the Day of Judgment, general resurrection, heaven and hell, and an eternal life for the soul.

The duties of the Muslim form the "five pillars" of faith. These are *shahada,* testimony and recitation of the creed; *salat,* daily prayer; *zakat,* almsgiving; *sawm,* fasting; and hajj, pilgrimage. The believer is to pray in a prescribed manner after purification through ritual ablutions at dawn, midday, midafternoon, sunset, and nightfall. Prescribed genuflections and prostrations are to accompany the prayers, which the worshiper recites while facing Mecca.

Whenever possible, men pray in congregation at the mosque under an imam, or prayer leader, and on Friday they are obliged to do so. Women may also attend public worship at the mosque, where they are segregated from the men, although most frequently those who pray do so in seclusion at home. A special functionary, the muezzin, intones a call to prayer to the entire community at the appropriate hours; people out of earshot determine the proper hour by other means.

In the early days of Islam, the authorities imposed a tax on personal property proportionate to the individual's wealth, which was distributed to the mosques and to the needy. In the modern era, *zakat,* or almsgiving, while still a duty of the believer, has become a more private matter. Properties contributed to support religious activities have usually been administered as religious foundations, or *habus* in North Africa.

The ninth month of the Muslim calendar is Ramadan, a period of obligatory fasting in commemoration of Muhammad's receipt of God's revelation, the Quran. During this month, all but the sick and certain others are enjoined from eating, drinking, smoking, or sexual intercourse during the daylight hours.

Finally, all Muslims at least once in their lifetime should, if possible, make the hajj to the holy city of Mecca. There they participate in special rites held at several locations during the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar.

Islam and the Algerian State

The Prophet enjoined his followers to convert nonbelievers

to the true faith. Jews and Christians, whose religions he recognized as the precursors of Islam and who were called "people of the book" because of their holy scriptures, were permitted to continue their own communal and religious life as long as they recognized the temporal domain of Muslim authorities, paid their taxes, and did not proselytize or otherwise interfere with the practice of Islam.

Soon after arriving in Algeria, the French colonial regime set about undermining traditional Muslim Algerian culture. According to Islam, however, a Muslim society permanently subject to non-Muslim rulers is unacceptable. Muslims believe that non-Muslim rule must be ended as quickly as possible and Muslim rulers restored to power. For this reason, Islam was a strong element of the resistance movement to the French.

After independence the Algerian government asserted state control over religious activities for purposes of national consolidation and political control. Islam became the religion of the state in the new constitution and the religion of its leaders. No laws could be enacted that would be contrary to Islamic tenets or that would in any way undermine Islamic beliefs and principles. The state monopolized the building of mosques, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs controlled an estimated 5,000 public mosques by the mid-1980s. Imams were trained, appointed, and paid by the state, and the Friday *khutba*, or sermon, was issued to them by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. That ministry also administered religious property (the *habus*), provided for religious education and training in schools, and created special institutes for Islamic learning.

Those measures, however, did not satisfy everyone. As early as 1964 a militant Islamic movement, called Al Qiyam (values), emerged and became the precursor of the Islamic Salvation Front of the 1990s. Al Qiyam called for a more dominant role for Islam in Algeria's legal and political systems and opposed what it saw as Western practices in the social and cultural life of Algerians.

Although militant Islamism was suppressed, it reappeared in the 1970s under a different name and with a new organization. The movement began spreading to university campuses, where it was encouraged by the state as a counterbalance to left-wing student movements. By the 1980s, the movement had become even stronger, and bloody clashes erupted at the Ben Aknoun campus of the University of Algiers in November 1982. The violence resulted in the state's cracking down on the movement, a

confrontation that would intensify throughout the 1980s and early 1990s (see The Islamist Factor, ch. 4).

The rise of Islamism had a significant impact on Algerian society. More women began wearing the veil, some because they had become more conservative religiously and others because the veil kept them from being harassed on the streets, on campuses, or at work. Islamists also prevented the enactment of a more liberal family code despite pressure from feminist groups and associations.

