

The Algerian Folk Proverb as a Reflection of the Collective Folkloric Heritage

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Abstract:

The Algerian folk proverb is regarded as one of the most prominent manifestations of the collective folkloric heritage, owing to its rich semantic density that encapsulates the historical and cultural experience of Algerian society. This article examines the folk proverb as an oral expression rooted in the collective memory, reflecting the system of shared values and perceptions that have shaped the social consciousness over time. The study focuses on the analysis of selected Algerian folk proverbs to reveal their functions in reinforcing values, guiding everyday behavior, and transmitting life experiences across generations. It also highlights the role of the folk proverb in preserving the continuity of the cultural heritage and ensuring its transmission within the social system, particularly in light of the rapid transformations experienced by contemporary society. The study concludes that the Algerian folk proverb is not merely a transient proverbial expression used in daily communication, but rather a fundamental component of the folkloric heritage and an active element in preserving the collective cultural memory.

Keywords: Algerian folk proverb; folkloric heritage; collective memory; cultural values; folk culture; oral transmission; social system.

1. Introduction

As is well known among scholars in the fields of folk culture, folklore, and anthropology, the term folklore corresponds to the concept of folk heritage.¹

The English journalist W. J. Thomas was the first to use the term and advocate its adoption in the mid-nineteenth century to denote inherited culture. He introduced it in an article published in *The Athenaeum* magazine in 1846. Subsequently, the Folklore Society in England officially adopted the term in 1878², replacing the earlier expression popular antiquities. The term itself consists of two parts: Folk, meaning "the people," and Lore, meaning "wisdom" or "knowledge." Accordingly, the general meaning of folklore is "the knowledge of the people" or "the wisdom of the people."³

The term coined by Thomas, however, was preceded by an earlier stage.⁴ The concept of folklore is of German origin, having first appeared in 1806 through the works of Brentano and

Von Arnim. It was later reintroduced by the German thinker Riehl, the leader of the modern scientific Volkskunde movement.

According to Alexander Crabbe, the German term Volkskunde is not fully equivalent to the English term folklore; rather, it is broader in scope, encompassing the study of the arts of craftsmen, artisans, and farmers. Likewise, the frequently used expression the spirit of the people refers to their inner experiences, understood here as collective rather than individual experiences. People express these experiences and accumulated knowledge through myths, folktales, riddles, proverbs, songs, poetry, and popular narratives, all of which reveal their beliefs, traditions, customs, social norms, and values.⁵

Fawzi Al-Antil supports this view,⁶ arguing that there is a clear distinction between the two terms. In his opinion, the German term is more comprehensive and inclusive, as it encompasses the study of rural art and rural crafts⁷. He summarizes the meanings associated with this concept in the following points:

- The study of folk culture.
- The examination of inherited elements within folk culture.
- Folklore.
- The study of the lower strata of the nation.
- The study of rural communities and their traditional heritage.
- The study of the people (Volk)
- The study of folk life (Volksleben).
- The study of humanity.⁸

The concept of folklore reflects the vast scope of its scholarly content. It is neither simple nor easy to reach a consensus on a single definition of folklore, as numerous definitions have sought to encompass its meaning. Some define it as a body of popular traditions transmitted through inheritance, representing the wisdom and literature of the people, acquired not from books but through collective cultural transmission.⁹

Definitions of Folklore

1. Jonas Balys' Definition:

Balys defines folklore as: "Traditional folk knowledge, folk poetry, and all traditional forms that employ the spoken word as their medium, created by people whether they are primitive or civilized, in addition to beliefs, superstitions, customs, dances, and folk performing arts."¹⁰ From this definition, it can be inferred that Balys places greater emphasis on the content of folklore than on its form.

2. Mamie Harmon's Definition:

Harmon adopts an approach similar to that of Balys. She defines folklore as follows: "It may appear in any subject, within any group or individual, and at any time and place. It encompasses all the knowledge, skills, and concepts that an individual inevitably acquires as a result of the influence of the environment in which they were raised. The individual does not deliberately seek to acquire these things as in formal education but rather absorbs them. Nor does the individual intentionally invent them; instead, they arise naturally. We accept this knowledge, these concepts, and these skills, use them, modify them, pass them on to others, or eventually forget them."¹¹

Harmon defines folklore according to the ways in which it is acquired. She also associates folklore with the collective heritage linked to the original cultural patterns possessed by a community and transmitted to its members. This is consistent with what Sokolov recognized through his concept of the "bearers of folklore," which highlights the significant role played by individual artistic skill, training, talent, memory, and various forms of individual intellectual activity in shaping folkloric material, while at the same time viewing the individual as a creative contributor.¹²

