

ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF THE ORIENT

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Algeria: History

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INTRODUCTION

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From 8000 BCE: First traces of people living in what is today's Algeria. These are probably the ancestors of today's Berbers.

From 1100 BCE: Start of Phoenician influence in the region. Colonies established in today's Tunisia.

Around 200 BCE: Kingdom of Numidia is established by Massinissa, who operates as an ally of Rome, motivated by the growing force of Carthage (today's Tunisia).

106 BCE: Numidia is subdued by Rome. A prosperous time for the region begins, but it is Romans living in the area who benefit most from this. Numidia is supplying Rome with grain, wine, fruits and olive oil.

4th century CE: Economic decline in the Roman empire

results in a dramatic fall in revenues in Numidia.

310-330: Christian Donatist movement, a rebellion against Rome's supremacy.

430: Vandals destroy the Roman rule in North Africa, and the region is dissolved into many small kingdoms.

534: Algeria is conquered by Justinian, and becomes a part of the East Roman Empire.

Around 670: Arab conquest. Kahina (a woman) leads the Berber resistance.

8th century: Berbers form their own kingdoms, and take Shi'i Islam as their creed.

1060-1143: Almoravids rule. They extend their kingdom to Spain.

1130-1269: Almohads are ruling, with Tlemcen as their capital. While the ruling structures are dissolved slowly, Algeria prospers economically and culturally.

1269: With the fall of the Almohads, city states rule independently, but there is strong competition between them. Many Algerian ports prosper through income from sea piracy.

1492: With the fall of Grenada, Moors take refuge in Algeria, settling mainly in the west.

1509: Spain starts taking over control of important ports in Algeria.

1510: Tlemcen becomes a vassal state under Spain.

1519: Most of Algeria is conquered by the Ottomans, who are solicited by the Muslims, in order to liberate them from the Spaniards. Some of the most important ports remain Spanish for decades to come. Algeria enjoys much freedom under the Ottomans, and continues to prosper from corsair activities. The old Roman name 'barbar' used for all foreigners, is in this period used more and more for the people of North Africa, eventually naming the peoples of this region 'Berber'.

Late 18th century: European powers become more advanced compared to Algeria, and suppress the corsair activities of the North African ports.

1815: American attacks on Algiers, in revenge on piracy.

1816: Joint British-Dutch attack on Algeria, weakening the military power of the country.

1830: French occupation of Algiers, Oran and Annaba.

1834: France annexes Algeria, and soon takes control over other ports on the Algerian coast.

1839: Abd al-Qadir declares Jihad against the French occupants. The French had been trying to maintain the old Ottoman system, using agreements with local leaders rather than seeking to control the interior with centralized force. Abd al-Qadir had used the prior years to build up his own strong force, capable of facing the French troops helped by shrewd tactics as well as the

harsh climate.

1840: The number of Europeans present in Algeria surpasses 100,000.

1847: After years of burning and destroying Algerian villages, the support of Abd al-Qadir's fight has dwindled to proportions too small for survival. Abd al-Qadir is arrested by the French, and eventually exiled to Damascus, Syria. From this time on, the French colonization begins in earnest, but it would take more than 50 years before all of Algeria is controlled. The Algerian economy favours Europeans in all aspects of life, and the agricultural activities of the country are suited to the needs of France.

1870: Rebellion in the Kabylies, with the son of Abd al-Qadir as one of the leaders. This happens at the very same time as there is a war between France and Germany. The rebellion is cruelly suppressed, and the best soil of the Kabylies is taken from the population and given to European settlers.

1879: Northern Algeria is declared part of France. Europeans living in Algeria could receive full citizenship, but Algerians could obtain this only after renouncing Islam. While all Algerians are considered French subjects, however, they cannot hold public meetings, carry weapons, or move around the country without permission.

1901: Algeria gets economic autonomy.

1920s: Algerian nationalism is developed among Algerians who are disappointed not to receive full equality with the French, even after they adjust to French culture.

1930: The Muslim population surpasses 5 million.

1942: Algeria becomes the seat of de Gaulle's exiled government, during World War 2.

1945: Clash in Constantine, where several thousand Algerians are killed, as well as more than one hundred Europeans.

1947: Algerian parliamentary assembly, with the number of Muslims equal to Europeans, is established. But this institution never gets sufficient support from either side to become effective.

1954: The committee, that soon comes to be called Front de Libération Nationale (FLN), is established in Egypt, by Algerian exiles. The FLN starts guerrilla activities and terrorism in Algeria, mainly in the countryside. France responds by placing troops in Algeria. At most, 400,000 are stationed in the country. The strategy of FLN to create fear, is soon copied by the French, and horrible acts are committed on both sides.

1956: The fights spread to the cities. The French are gaining ground.

1958: Heavy pressure is put on the French government by French opposition and French settlers in Algeria to find a solution to the conflict.

— **May 2:** De Gaulle is asked to form a new government in France, as there is a deep political crisis in the country.

1959: De Gaulle surprises the Europeans of Algeria by declaring that he would allow Algeria to choose between independence or continued association with France.

1960, 1961: Unsuccessful revolts against de Gaulle in France, performed by army generals.

1961 January 8: 70% in Algeria, and 76% in France, vote for geographically restricted independence for Algeria.

1962 March 18: The agreement of Evian. FLN, the French government, and the Algerian exile government, agree that independence is to be given to Algeria after a transitional period, after referendums in both Algeria and France. 100,000 French and about 1,000,000 Algerians are estimated to have been killed in the 8 years of fighting.