Religious Minorities

Christianity came to North Africa in the Roman era. Its influence declined during the chaotic period of the Vandal invasions but was strengthened in the succeeding Byzantine period, only to disappear gradually after the Arab invasions of the seventh century.

The Roman Catholic Church was reintroduced after the French conquest, when the diocese of Algiers was established in 1838. Proselytization of the Muslim population was at first strictly prohibited; later the prohibition was less vigorously enforced, but few conversions took place. The several Roman Catholic missions established in Algeria were concerned with charitable and relief work; the establishment of schools, workshops, and infirmaries; and the training of staff for the new establishments. Some of the missionaries of these organizations remained in the country after independence, working among the poorer segments of the population. In the early 1980s, the Roman Catholic population numbered about 45,000, most of whom were foreigners or Algerians who had married French or Italians. In addition, there was a small Protestant community. Because the government adopted a policy of not inquiring about religious affiliation in censuses or surveys to avoid provoking religious tensions, the number of Christians in the early 1990s was not known.

The Jewish community is of considerable antiquity, some members claiming descent from immigrants from Palestine at the time of the Romans. The majority are descendants of refugees from Spanish persecution early in the fifteenth century. They numbered about 140,000 before the Algerian revolutionary period, but at independence in 1962 nearly all of them left the country. Because the 1870 Crémieux Decrees, which aimed at assimilating the colons of Algeria to France, gave Jews full cit-

izenship, most members of the Jewish community emigrated to France.

The government of independent Algeria discouraged anti-Semitism, and the small remaining Jewish population appeared to have stabilized at roughly 1,000. It was thought to be close to this number in the early 1990s. Although no untoward incidents occurred during the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973, a group of youths sacked the only remaining synagogue in Algiers in early 1977.