3. Erminie Voegelin's Definition:

Voegelin defines folklore by criticizing American anthropologists who restricted the concept of folklore to the various forms of poetry and prose transmitted orally within primitive societies, such as myths, folktales, anecdotes, drama, chants, incantations, recipes, charms, riddles, proverbs, and the texts of songs and hymns. She argues that folklore "does not include only oral poetic and prose material, but also encompasses all traditional fine arts, as well as traditional handicrafts, and a substantial portion of religious and social beliefs and customs elements that anthropology usually classifies under the general term ethnography."¹³

4. Stith Thompson's Definition:

The American ethnologist Stith Thompson defines folklore as follows: "It is traditional heritage; it is something that is transmitted from one person to another and preserved through memory or practice rather than through writing and documentation."¹⁴ This definition equates folklore with the cultural folk heritage¹⁵. Thompson also associates folklore with the following folk domains, considering them aspects of ethnology:¹⁶

- Dances and songs.
- Folk tales.
- Customs and traditions.
- Beliefs.
- Popular sayings and widely circulated expressions (such as folk proverbs, jokes, and riddles).
- Agricultural practices.

5. Archer Taylor's Definition:

Archer Taylor defines folklore as: "Material that is transmitted from one generation to another, either orally or through practice. It may take the form of tales, songs, riddles, folk proverbs, or any other materials expressed through words, or embodied in objects, beliefs, symbols, or traditional practices. All of these constitute folklore."¹⁷ The reader will have little difficulty recognizing the close affinity between Stith Thompson's definition and that of Archer Taylor. Like Thompson, Taylor equates folklore with traditional heritage. He further adds another element to his definition, one that does not differ substantially from the previous one, namely, the issue of authorship and creativity. In this regard, he maintains that: "Folklore consists of materials that are transmitted traditionally from one generation to another without being attributed to a specific creator or author."¹⁸

As previously noted, it is impossible to encompass all the definitions that have been proposed for the concept or term folklore. Even if we were to compile all these definitions, we would

inevitably find considerable differences among them. Nevertheless, the definitions presented above, selected from the vast body of existing definitions, generally agree that folklore:

- Is regarded as the traditional component of folk culture.
- Is transmitted naturally from one generation to another and from the individual to the community.

3. Folklore and Folk Heritage

Folk heritage comprises what ancestors pass on to their descendants and what earlier generations bequeath to later ones, including customs, traditions, accounts, narratives, and folk culture. In *Lisān al-‘Arab*, Ibn Manẓūr states: "Al-turāth (heritage) derives from the expression *waritha fulān abāhu*, meaning 'so-and-so inherited from his father,' *yarithuhu wirāthan wa mīrāthan*,"¹⁹ that is, inheritance. In this sense, Allah the Almighty says: And you consume inheritance with voracious appetite,²⁰ and in another verse, quoting the Prophet Zakariyya (peace be upon him): }So grant me from Yourself an heir, who will inherit from me and inherit from the House of Jacob{,²¹ meaning one who would inherit the prophethood after him.

Several terms have attempted to establish a connection between folk heritage and folklore. Among them is the German term *Volkskunde*, coined in 1807, which conveys essentially the same concept as folklore. In France, the concepts of popular traditions, folk literature, and *demospsychology* (the psychology of the people) have also been used.

Arab scholars have likewise sought to find an equivalent term for folklore. Some have associated it with folk heritage, referring to it as folk arts, folk literature, folk traditions, and folk heritage (*al-ma'thūrāt al-sha'biyyah*), the latter being the term officially adopted by the Arabic Language Academy in Cairo.

Western and Arab scholars have differed in defining the term and in establishing a clear relationship between folklore and folk heritage. Explaining these differences in detail would be lengthy and complex. However, we adopt the definition proposed by Al-Jarrari, who sought to reconcile these divergent views, which rarely converge on a single opinion without diverging on many other aspects. Al-Jarrari offers a comprehensive definition of folk heritage, encompassing most of the existing definitions from which he drew inspiration. According to him, folk heritage is:

"The sum of what the people, across their various primitive and civilized social strata, have created in terms of culture and civilization that are not founded upon systematically studied scientific principles. Its manifestations appear in the customs and traditions they practice, the values and morals they embody, the feelings and emotions they experience, the stories, proverbs, and poetry they transmit, and the arts and crafts they produce. All of these live within their conscious and unconscious depths. At times they are aware of them, and at other times they are not; yet they remain constantly present in their lives, shaping their temperament, defining their personality, distinguishing their genius, and occupying their existence, even though they are often unaware of them."²²

It appears from Al-Jarrari's definition of folk heritage that he is, in fact, providing another definition and an equivalent concept for the term folklore. His definition closely and explicitly overlaps with the various definitions of folklore proposed by Mamie Harmon, Stith Thompson, Archer Taylor, and Theodor Gaster. This suggests one of two possibilities: either Al-Jarrari sees

no distinction between the terms folk heritage and folklore, considering them two expressions of the same popular tradition, or the two concepts were not clearly distinguishable to him, making it difficult to identify the subtle differences between them. Consequently, his definition tends toward broadness and generalization, which ultimately limits its explanatory value.

