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History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria

Colonialism denied Algeria its own history; nationalism reinvented it. James McDougall's book charts the creation of that history through colonialism to independence, exploring the struggle to define Algeria's past and determine the meaning of its nationhood. Through local histories and individual experiences, McDougall analyses the relationship between history, Islamic culture and nationalism in Algeria. In so doing, he confronts prevailing notions that nationalism emancipated Algerian history, and that Algeria's past has somehow determined its present, violence breeding violence, tragedy repeating itself. Instead, he argues, nationalism was a new kind of domination, in which multiple memories and possible futures were effaced. But the histories hidden by nationalism remain below the surface, and can be recovered to create alternative visions for the future. This is an exceptional and engaging book, rich in analysis and documentation. It will be read by colonial historians and social theorists as well as by scholars of the Middle East and North Africa.

JAMES MCDUGALL is Assistant Professor of History at Princeton University. He has edited *Nation, Society and Culture in North Africa* (2003).

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Would it exceed the bounds of legitimate doubt if we were to place our emphasis on the part of purely linguistic play in these spiritual, or religious, variations, which constitute the ancient history of the Maghrib? This history is, perhaps, nothing but a study in heresy. The Maghribis, we are told, apostatized as many as twelve times. In this they pursued a search for their own identity which has probably not yet ceased today. As we know, in matters of schism and sect it is the verbal label, the classification by name, or by epithet, which plays the primary role. It is by this that the personalities of individuals, or of groups, situate, recognise, or affirm themselves relative to one another. Do we not see, throughout recent centuries, Islamic religious brotherhoods – just like the Wahhabi movement that today, in turn, attacks them – constantly renewing against one another the same struggle in the name of authenticity and purism? Indeed, throughout North African history, people may always have been labelled as ‘puritan’ or ‘heretic’, just as they have been as ‘nomad’ or ‘peasant’. Or even ‘Arab’ or ‘Berber’ . . . This, surely, is to carry our doubts too far. I have merely wished to show to what extent, in North Africa, this land par excellence of the search for oneself . . . a part of things is held in their sign. A part of history, as of the morphology of groups, hangs on the life of words.

Jacques Berque
‘Qu’est-ce qu’une “tribu” nord-africaine?’

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Preface

This book examines the place of cultural authority and historical imagination in nationalism. My aim has been to move beyond the tropes of awakening and consciousness still common in writing on this subject with regard to the Maghrib, and to put the cultural history of nationalism back into a critical, materialist discursive history of changing forms of social power and modes of domination. I do not pretend to have exhausted this subject; there are many important aspects of the issue not addressed here. Limits of space, competence and material have defined what I have, and have not, been able to discuss.

This study is based primarily on two sets of documentary sources: French colonial archives that chronicle the development of new cultural dynamics in Algerian society through the first two-thirds of the twentieth century; and published periodicals and books in French and Arabic that both constitute and reflect on these same developments. I particularly have to thank the directors and staff of archives and libraries in Aix-en-Provence, Nantes, Tunis, Algiers, Oran and Constantine, the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, the Bibliothèque nationale de France and the Centre culturel algérien, Paris, the National Library and the Institut supérieur de l'histoire du mouvement national, Tunis, the Firestone library at Princeton and the various libraries of the University of Oxford.

In transliterating from Arabic, I have aimed for clarity overall. Place names are given in the most familiar form (Oran not Wahrān). For proper names of persons, I have given Arabic transliterations for people who wrote primarily in Arabic, and established French forms for individuals who themselves wrote in French. Personal names are transliterated on their first appearance, following the system of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (with word-final *hamza* omitted), and thereafter given in a simplified transliteration without diacritics. Less commonly known Arabic terminology (e.g. *dhikr*) is transliterated, but words familiar in English (e.g. *sufi*) are not. All unattributed translations are my own.