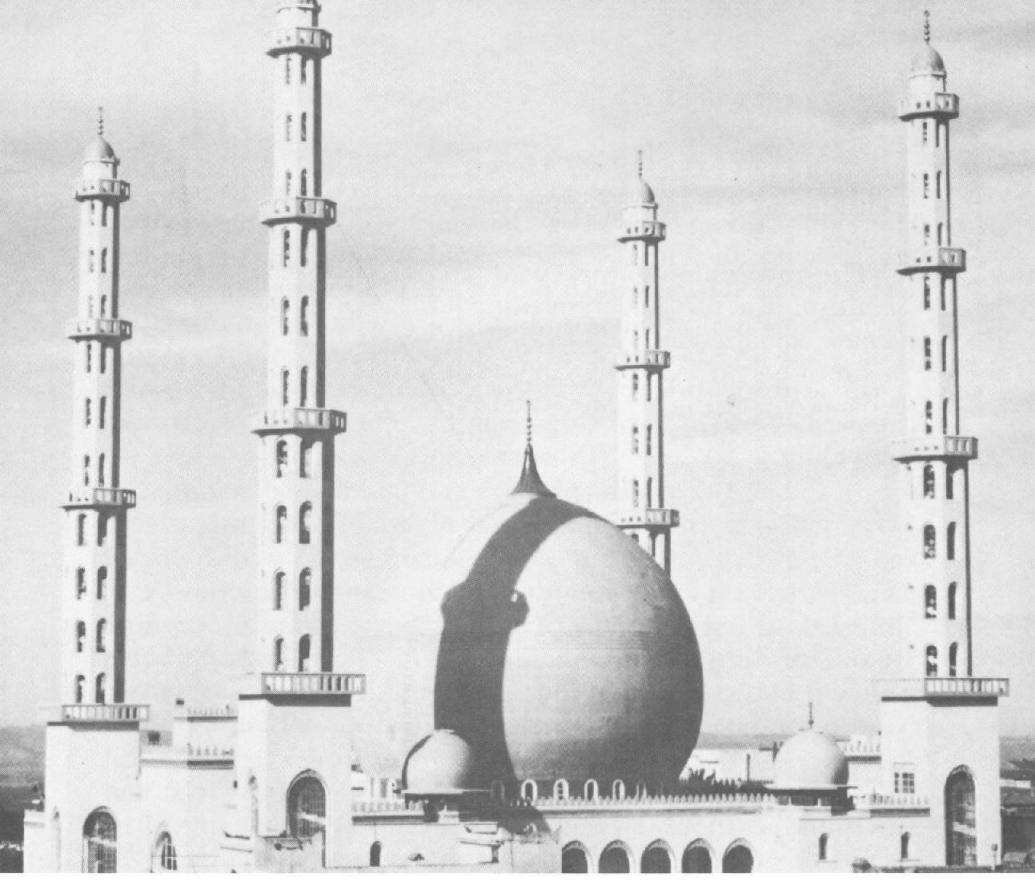
Education

The French colonial education imposed on Algeria was designed primarily to meet the needs of the European population and to perpetuate the European cultural pattern. A large majority of the students were children of the colonists. French was the language of instruction, and Arabic, when taught, was offered as an optional foreign language.

Segregated schooling of French and Algerian children was abolished in 1949, and increases in Muslim enrollments were scheduled in the comprehensive 1954 Constantine Plan to improve Muslim living conditions. On the eve of independence, however, the European-oriented curricula were still taught exclusively in French, and less than one-third of school-age Muslim children were enrolled in schools at the primary level. At the secondary and university levels, only 30 percent and 10 percent of the students, respectively, were Algerians.

At the beginning of the 1963 school year, the education system was in complete disarray, and enrollments in schools at all levels totaled only 850,000. In the years immediately following, teachers were trained hastily or recruited abroad; classrooms were improvised, many in the vacated homes of former French residents. Attendance climbed to 1.5 million in 1967, to nearly 3 million by 1975, and to 6.5 million in 1991–92 (see table 2, Appendix).

At the time of independence in 1962, the Algerian government inherited the remnants of an education system focused on European content and conducted in a foreign language by foreign teachers. Algerian authorities set out to redesign the system to make it more suited to the needs of a developing nation. The hallmarks of their program were indigenization, arabization, and an emphasis on scientific and technical studies. They sought to increase literacy, provide free education, make primary school enrollment compulsory, remove foreign



Mosque in Blida, south of Algiers
Courtesy ANEP

teachers and curricula, and replace French with Arabic as the medium of instruction. They also planned to channel students into scientific and technical fields, reflecting the needs of Algerian industrial and managerial sectors. The approach to education has been gradual, incremental, and marked by a willingness to experiment—unusual characteristics in a developing country.

The high priority assigned by the government to national education was reflected in the amount of money spent on it and on the existence of free schooling at all levels. Between 1967 and 1979, a total of DA171 billion (for value of the dinar—see Glossary) was allocated for operating expenditures in this sector. In 1985 approximately 16.5 percent of the government's investment budget was devoted to education; in 1990 the education sector received 29.7 percent of the national budget.

Algeria received substantial assistance from the World Bank. Between 1973 and 1980, Algeria contracted five education loan agreements for sums totaling US$276 million. The World Bank has continued to provide funds and technical assistance in connection with a fundamental reform of education, the latest phase of which occurred in 1993. The structure of the existing basic and secondary systems was being revised, and much heavier emphasis was being given to technical and vocational schooling.

In the mid-1970s, the primary and middle education levels were reorganized into a nine-year system of compulsory basic education. Thereafter, on the secondary level, pupils followed one of three tracks—general, technical, or vocational—and then sat for the baccalaureate examination before proceeding to one of the universities, state technical institutes, or vocational training centers, or directly to employment. The process of reorganization was completed only in 1989, although in practice the basic system of schooling remained divided between the elementary level, including grades one to six, and the middle school level of grades seven to nine. Despite government support for the technical training programs meant to produce middle- and higher-level technicians for the industrial sector, a critical shortage remained of workers in fields requiring those technical skills.

The reforms of the mid-1970s included abolishing all private education. Formerly, private education was primarily the realm of foreign institutions and schools often run by Roman Catholic missions. Legislation passed in 1975 stipulated that education was compulsory for nine years between the ages of six and fifteen, and that it would be free at all levels. The Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Higher Education were assigned sole responsibility for providing and regulating the education system.