4. Folklore and Folk Heritage / or Survivals (Survivals)

The first scholar to formulate the concept of survivals was the English anthropologist Edward Tylor in his book *Primitive Culture* (1871), in which he stated:

"Among the kinds of evidence that concern us in tracing the course followed by the civilization of the world is an important group of facts that I have found it most appropriate to designate by the term Survivals. These facts include practices, customs, ideas, and the like."²³

The term Survivals, which refers to "cultural survivals," "cultural inheritances," or "living remnants," has generated considerable debate. In some definitions, it has been understood to mean something preserved, a remaining relic, or even superstitions lacking any specific character. Scholars adopting these definitions regarded folk heritage as a field of historical studies concerned with ancient remnants and the superstitions of the past, detached from the realities of the present. This view was advocated by Botter, Crabbe, and others. The latter, in particular, considered folklore to be: "A discipline for reconstructing the spiritual history of humankind as preserved in the unrefined expressions of the people, rather than as reflected in the outstanding works of poets and thinkers. Folklore thus appears as a historical science."²⁴

However, Sokolov and others regard folklore as: "An echo of the past, yet at the same time the resounding voice of the present."²⁵ Theodor Gaster supports this view by defining folklore as: "That part of culture which is preserved, consciously or unconsciously, in beliefs, practices, customs, myths, folktales, as well as in the arts and crafts that express the character and genius of the community rather than those of the individual."²⁶

Likewise, Jameson and Edward Leach share the views of their predecessors, whose ideas on folklore crystallized around several important points. They considered folklore to be:²⁷

- Cultural ethnology.
- Myths and folktales.
- Religions and rituals.
- Traditional customs, traditions, and folk beliefs.
- Magical practices.
- Folk dances.
- Folk proverbs and songs.

The definitions proposed by Sokolov, Gaster, and other scholars who share their perspective are based on the understanding that folklore is a form of folk heritage or a body of cultural survivals that continues to exist within societies. No activity in contemporary human society exists without extensions of the accumulated experiences of past civilizations. These tangible and intangible elements of folk heritage are practiced in our daily lives, both consciously and unconsciously, in times of joy and sorrow, during social gatherings and travel, and in our religious and social festive rituals, as well as in other domains of folklore, all of which are rooted in original cultural patterns that shape the precise ways in which we conduct our everyday lives.

Accordingly, it can be said that folk heritage constitutes the rich repository of the tangible and intangible traditions of a people or a society. Folklore, in turn, is the living and active manifestation of that heritage in the present; it is the dynamic force that activates this inherited legacy, the principal means through which this hidden cultural treasure is expressed in the life of peoples, and the guarantor of the continuity of cultural survivals and the ongoing vitality of the living cultural remnants²⁸ within societies.

5. Definition of the Proverb

1) Linguistically

In his work *Majma' al-Amthāl* (Collection of Proverbs), Al-Maydani presents several definitions of the proverb, the most important of which are the following:

Al-Mubarrad states: "A proverb (mathal) derives from *mithāl* (likeness); it is a widely circulated saying by which the condition of one case is likened to that of another."²⁹

Ibn al-Sikkīt states: "A proverb is an expression whose wording differs from that to which it is applied, while its meaning corresponds to the meaning of that expression."³⁰

Ibrahim al-Nazzam states: "A proverb possesses four qualities that are not found together in any other form of expression: brevity of wording, precision of meaning, excellence of analogy, and quality of expression. It therefore represents the highest degree of eloquence."³¹

Ibn Manẓūr, in his dictionary *Lisān al-ʿArab*, defines the proverb (mathal) as follows: "A mathal is something that is set forth as a likeness for another thing, thereby becoming its equivalent."³²

In *Al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, it is defined as: "That by which proverbs are expressed."³³

Proverbs are mentioned extensively in the Qur'an. Among the relevant verses are: And We have certainly set forth for mankind in this Qur'an every kind of example, And Allah sets forth examples for mankind so that they may take heed,³⁴ and Indeed, Allah is not ashamed to set forth the example of a mosquito or anything above it.³⁵

The Arabic Language Academy in Cairo defines the proverb in its dictionary *Al-Muʿjam al-Wasīṭ* as follows: "A proverb is a sentence detached from a larger discourse or independently formulated, which is transmitted from the original context in which it was uttered to another similar context without alteration."³⁶

2) Terminologically

A proverb is defined as: "A concise and widely circulated transmitted saying, or a sentence detached from a larger discourse and expressed independently. It is transferred from the context in which it originally appeared to another analogous context conveying a particular meaning, whatever that meaning may be. It embodies the outcome of real-life experience and practical wisdom, far removed from illusion and fantasy."