— **April 8:** 91% vote in favour of Algerian independence. The French nationalists do not accept this, and continue with terrorist attacks.

— **April 20:** The leader of the French nationalists, Raoul Salan, is arrested and transported to France.

— **July 1:** 99,7% of Algerians vote for independence, in elections boycotted by the Christians and Jews.

— **July 3:** Independence is proclaimed. Mass emigration of Europeans begins, and Algeria is left with a desperate lack of skilled labour.

— **August 3:** FLN and the exile government GPRA join forces, and agree on arranging elections.

— **September 28:** Ahmed Ben Bella forms the first government of free Algeria.

1963 October: Morocco attacks western Algeria, claiming much of western and southern Algeria. Algeria proves able to defeat the Moroccans. See Sand War.

1965: Minister of defence Houari Boumedienne arranges a coup, where Ben Bella is evicted, but without bloodshed. Ben Bella's power had for some time been growing at the cost of the National Assembly. Boumedienne takes supreme power for himself. Algeria makes full use of its oil resources, and enters the international arena, as a revolutionary, effective, fast growing third world country.

1976: Algeria is declared a socialist state, under control of the FLN. Boumedienne is elected president.

1978 December 27: Boumedienne dies. Benjedid Chadly is elected as the new president. His politics becomes a continuation of Boumedienne's, but with less stringent control of the country.

1980: "Spring of Kabyle", in which a rebellion against Arab cultural and political dominance, takes place in Tizi Ouzou, and also in Bejaïa. Nobody is killed, but this incident is very important for Kabyle identity, which is facing the Arabization of Algeria.

1988: Protests in Algiers and some other cities against the politics of the government. At least 500 youth are killed in Algiers.

1989: A new constitution allows political parties besides FLN.

1990: Front Islamique du Salut, FIS, wins the provincial and municipal elections, and defeats FLN with a large margin.

1992: After the first round of the national elections, in which the FIS wins clearly, Chadly is forced to resign by a group of military and civilian officials. Elections are cancelled, and state of emergency is declared. Muhammad Boudiaff is elected the new president, but he is assassinated later in the same year. After him a five member presidency acts in the place of the president. Fights commence, in which the Islamists attack all associated with the government, people acting in any perceived immoral manner, as well as foreigners from selected countries (countries supporting the governments — France is one of the main targets). The government sends military troops and police forces against the Islamists, as well as their supporters.

1994: Liamine Zeroual is named new president of Algeria. He confronts the Islamists with hard line politics.

1995: The government forces get the upper hand in the fights, and the FIS loses much of its popular support.

— **November 16:** Multi-party elections are held that show Liamine as the winner, with around 60% of the ballots. The elections are strongly criticised by several political groups in Algeria, with accusations about falsification of the results, but foreign observers declare the elections to be free and fair.

1996: Less fighting than in earlier years, but the killing of 7 Christian monks in April destroys much of the image of FIS among Algerians, although FIS declares that they had nothing to do with this. Several actions beginning in August result in the death of as many as 100 people. Most of these actions are between Islamist groups and government troops, but attacks on civilians in northeastern Algeria in August leave many people dead. Verification for some of these actions has been questioned.

— **November 28:** It is reported that the referendum on a new constitution gives overwhelming support for President Zeroual's position. The new constitution stipulates that religiously based parties are not allowed to participate in Algerian politics. Therefore, several Islamist groups call a public boycott, as well as some threaten to kill people casting ballots. However, it appears that as many as 75% participated in the referendum.

— **December 17:** Algeria's national assembly carries a decision to have the country arabized by 1998.

1997: The first half of this year witnesses a number of very violent actions, leaving hundreds of civilians killed, resulting mainly from the Islamist group GIA. This appears to be especially connected to the upcoming parliamentary elections.

— **June 5:** Parliamentary elections, result in a pluralist parliament represented by 10 parties in

the 380 seat unicameral body. No party receives a majority, and there is a need for forming a coalition government. The party of President Liamine Zeroual, RND, becomes the largest party with 155 seats, and could become the strongest of the two parties forming the new government. The legal Islamist party gets 69 seats. A number of aspects of the elections are criticized by Algerian and foreign observers but, in general, it is believed that they are free and fair.

— **July 22:** The leader of GIA, Antar Zouabri, is killed by government soldiers in a village west of Algiers.

— **August 28:** In the largest massacre to date in the civil strife, 256 are killed in one village. GIA is accused for the killings.

— **September 22:** Around 200 people are killed and many wounded in attacks in Barak county. GIA is accused for the killings.

— **October 23:** RND wins the local elections with more than 50% of the votes. The former government party, FLN, gets 20%. There are many reports about election fraud.

1998 January 1: 412 people are killed in Reliziane province, in the worst massacre to date in the civil strife.

— **December 15:** Smail Hamdani is appointed the new prime minister, following Ahmad Ouyahia.

1999 April 15: Abdelaziz Bouteflika is elected the new president of Algeria. All his opposing candidates withdraw their candidacy just before the election day.

— **June 12:** FIS and AIS approves a peace accord with the Algerian government.

— **July 3:** Bouteflika declares amnesty for thousands of prisoners.

2000 January: FIS disbands its armed faction, and has a majority of its militants surrender in a government amnesty program.

2001 April: Widespread protests in Kabylia, ignited by the killing of a young Berber by local police, see Black Spring.