In 1982 about 4 million pupils were enrolled in the nine-year basic education track at a time when the government claimed 81 percent of all six-year-olds were attending school. Attendance approached 90 percent in urban centers and 67 percent in rural areas. Teachers were nearly all Algerian, and instruction was entirely in Arabic, French being introduced only in the third year.

In the 1991–92 school year, about 5.8 million pupils were enrolled in grades one through nine; and the gross enrollment ratios reached 93 percent for the first six years of school and 75

percent for the next three years. Algerian society in the early 1990s was still not fully accustomed to women assuming roles outside the home, and female enrollments remained slightly lower than might have been expected from the percentage of girls in the age-group.

Secondary enrollments totaled 280,000 in 1982, compared with 51,000 in 1962–63. The number of secondary schools increased from thirty-nine to 319 over the decade, while the percentage of Algerian teachers increased from 41 in 1975 to 71 in 1982. French continued as the favored language of instruction in general, particularly in mathematics and science. Despite these impressive gains, enrollments still fell short of planned targets, especially in scientific and technical fields. The same was true of female education. Nationwide, in 1982 girls accounted for 38.8 percent of total enrollments in secondary and technical schools. A great variation also existed between the number of girls attending school in Algiers, where the percentage nearly equaled that of boys, and Tamanrasset in the south, where the percentage dropped to as low as 7. In 1984 national primary and secondary enrollments totaled 5 million.

In 1990-91, secondary school enrollments represented a total of 752,000 students, of whom 20 percent had entered a *technicum*, or technical high school. The proportion of girls in that cycle of education was 31 percent and constituted 47 percent of total enrollment at the secondary level. Teachers were more than 90 percent Algerian at all levels. Arabization of the education system was considered an important objective of the 1990s.

Vocational education at the secondary level received attention as part of the reorganization of the mid-1970s. The program was designed with the requirements of industry and agriculture in mind; students were to be trained as apprentices for up to five years. As of 1990, a total of 325 vocational training schools were in operation, and about 200,000 apprentices were in training. Vocational skills were also taught as part of the national service program, which provided employment and work experience for large numbers of young men (see Labor and Employment, ch. 3).

The major universities in 1993 were the University of Oran, the University of Science and Technology at Oran, the University of Algiers, and universities at Tlemcen, Sidi Bel Abbes, Constantine, and Annaba and the Houari Boumediene Univer-

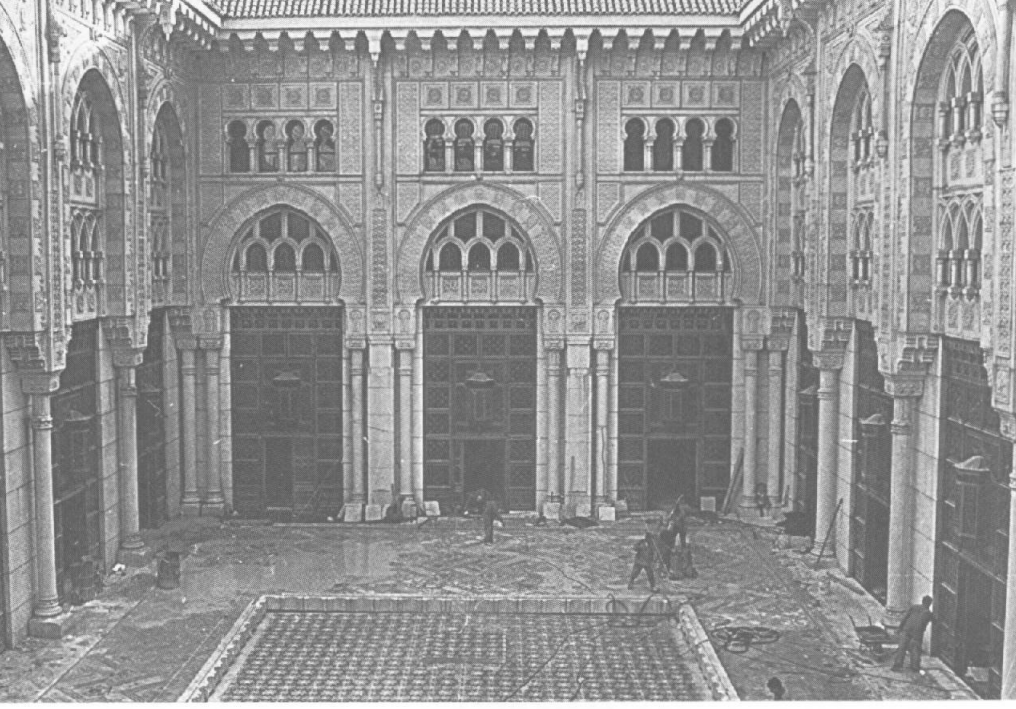
sity of Science and Technology. There were also universities at Batna, Blida, Sétif, and Tizi Ouzou and university centers at Bejaïa, Mostaganem, Chelif, and Tiaret. Total higher education enrollment for the academic year 1989–90 was 177,560 students as compared with 103,000 in 1983–84 and close to 8,000 in 1967. Only the Algiers campus predated independence, having been founded in 1909.