Beyond being the product of accumulated experience, and in addition to its linguistic and rhetorical beauty, the proverb is also: "A direct reflection of the conditions of the society in which it circulates."³⁷

The Encyclopaedia Britannica defines a proverb as: "A short, concise statement that accurately conveys its meaning and is widely used."³⁸

The Encyclopedia Americana defines it as: "A short statement that accurately expresses its meaning, precisely reflects a commonly accepted truth, and originates primarily within early

societies in a colloquial rather than literary style. It constitutes a folkloric form that is widespread across all generations."³⁹

The French Encyclopedia defines proverbs as: "Echoes of experience, and a proverb is an expressive condensation of meaning into a few words that has become popular."⁴⁰

Crabbe defines the proverb as: "In its basic form, it expresses a familiar truth, formulated in a concise style so that it may be widely circulated among the people."⁴¹

Seiler defines the proverb as: "A saying commonly used by the people, characterized by an instructive nature and a complete literary form that transcends ordinary modes of expression. It must embody a philosophy, though not necessarily a profound one, expressed in a popular style so that it can be understood and repeated by the people as a whole."⁴²

2_ The Origin of the Folk Proverb

The creation of the folk proverb originates with an individual, regardless of the social class to which that person belongs or the sphere of life from which it emerges. It then spreads without concern for the identity of its original speaker. This widespread circulation indicates that the proverb has resonated with its audience and consequently becomes the shared property of the community. Its dissemination continues as long as there remains a psychological need for its use. In this way, the proverb survives across generations that find it appropriate to cite, according to the relevance of its meaning to particular times and circumstances similar to those in which it was first uttered.

People resort to the world of the proverb whenever they wish to avoid prolonged reflection on the outcomes of their own experiences. This is because the proverbial saying is among the most concise and eloquent forms of expression. It conveys individual human experiences shared by people and expresses the philosophical ideas, personal experiences, knowledge, expertise, and realities that enrich the human mind, far removed from illusion and fantasy.⁴³

It is by no means possible to determine the historical origin, source, or original author of the folk proverb. This is due to several difficulties, which may be summarized in the following points:

1. People's lack of concern with identifying the original speaker of the proverb: What matters to them is not its author, but the extent to which it expresses the thoughts, feelings, and experiences they share.
2. The diversity of the sources of proverbs: There are rural proverbs as well as urban proverbs. This means that proverbs originate from various social environments and classes. There are proverbs associated with the common people, the aristocracy, craftsmen, artisans, women, and men. As a result, one may sometimes encounter proverbs that convey contradictory meanings.⁴⁴

3. Characteristics of Folk Proverbs⁴⁵

The folk proverb possesses a number of characteristics and distinctive features, many of which it shares with other forms of folk literature. These characteristics include:

- Oral transmission and inheritance from one generation to another.
- The anonymity of its author, since the creator of the proverb becomes absorbed into the collective identity of the community.

- Its popular character, reflected in a style that embodies a simple folk philosophy derived from everyday life. It is therefore easily understood because it falls within the realm of common human experience expressed in a popular style.
- The language of the folk proverb is the vernacular dialect commonly spoken by the members of the community.
- Folk proverbs represent the distilled essence of everyday experiences and the product of popular creativity.
- The folk proverb reflects the philosophy of the community regarding existence, life, and its perception of the universe.
- The folk proverb constitutes the spiritual and religious repository of the people.

Stylistically, the folk proverb is distinguished by brevity, concise wording, effective figurative expression, and precision of meaning appropriate to the context. This characteristic clearly corresponds to the concept of eloquence.

From a musical perspective, the folk proverb is marked by the beauty of its rhythm and cadence, which harmonize with the psychological disposition of its audience.

The folk proverb is often presented in a narrative form and may also appear in a poetic form, as illustrated by the following example:

Do not be deceived by the oleander's blossoms;

In the valley it casts deceptive shadows.

Nor be deceived by a young woman's beauty

Until you have seen her deeds.

Folk proverbs also frequently employ rhetorical antithesis, as in the following examples:

- To his face, a mirror; behind his back, a butcher's knife.
- My heart is on burning embers, while his heart is set on dates.
- Every beetle is a gazelle in its mother's eyes.

Another important characteristic of the folk proverb is its educational and didactic nature.