x Preface

Some of this material first appeared elsewhere. I thank the following for permission to reproduce parts of the work: Duke University Press for parts of chapter 5 which appeared as ‘Myth and counter-myth: “The Berber” as national signifier in Algerian historiographies’, *Radical History Review* 86 (Spring 2003), 66–88; Nebraska University Press, for part of the epilogue appearing in ‘Authenticity/Alienation: the cultural politics of rememoration in post-colonial Algeria’, in William B. Cohen and James D. le Sueur (eds.), *France and Algeria: From Colonial Conflicts to Postcolonial Memories*; and Indiana University Press, for parts of chapters 4 and 5 appearing in ‘Martyrdom and destiny: the inscription and imagination of Algerian history’, in Ussama Makdissi and Paul Silverstein (eds.), *Memory and Violence in the Middle East and North Africa*.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge my many debts. The British Academy, latterly the Arts and Humanities Research Board, made my graduate education possible, and I was fortunate to pursue it at the Oriental Institute and St Antony’s College, Oxford. I was lucky again to receive a post-doctoral award from the Leverhulme Trust, to be able to hold that award at St Antony’s Middle East Centre through the generosity of Jack McCrane and the Hadid Fund, and to be elected to a research fellowship by the Warden and Fellows of St Antony’s. It is a privilege to have been part of such a distinguished, stimulating and supportive institution. The book was finished in my first year as a member of another extraordinary institution, the history department at Princeton. It would never have been written without the welcome afforded me by the Institut de Recherches et d’Etudes sur le Monde arabe et musulman at the Maison méditerranéenne des Sciences de l’Homme in Aix-en-Provence, the Institut de Recherches sur le Maghreb contemporain, Tunis, and the Centre de Recherches en Anthropologie sociale et culturelle in Oran. To the wonderful faculty and staff of all of these I am greatly indebted. My thanks go especially to Mastan Ebtehaj, Elizabeth Anderson and Collette Caffrey.

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I am grateful to many people for support, criticism, encouragement, advice, hospitality and friendship: in Aix and Marseille, Isabelle Grangaud and Randi Deguilhem, and their families, Jean-Robert Henry and Françoise Lorcerie, Ahmed Mahiou, Bernard Botiveau, Isabelle Merle, Ali Bensaad and Abderrahmane Moussaoui; in Paris, Omar Carlier, Sylvie Thénault, Raphaëlle Branche, Anne-Marie Pathé, Ouarda

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The manuscript was read in part, or in its entirety, with extraordinary generosity of time and energy by Michael Cook, Julia Clancy-Smith, Michael Laffan, Molly Greene, Gyan Prakash, and two readers for the Press. The book has far fewer errors, and greater clarity, than it would have had without their incisive and detailed comments; remaining errors and obscurity are my own responsibility. Marigold Acland's enthusiasm and patience have been wonderful. My thanks to her, to Isabelle Dambricourt, Liz Davey and Mary Starkey.

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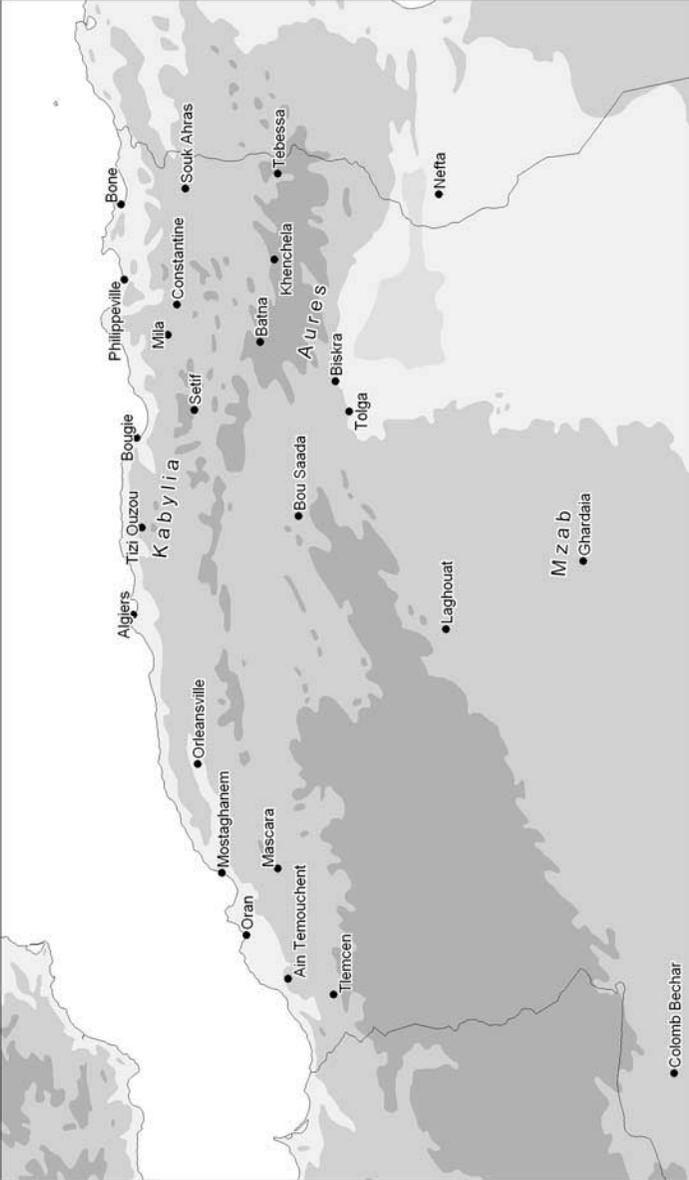
Abbreviations and acronyms