The higher education system first adopted by the University of Algiers was based on the French model. As such, it stressed autonomy of the university faculties not only in administration but also in designing curricula and organizing courses of study aimed at particular degrees. The system resulted in unwieldiness, duplication of academic offerings, and complete loss of credits by students changing programs. In addition, it led to a very high attrition rate. Some reforms designed to modernize the university system were introduced in 1971, and major reforms were introduced in 1988. Nevertheless, the universities still loosely resemble the French model, and French remains widely used for instructional purposes. The number of French instructors has declined, however, as the number of Algerian teachers has increased after 1980. In 1981–82, for instance, 64.6 percent of the teachers at all levels of education were Algerian. By the academic year 1990–91, the percentage had increased to 93.4 percent. Arabic was widely taught at the tertiary level, and Zouaouah, the dialect of the Kabyle Berbers, was taught at the University of Tizi Ouzou.

In addition to the universities, a number of state institutes provide specialized technical, agricultural, vocational, and teacher training. Some function under the direct jurisdiction of appropriate ministries and provide one to five years of technical training and job experience for trainees. The Ministry of Energy and Petrochemical Industries and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fishing each has a number of institutes. Algeria in the early 1990s had more than thirty institutes of higher learning, including technical studies, teacher-training colleges, and Islamic institutes.

Many Algerian students also study abroad. Most go to France or other West European countries, various countries of Eastern Europe, and the United States.

A variety of literacy programs for adults was initiated after 1962, when the national literacy rate was below 10 percent. The Conquest of Literacy program was mounted to help people attain literacy in Arabic or French or both languages. Volunteer



Great Mosque and University of Islamic Studies, Constantine
Courtesy Embassy of Algeria, Washington
School children, Algiers
Courtesy Anthony Toth and Middle East Report

teachers held classes on the job, in homes, and in abandoned buildings; old French or Arabic grammars, copies of the Quran, and political tracts were pressed into service as texts. Wide-ranging approaches, including correspondence courses and use of the public media, were introduced during the Second Four-Year Plan, 1974–77. Major responsibility for out-of-school education was assigned to two specialized government agencies. These agencies benefited from technical assistance under the second of the three World Bank education loans, but the main emphasis of the government's education program has been on the rapid development of the formal school system.

Progress in literacy has been noteworthy. About 42 percent of the population was literate in 1977. By 1990 adult literacy had reached 57.4 percent, according to estimates by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); 69.8 percent of Algerian men and 45.5 percent of Algerian women were literate. Because, however, priority has been given to the education of youth, adult illiteracy has not yet received the attention it needs.

Health and Welfare

Health

At independence the Algerian health care system was skeletal, consisting of one physician per 33,000 people (or an estimated 300 doctors in all) and one trained paramedic per 40,000. The approach at the time was primarily curative rather than preventive.