****Crabbe**** emphasizes that the folk proverb possesses two essential features: its instructional content and its stylistic brevity and conciseness.⁴⁶

Themes of Folk Proverbs

Folk proverbs encompass a wide range of themes related to the various aspects of people's lives. If these themes are to be classified, they may be categorized according to the different domains of human life, including social, economic, religious, moral, and political life.

From these spheres emerge the various themes reflected in folk proverbs. In this regard, several classifications of Algerian folk proverbs have been proposed by Algerian scholars recognized for their contributions to the study of forms of folk expression. Among these are the following:

1. Muhammad Ben Abi Shneb's Classification:

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the scholar Muhammad Ben Abi Shneb compiled a work entitled Algerian Proverbs from Algeria and Morocco. In this work, he classified and arranged the proverbs alphabetically to facilitate consultation and research. The collection includes 3,127 proverbs and 70 maxims, translated into French and fully documented, with comparative references to local, Arab, and Islamic proverbs.⁴⁷

2. Abdelhamid Ben Hadouga's Classification:

This compilation relies on memory and the preservation of oral heritage⁴⁸. Abdelhamid Ben Hadouga collected 641 proverbs, providing explanations and commentary, together with the social and literary context of each proverb. He considered them to be proverbs commonly used in an isolated village, far removed from all means of communication. These proverbs correspond closely to those found throughout Algeria, the countries of the Maghreb, and classical Arabic proverbial literature. As such, they reflect the cultural and civilizational unity of the Algerian people, intertwined with the broader cultural and civilizational structure of the Arab world⁴⁹. In his compilation, Ben Hadouga arranged the proverbs alphabetically, according to the original initial letter of the word or verb.

3. Kada Boutarn's Classification (Algerian Folk Proverbs):

Kada Boutarn collected 1,010 proverbs, arranging them into six thematic sections, each accompanied by brief explanations and commentary. These sections are as follows:

Part One: Life and Its Law, including the following chapters:

- Fate and destiny.
- The vicissitudes of time and divine providence.
- Perplexity, doubt, and anxiety.
- Deceptive appearances.
- Time and patience.

Part Two: Social Relations, including the following chapters:

- The law of the strong.
- Loyalty.
- Friendship.
- Effectiveness.
- Vigilance, caution, and indifference.
- Gratitude and ingratitude.

Part Three: Behavior, including the following chapters:

- Education, customs, and traditions.
- Self-respect.
- Generosity and integrity.
- Wisdom.
- Sound judgment.
- Etiquette and propriety.⁵⁰

Part Four: The Family, including the following chapters:

- Women.
- Marriage.
- Inheritance.
- Parent-child relationships.
- Blessings and curses.

Part Five: Human Virtues and Vices, including the following chapters:

- Sense of responsibility and competence.

- Virtues.
- Vices.

Part Six: Satire, Humor, and Irony.

Kada Boutarn devoted particular attention to providing clear and accessible explanations of each proverb, accompanied by commentary intended to clarify its intended meaning.

4. Ezzeddine Djelouji's Classification:

Published under the title Algerian Proverbs in Sétif, this collection comprises 327 proverbs, accompanied by explanations and, in some cases, the stories associated with them.

5. Themes of the Folk Proverb According to Al-Tili Ben Cheikh:⁵¹

1. Marriage in Folk Proverbs:⁵²

Before he proposed, he bought the meat and the firewood; and before the Fātiḥah was recited, Rabha let out her ululations.

He who does not wish to marry says, "It is my ill fortune," while he who truly wishes to marry seeks a virtuous woman.

On making a good choice in marriage:

He who marries a woman for her wealth dies poor; he who marries her for her family dies humiliated; and he who marries her for her beauty is loved by God and the Prophet, the Bearer of Glad Tidings.

2. Freedom in Folk Proverbs:⁵³

Put your finger in your own eye; as you feel, so do others.

You do not need to tell an orphan how to grieve.

Only the one who steps on the ember feels its heat.

When you divorce her, do not show her the door of her family's house.

These proverbs do not adopt an explicit position on the concept of freedom, nor do they present it as a fixed slogan. Rather, they invite individuals to experience it personally. To understand the meaning of freedom, one must first begin with oneself by putting oneself in the place of others. If your own eye is precious to you, then every other person possesses an eye with the same qualities and functions as yours.⁵⁴ This proverb thus embodies the philosophical principle that "Your freedom ends where the freedom of others begins."

3. Social Hypocrisy:⁵⁵

Elephants favor elephants.

If you see people bowing to the bull, cut grass for it.

A closed mouth lets no flies in.

If the millstone crushes you, save at least some flour.

One day it has ears, another day it has eyes.

These proverbs depict familiar social phenomena in people's lives. People often become enthusiastic and rally behind a particular cause; however, when hardship intensifies and adversity strikes, they reveal their true nature. Each person begins to seek personal salvation or to adapt to changing circumstances by altering their position not out of wisdom, prudence, or caution, but rather as a manifestation of social hypocrisy.