<i>AAN</i>	<i>Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord</i>
ADA	Archives du Département d'Alger
ADC	Archives du Département de Constantine
ADN	Archives diplomatiques, Nantes
<i>AESC</i>	<i>Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations</i>
AGGA	Archives du Gouvernement Général de l'Algérie
<i>AHR</i>	<i>American Historical Review</i>
<i>AHSS</i>	<i>Annales: Histoire, Sciences sociales</i> (formerly <i>AESC</i>)
ALN	Armée de libération nationale
AML	Amis du manifeste et de la liberté
ANT/AGGT	Archives nationales, Tunis; Archives générales du Gouvernement Tunisien
AUMA	Association des <i>'ulamā</i> musulmans algériens
AWC	Archives of the <i>wilaya</i> of Constantine
AWO	Archives of the <i>wilaya</i> of Oran
<i>BCAF</i>	<i>Afrique française. Bulletin du Comité de l'Afrique française</i>
BnF	Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris
BNT	Bibliothèque nationale, Tunis
<i>BSGA</i>	<i>Bulletin de la Société de Géographie d'Alger</i>
<i>BSOAS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
CANA	Centre des archives nationales, Algiers
CAOM	Centre des archives d'outre mer, Aix-en-Provence
CFLN	Comité français de libération nationale (1944)
CIE	Centre d'information et d'études (created May 1935)
CM	Commune mixte
Comm. div.	Commissaire divisionnaire
CPE	Commune de plein exercice
CRUA	Comité révolutionnaire d'unité et d'action
C/SIDM	Centre/Service d'information et de documentation musulmane (succeeds CIE, 1945)
<i>CSSH</i>	<i>Comparative Studies in Society and History</i>

List of abbreviations

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<i>EI2</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> (2nd edn)
ENA	Etoile nord-africaine
FADRL	Front algérien pour la défense et le respect de la liberté
FLN	Front de libération nationale
GPRO	Gouvernement provisoire de la République algérienne
GPRF	Gouvernement provisoire de la République française
<i>IBLA</i>	<i>Revue de l'Institut des belles lettres arabes</i> (Tunis)
<i>IJMES</i>	<i>International Journal of Middle East Studies</i>
ISHMN	Institut supérieur de l'histoire du mouvement national, La Manouba, Tunis
<i>JAH</i>	<i>Journal of African History</i>
<i>J. Hist. Sociol.</i>	<i>Journal of Historical Sociology</i>
<i>JORA</i>	<i>Journal officiel de la République algérienne</i>
MAE	Ministère des affaires étrangères
<i>MES</i>	<i>Middle East Studies</i>
MNA	Mouvement national algérien
MS(S)	manuscript(s)
MTLD	Mouvement pour le triomphe des libertés démocratiques
OS	Organisation spéciale (PPA/MTLD paramilitary wing, 1947–50)
PCA	Parti communiste algérien
PCF	Parti communiste français
PE	Police d'Etat
PPA	Parti du peuple algérien
PRG	Police des renseignements généraux
<i>RA</i>	<i>Revue africaine</i>
<i>RASJEP</i>	<i>Revue algérienne des sciences juridique, économique et politique</i>
<i>REMMM</i>	<i>Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée</i> (formerly <i>ROMM</i>)
<i>Rev. Hist. Maghr.</i>	<i>Revue d'histoire maghrébine</i>
<i>ROMM</i>	<i>Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée</i>
SAINA	Service des affaires indigènes nord-africaines (Paris Police Prefecture)
SD	Sûreté départementale
SEGLNA	Service des études générales et des liaisons nord-africaines (1958–9)
SLNA	Service des liaisons nord-africaines (succeeds C/SIDM, 1947–57)
tr. extr.	translated extract
UDMA	Union démocratique du manifeste algérien



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