Since then the country has made tremendous progress in health care. From 1975 onward, a new system of almost free national health care was introduced. Hospitalization, medicines, and outpatient care were free to all. In 1984 the government formally adopted a plan to transform the health sector from a curative system to a preventive one more suited to the needs of a young population. Rather than investing in expensive hospitals, the government emphasized health centers and clinics, together with immunization programs. The results were impressive: whereas the infant mortality rate was 154 per 1,000 live births in 1965, it had fallen to sixty-seven per 1,000 live births by 1990.

By 1991 Algeria had about 23,000 physicians, or one for every 1,200 inhabitants, and one nurse per 330 people. About 90 percent of the population had access to medical care, and

only in remote rural areas did people have difficulty reaching health care services. Algeria also had 2,720 basic health units, 1,650 health centers, thirteen university hospitals, 178 general hospitals, and eighteen specialized hospitals. Overall, there was one hospital bed for every 380 people. The average occupancy rate of hospitals was 55 percent, while the average length of stay was six days.

In 1993 most health services were provided by the public sector, although a small private sector comprising some 20 percent of Algerian physicians also existed. A network of hospitals and ambulatory facilities was organized into health districts. The districts consisted of a general hospital, one or more urban and rural maternity centers, health care centers, and dispensaries. These facilities were complemented by specialized clinics and teaching hospitals. Three regional public pharmaceutical enterprises oversaw the wholesale purchase and distribution of drugs, a public company imported and maintained medical equipment, and a number of pharmaceutical units produced a limited quantity of serums, vaccines, and other drugs.

Expenditures for this health care system increased at an annual average rate of 14 percent during the 1980s. Estimates for health services expenditures were 5.4 percent of Algeria's gross domestic product (GDP—see Glossary), compared with a 5.2 percent average for countries with similar middle income, and 7.2 percent for some of the lower-income Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. Funding came from the state budget (20 percent), the social security system (60 percent), and individual households (20 percent).

In the early 1990s, tuberculosis, trachoma, and venereal infections were the most serious diseases; gastrointestinal complaints, pneumonia, diphtheria, scarlet fever, and mumps were relatively common, as were waterborne diseases such as typhoid fever, cholera, dysentery, and hepatitis among all age-groups. Tuberculosis was considered the most serious health hazard, and trachoma ranked next; only a small minority of the population was entirely free from this fly-borne eye infection, which was directly or indirectly responsible for most cases of blindness. Malaria and poliomyelitis, both formerly endemic, had been brought under control. Acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDs), does not appear to be a serious problem, but ninety-two cases had been reported as of August 1991. The inci-

dence of disease is related to nutritional deficiencies, crowded living conditions, a general shortage of water, and insufficient knowledge of personal sanitation and modern health practices.

Medical training has been a priority for the Algerian government since independence. In 1990 the following institutions had schools of medicine, dentistry, and pharmacy: Algiers, with branches in Blida and Tizi Ouzou; Annaba; Constantine, with branches in Setif and Batna; and Oran, with branches in Sidi Bel Abbes and Tlemcen. The total number of students enrolled in those programs in the 1988-89 academic year was 27,472. In addition, the government maintained public health schools for paramedical personnel in Algiers, Constantine, and Oran that recruited from secondary schools for their programs.

Medical schools have been graduating a large number of physicians: 800 to 1,000 annually in the first half of the 1980s, and even more in the second half of that decade. Several thousand women are enrolled in medical school. It is estimated that between 1990 and 1995 some 25,000 new doctors will graduate, the majority of whom will probably be unable to find work in the public health sector. The private sector was expected to expand significantly to absorb the large number of graduating physicians.

The Algerian government has made major efforts to train women as nurses and technicians since the mid-1970s. Two-year nursing courses at the secondary level are offered in Algiers and at several regional centers. Training for midwives is available in Oran and Constantine. Problems exist, however, with the paramedical staff. Since the mid-1980s, the ratio of nursing staff to physicians has dropped from 5.7 percent to one to 2.7 percent to one, in part because of low salaries, little opportunity for advancement, difficulty in recruiting good teachers for paramedical schools, and low compensation for those teachers. Furthermore, in an effort to reform the training system for medical personnel, a number of those schools were temporarily shut down in the latter 1980s, further reducing enrollment in those programs.