4. Wisdom and Moral Lesson:⁵⁶

- The owner of wool asks for the spindle, and the owner of wheat asks for the yeast.

- If it were in her bundle, it would be evident from her braid.
- A chick in the hand is better than ten on the tree; a coin in the pocket is better than ten in the unknown.
- Keep me alive today and kill me tomorrow.
- He who waits is better off than he who merely wishes; what you mortgage, sell; and the one who works for you, treat with kindness.
- A brave man may sometimes benefit and sometimes cause harm, but the mother of a coward neither rejoices nor fears.
- When the donkey lifts its first leg, neither clap nor scratch.
- What is inherent cannot be concealed.
- A dog remains a dog, even if its collar is made of gold.
- I brought him for God's sake, not to become a burden.
- Take him as a rider, and he will unseat you.
- While I dig his mother's grave, he runs away with the axe.
- He performed the pilgrimage, drank from Zamzam, and returned girded for misfortune.

These proverbs embody the accumulated wisdom and practical experience of the community. They encourage prudence, contentment, realism, patience, self-reliance, and sound judgment, while warning against misplaced trust, hypocrisy, ingratitude, and judging others solely by outward appearances.

5. Fate and Divine Decree in Folk Proverbs:⁵⁷

- What is written on the forehead will be seen by the eye.
- Caution cannot avert destiny.
- What is written for the eye will be seen by the eye.
- He whose fortune is good will have the wind gather firewood for him.
- The ill-fated finds a bone even in tripe.
- A beautiful night is evident from sunset; a good lamb bleats as soon as it emerges; and the true provider is God.
- The one who is betrayed says she has been bewitched.
- If I owned camels, I would slaughter a young camel.

These proverbs reflect the popular conception of fate and divine decree. They express the community's belief that human destiny is ultimately governed by God's will and that fortune, misfortune, and the outcomes of human endeavors are closely associated with divine providence.

6. Education in Folk Proverbs:⁵⁸

- He who has children never truly dies; fire gives birth to ashes, and the mouse's offspring becomes a digger.
- On the Upbringing of Girls:
 - Look at the mother before asking for the daughter's hand in marriage.
 - Turn the bowl upside down over it the daughter grows up to resemble her mother.
 - Who praises the bride? Her mother or her maternal aunt.
- On the Importance of Good Conduct:

- A hand in the fire is not like a hand in the water.
- Whoever sells you beans, sell him their husks.
- He whose fortune is good will have the wind gather firewood for him.
- She who is not accustomed to incense will burn her clothes with it.
- He who is struck by his own hand does not cry.
- He who gives his word gives his neck.
- What is inherent cannot be concealed.
- What you mortgage, sell; and the one who works for you, treat with kindness.

These proverbs emphasize the importance of education and moral upbringing by highlighting the influence of family, particularly parents, on children's character and behavior. They also stress values such as integrity, responsibility, keeping one's promises, prudence, and sound conduct in daily life.

6. Saidi Mohamed's Classification of the Themes of Folk Proverbs

In his book *Rhythmic and Semantic Parallelism in the Text of the Algerian Folk Proverb*, Prof. Dr. Saidi Mohamed classifies the themes of the folk proverb according to phonemic (rhythmic) and semantic criteria.⁵⁹ Some of these classifications are presented below:

The Hamza ('): ⁶⁰

- A kiss without payment, and water without purchase.
- Do not throw until you are sure to hit the water.

The /b/ Sound

- One coin in the pocket is better than ten in the unknown.
- He lives beside a wolf and beside a fox.
- Nothing remains for the wolf except wailing.
- The barking of dogs does not stop the clouds.

The /t/ Sound

- He who does not provide you with food wishes you dead.
- If food passes you by, say, "I have eaten"; if words pass you by, say, "I have heard."
- Do not rejoice over what has come, nor grieve over what has passed.

The /j/ Sound

- Step by step, and never close the door of hope.
- When pilgrims become numerous, chickens become expensive; the rich become needy, and the girl desires marriage while burdening her father.
- He who eats another's chickens fattens his own.

The /h/ Sound

- Hold on to what is true and let the wind go.
- A friend is a friend in times of joy and sorrow.
- Barley with peace of mind is better than wheat with disgrace.

The /kh/ Sound

- A mere puff, and the rotten stick.

The /d/ Sound

- Too many witnesses over the slaughter of a hedgehog.

- The mouth speaks with good intent, but the heart is corrupt.

The /r/ Sound (Work)

- If a metal plate could erase disgrace, it would have erased it from the donkey.
- Working with Christians is better than remaining idle.
- If I were dates, you would be the one playing the flute.
- Everything heals with time except words of insult.