Despite the threat of oversupply of medical personnel, a small percentage of foreigners has always practiced in Algeria. They come from France, Russia, Eastern Europe, and Vietnam. Their number, however, is declining rapidly. In 1986 there were 1,724 specialized physicians, 241 general practitioners, eight pharmacists, and nineteen dental surgeons who were not Algerian; by 1990 only 767 specialized physicians, sixty-seven gen-

eral practitioners, one pharmacist, and ten dental surgeons who were not Algerian remained in Algeria.

Social Welfare

The social system that prevailed before the coming of the French had little need for public welfare. Extended families, clans, and tribes cared for their elderly and needy members, and granaries maintained by villages or tribal units stored grain for use in years of poor harvest. During the French colonial period, the old way of life was substantially altered, but in the early 1990s enough of the old system remained for the traditional sense of personal responsibility to rank high among accepted social values.

The fabric of the socialist system, however, was based largely on the concept of public responsibility for welfare, and during the first years after independence the government of Algeria set about extending the public welfare program. A system of family allowances for employed persons had been instituted by the French in 1943, and in 1949 a limited social security program had been initiated for urban employees and some agricultural workers. These systems remained in effect after independence. In 1971 a new social security ordinance extended to all agricultural personnel the benefits already enjoyed by industrial and service-sector workers. This program has provided sickness and disability insurance, old-age pensions, and family allowances and has been financed by contributions from employees, employers, and the government.

Housing

Unchecked population growth and a steady flow of urban migration have combined to produce a severe housing shortage. The Algerian housing problem has been less pressing than in many other developing countries, however, owing to the postindependence departure of most Europeans. Nearly all of the Europeans had been city dwellers, living in the new towns surrounding a *medina* (traditional city) housing the Algerian population. In 1961 and 1962, many Europeans simply abandoned their properties to squatters from the countryside who promptly occupied them; sometimes as many as six Algerian families lived in a residence that had formerly housed a single European family. Property abandonment was so common that *biens vacants* (empty properties) became a term in common use.

Several years were required for the government to inventory the vacant properties. In 1965, however, a government financial reform endeavored to regularize ownership and collection of rents from about 500,000 nationalized or sequestered apartments and houses in the major cities.

Rural migrants settled into *bidonvilles*, named after the flattened *bidons* (tin cans) used extensively in their ramshackle construction. After independence the *bidonville* population of Algiers alone soon exceeded 100,000. *Bidonvilles* appeared in other cities, and during the early 1970s they emerged on the fringes of the oil camps in the Algerian Sahara.

The proliferation of urban shantytowns has been a worldwide phenomenon in developing countries. Proportionately fewer have sprung up in Algeria than in neighboring Morocco, in part because of government projects to limit urban sprawl by creating industrial villages near new factories. In the early 1970s, industrial villages were started near Algiers and in the vicinity of Annaba and Oran.

During the first twenty years after independence, public investment was concentrated in the industrial sector, and little attention was paid to the housing sector. Private construction was minimal because of tight government regulation and difficult access to landownership. In Algiers in particular, the government sought to discourage the flood of migration by almost freezing the housing sector and confining itself to improving sanitation and public utility service.

The consequence of those policies was a severe housing shortage starting at the end of the 1970s. By the early 1980s, the occupancy rate per three-room housing unit stood at seven persons, and the shortfall in public housing was placed at 1 million units. In 1992 the shortage had become critical and had risen to 2 million housing units. The shortage had resulted in an average occupancy rate of 8.8 persons per unit, comparatively one of the highest in the world.

Between 1990 and August 1993, as part of a series of reforms, the government sought to eliminate the housing backlog and built about 360,000 public housing units and launched new housing programs for low-income groups. Earlier plans to produce 100,000 public housing units between 1980 and 1984 achieved only a 57 percent rate of success. In the Second Five-Year Plan (1985–89), the success rate for completed housing was even lower, convincing the government that major reforms were necessary.

Largely as a result of import restrictions that included building materials, the public housing sector in 1992 could produce only 35,000 units per year, up from 24,000 units in 1991, but down from the 1986 peak year of 88,000 units. At this rate, public housing shortages will not only continue but become worse.

In November 1990, new land legislation (Loi d'Orientation Foncière) was enacted to abolish the local government monopoly over land transactions, thus freeing urban landowners to buy and sell their land as they wish. The law was also intended to encourage private-sector investment in housing and construction. Furthermore, new standards were introduced in 1991 to simplify urban development procedures by the private sector.

To encourage the private sector to invest in housing, the government is proposing legislation that will permit private contractors to compete with public enterprises and have access to building materials that are exclusively for public housing. The private sector is also encouraged to produce locally some of the building materials needed, in order to compensate for market shortages and for the cost of importing those materials. By the early 1990s, some Algerians in the private sector had begun producing bricks, ceramic tiles, and steel rods.

Registered private construction companies remain very small and work primarily to build private family homes. Individuals also hire workers and architects to build their own houses. In 1991 alone, 85,000 building permits were issued to private households wishing to build dwellings. Between 1989 and 1992, an estimated 300,000 such housing units were built by private individuals.

The most conspicuous development in rural housing during the postindependence years has been the One Thousand Socialist Villages program undertaken in 1972 in conjunction with the agrarian revolution program. Socialist villages represented a pilot plan for improving rural housing. According to the plan, each village would have a population of as many as 1,500 people housed in 200 individual units, together with schools and clinics. Each unit was to have three rooms and would be provided with electricity, heat, and running water. By mid-1979 about 120 such villages had been completed. Although the villages had much to commend them, the program has done little to slow migration to urban areas.

In the mid-1980s, urban housing varied from the most modern apartment buildings and private dwellings of concrete and

glass to crowded shantytowns. The cities had grown so rapidly that the small-windowed walls and courtyards of a *medina* occupied only a small fraction of the urban area. The most common rural dwellings are called *gourbi*, some of which are mere huts constructed of mud and branches. Others are more solidly built, having walls of stone or clay and containing several rooms. Tiled or tin roofs are usually flat; but in parts of eastern Algeria subject to heavy rainfall or winter snows, the roofs are steeply slanted.

As a consequence of the heavy urban migration of early postindependence years, entire *gourbi* settlements appeared in Annaba and other coastal cities. During this period, the Kabylie region was the only part of Algeria to enjoy a housing boom. A large majority of the immigrant laborers in France were Berbers from the Kabylie, and the funds remitted by them to their families at home made the surge of building possible in this generally impoverished region.

Significant changes have occurred in Algeria in the last decade in the sectors of health, education, and welfare. The increase in health care facilities and the general upgrading of health services have met the needs of the very young Algerian population. The education system also has undergone major reforms and has become more responsive to the economic and social needs of Algerian society. However, the housing shortage, which worsened in the 1980s, has become critical in the 1990s. Private-sector involvement may alleviate this shortage as it plays a larger role in the economy. Another major problem confronting the nation is that of unemployment, particularly among younger workers. Thus, despite Algeria's achievements in some areas, the country in 1993 was facing a number of difficult societal pressures that, combined with militant religious forces and economic difficulties, posed ongoing challenges to the government.

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One of the best and most comprehensive recent studies on Algerian history and society is John Ruedy's *Modern Algeria: The Origins and Development of a Nation.* Of particular importance are Ruedy's descriptions of the structure of the society and how it changed as a result of the political and economic upheavals that shook the country, especially in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Two older studies, John P. Entelis's *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized* and the study edited by I. William

Zartman, *Man, State, and Society in the Contemporary Maghrib,* remain of critical importance to an understanding of present-day Algerian society. A number of French writers such as Jean-Claude Vatin, Rémy Leveau, and Jean Leca have written extensively on Algerian society and are essential reading.

World Bank reports contain the latest information and statistics on major development indicators in Algeria; they have contributed greatly to this chapter. Some excellent articles on Algeria also have appeared in publications such as the *Middle East Journal, Third World Quarterly, Annals of the Academy of Political and Social Sciences,* and *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord.* (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)