The /z/ Sound

- A free man understands a hint, whereas a foolish boy needs a beating.

The /s/ Sound

- I thought it was a vine bearing grapes, but it was only a ruin full of mosquitoes.
- Better to be unattractive and sociable than beautiful and troublesome.
- The year I say I will buy a hood, I end up selling my burnous.

The /sh/ Sound (Greed)

- For the sake of his stomach, he abandons his tribe.
- I feared scratching, only to pull out a snake.
- He tells the dog "Shoo!" and tells the traitor, "Pretend to be deaf."

The /ʃ/ Sound

- The rain of March is pure gold; it makes the young goats dance.
- Intended Outcome

The /t/ Sound

A hole in the wall is better than a jewel on a thread.

The /ʔ/ Sound

- Greed ruins good character.
- He came seeking one thing and ended up with nine.
- He who wanted everything lost everything.

The /f/ Sound

- The lion and the wild boar each has a known origin.
- A sword strike is no relief from the heat of summer.
- The shops stand side by side, but livelihoods differ.

The /q/ Sound

- A fine sack is suited to fine flour.
- An enemy never becomes a friend, and bran never becomes flour.

It may be observed that Saidi Mohamed's phonemic and rhythmic classification encompasses themes whose meanings and implications intersect despite their phonetic differences. Indeed, similar ideas recur within this sound-based and rhythmic classification. These themes may be summarized according to the following scheme:

1. The sounds Hamza, /b/, /t/, /j/, /h/, and /z/: represent prudence, intelligence, good judgment, reprehensible traits, dignity, and rising above trivial matters.
2. The sounds /kh/, /d/, /s/, and /sh/: represent undesirable or unintended outcomes.
3. The sounds /sh/, /t/, and /ʔ/: represent greed and undesirable character traits.
4. The sounds /r/ and /t/: represent the call to work and contentment.

5. The sounds /f/ and /q/: represent noble human qualities and reprehensible moral traits.

7. Prof. Dr. Abdelmalek Mortad's Classification of the Themes of Folk Proverbs

In his two works, *Algerian Folk Proverbs* and *Agricultural Proverbs*⁶¹, Prof. Dr. Abdelmalek Mortad classifies the principal themes of folk proverbs with a particular focus on the economic and agricultural dimensions.⁶² He also classifies these proverbs according to their relationship with the agricultural seasons, while incorporating secondary themes associated with them. Among the topics he identifies in these two works is:

1. The Ploughing Season in Folk Proverbs:⁶³

- Plough early, or you will end up renting.
- If they surpass you in numbers, surpass them by starting early.
- When there is frost, plough even more.
- When there is fog, plough with caution.
- When the almond tree blossoms, only the fool neglects to plough.

These proverbs emphasize the importance of timely agricultural work, diligence, foresight, and taking advantage of favorable seasonal conditions, reflecting the close relationship between the agricultural calendar and the accumulated experience of rural communities.

2. The Month of January in Folk Proverbs:⁶⁴

- If rain falls in January, reduce the store of yeast and increase the grain bins; but if it does not rain in January, reduce the grain bins and increase the store of yeast.
- When January arrives, eat the stored provisions.
- When "Al-Dhābiḥ" arrives, it leaves neither a shepherd grazing nor a dog barking.
- When "Bul'" arrives, the rains come in full force: the stomach fills, and the fire consumes.

These proverbs reflect the close association between the month of January and agricultural activity, particularly rainfall, food reserves, and seasonal weather conditions. They embody the accumulated experience of rural communities in anticipating climatic changes and managing agricultural resources accordingly.

3. The Month of March in Agricultural Proverbs:⁶⁵

- Do not let March pass you by, O planter.
- March brings snow: the first is like an egg, and the second is like honey.
- In March, one plant sprouts while another withers.

4. The Significance of April in Folk Proverbs:⁶⁶

- April distinguishes wheat from barley.
- In April, let the sheep graze and tether the camel.
- If rain falls in April, the year will pass without deficiency.
- April brings water and abundant pools.

These proverbs reflect the agricultural significance of the months of March and April, emphasizing the influence of seasonal changes on cultivation, rainfall, crop development, and livestock management. They embody the practical knowledge accumulated by farming communities through long experience with the agricultural calendar.

5. Economic Relations among Social Classes:⁶⁷

- He who has no money, his words carry no weight.

- What belongs to others belongs to others.
- He who is clothed in another's garments is naked.
- He who depends on his neighbor goes to bed without supper.
- Even the sultan with his crown is still in need.
- If the sea were divided, it would become streams.
- Relatives are like scorpions.
- Welcome to the one who visits and does not overstay.
- He who comes bearing a gift deserves a bed and a reply; he who comes empty-handed deserves to be chased away by the dogs.

These proverbs portray the economic and social relationships that govern everyday life. They emphasize the values of self-reliance, reciprocity, hospitality, moderation in social relations, and the influence of wealth and material resources on social status and human interaction.

6. Household Management and Thrift in Folk Proverbs:⁶⁸

- The letters *sīn* and *ṣād*: some have a wife, while others have only a worn-out harvesting tool.
- Hunger teaches begging, and nakedness teaches sewing.
- He who does not mend does not wear.
- One evening meal relieves a night's anxiety.
- If the income is five and the expenditure is six, its owner will be ruined.
- Go to bed without meat rather than wake up burdened with debt.
- I would rather eat onions than incur debt.
- I would rather eat only broth than have cats following me.
- What tempted you because it was cheap may cost you half of what you own.

These proverbs emphasize prudent household management, thrift, moderation in spending, and the importance of living within one's means. They encourage self-sufficiency, frugality, and avoiding debt, reflecting the economic wisdom accumulated through everyday experience.

7. Space and Time in Folk Proverbs:⁶⁹

- The year is known from its autumn.
- Between the bean and the ear of grain, the children of the careless perish.
- The fire lies beneath the straw.
- Summer is a guest, while winter is the mistress of the house.
- If the sea were divided, it would become streams.
- When it snows, go out.
- The sun cannot be covered with a sieve.
- Do not let March pass you by, O planter.
- In April, wherever you see a bean pod, bend it.
- Let him grow up, and then we shall call him *Sa'īd*.
- He who precedes you by one night surpasses you by a clever stratagem.
- Its nights grow longer, and it is fed.

These proverbs illustrate the importance of time and place in the collective experience of the community. They associate seasonal changes with agricultural activity, emphasize foresight

and timely action, and express the belief that natural phenomena and the passage of time reveal outcomes and shape human behavior. They also underscore the value of experience, planning, and attentiveness to the rhythms of nature and everyday life.

5. Results

This study has yielded a number of findings that address the core objectives of the research. These findings may be summarized in the following concise points:

1. The Algerian folk proverb affirms its status as a fundamental component of the country's intangible folkloric heritage.
2. The folk proverb represents the distilled essence of collective experience and reflects the collective consciousness and prevailing values of Algerian society.
3. The folk proverb relies on oral transmission as the primary mechanism for the intergenerational transmission of culture.
4. Folk proverbs perform multiple functions, including educational, moral, social, interpretive, and evaluative roles.
5. The folk proverb serves as a symbolic instrument for guiding everyday behavior and regulating social relations.
6. Algerian folk proverbs are characterized by thematic richness, encompassing various aspects of human life.
7. The folk proverb expresses a popular philosophy that is simple in form yet deeply rooted and far-reaching in its influence.
8. The folk proverb cannot be separated from the cultural and social context in which it originated and has been transmitted.
9. The folk proverb contributes to preserving the collective memory and ensuring the continuity of cultural heritage.
10. The folk proverb remains an open field for interdisciplinary research, particularly in anthropology, sociology, and semiotics.

6. Conclusion

This article concludes that the Algerian folk proverb is one of the most significant forms of folklore in terms of both its semantic richness and functional value. It is not merely a common linguistic expression but rather a symbolic cultural structure that encapsulates the historical and social experience of Algerian society. As a product of collective oral tradition, the folk proverb reflects the community's worldview and embodies the system of values and norms that regulate social relations and guide both individual and collective behavior over time.

The analysis has demonstrated that the folk proverb is closely linked to the folkloric heritage, both in the mechanisms of its production and in the modes of its circulation and transmission. This close relationship makes it an effective means of preserving collective memory and ensuring the continuity of popular culture. It has also become evident that Algerian folk proverbs constitute an open expressive domain encompassing various aspects of human life including economic, social, religious, and moral dimensions and perform implicit educational and pedagogical functions through their brevity, eloquence, and persuasive power.

The study further shows that the folk proverb should not be regarded as a static cultural remnant or a historical residue disconnected from the present. Rather, it is a living cultural practice that

interacts with social transformations and continually reproduces its meanings within new contexts, thereby ensuring its continuity and permanence. Accordingly, the Algerian folk proverb remains a faithful reflection of the collective folkloric heritage, a fundamental element in the construction of cultural identity, and a fertile field for anthropological, sociological, and semiotic research.

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- ⁵⁴ Al-Tili Ben Cheikh, *op. cit.*, pp. 162–163
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 165–166.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 167–168

⁵⁷ Farakh: Literally "a young bird" or "chick." In some regions of Algeria, however, the term carries a negative social connotation and is considered a derogatory expression.

⁵⁸ Al-Tili Ben Cheikh, *op. cit.*, pp. 171–176.

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