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**The Manifestations of History in the Algerian Theatre**  
**The play Hannibal by Al-Madani and the play Jugurtha by the past are**  
**examples**

التراث التاريخي ودواعي توظيفه في المسرح الجزائري  
مسرحية حنبعل للمدني ومسرحية يوغرطة للماضوي أنموذجا

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## Abstract:

The historical heritage is the true spirit of the nation, the source of its originality and the pulse of its active existence, the basic component of its identity, and the constant value from which it draws its successor, to present a new theatrical form based on the various forms of heritage expression, which reflect the reality of the people and its various social, political and religious issues. the historical heritage in all its dimensions is considered by most Algerian playwrights to be the closest art to self-expression, because of the clear springs in which they find inspiration for their experiences and artistic aspirations.

It should be pointed out that the demand of Algerians to take advantage of the historical heritage was not only for technical reasons but to be used as a tool in many Algerian plays to resist French colonialism, which sought to eliminate Algerian history completely and therefore the problem of our research is centered on: what are the reasons for the use of historical heritage in the Algerian theater? What is its role in expressing the Algerian reality, especially in the French colonial era?

**Keywords:** Algerian theatre, historical heritage, Ahmed Tawfiq Al-Madani, Abdel-Rahman Al-Madaoui

الملخص:

يعد التراث التاريخي الروح الحقيقية للأمة، ونبع أصالتها ونبض وجودها الفاعل، والمكون الأساسي لهويتها، والقيمة الثابتة التي يستقي منها الخلف، لتقديم شكل مسرحي جديد مبني على مختلف أشكال التعبير التراثية، المعبرة عن واقع الشعب، وعن قضاياها الاجتماعية والسياسية والدنية المختلفة، على اعتبار أن التراث التاريخي بكل أبعاده عند أغلب المسرحيين الجزائريين أقرب الفنون لتعبير عن الذات، نظرا لما وجدوا فيه من ينابيع صافية تلهم تجاربهم وتروي طموحاتهم الفنية.

ولا بد أن نشير إلى أن إقبال الجزائريين على النهل من التراث التاريخي لم يكن لأسباب فنية وحسب، بل ليستغل كأداة في العديد من المسرحيات الجزائرية لمقاومة الاستعمار الفرنسي الذي سعى إلى تغييب التاريخ الجزائري ومحوه تماما وعليه تتمحور إشكالية بحثنا في : ماهي دوافع توظيف التراث التاريخي في المسرح الجزائري؟ وما هو دوره في التعبير عن الواقع الجزائري المعيش وخاصة في الحقبة الاستعمارية الفرنسية؟.

الكلمات المفتاحية : المسرح الجزائري، التراث التاريخي ، أحمد توفيق المدني ، عبد الرحمان الماضوي.

The first subtitle opens with an introduction that presents the specific problem under study and describes the Algerian playwrights used the folk heritage that is considered as one of the most important old mythological ruins, with historical allusions and dropped them on Algeria's political reality to pass on meaningful messages<sup>1</sup> to achieve the justice that they should live."<sup>2</sup>

That is that the policy of French colonization in Algeria was a policy of "intellectual and civilizational conflict at the same time, as well as a phenomenon of political conflict, which from the beginning aimed at the elimination of Arab culture in Algeria, and this resulted in an intellectual stalemate, which hindered the development of Arab culture in general, and the literary movement in particular."<sup>3</sup>

It should be pointed out here that the deteriorating cultural reality witnessed by Algeria during this period was a natural result of the cultural blockade imposed by the French colonial policy on Algeria, which aimed to cut off the cultural ties between it and its Moroccan and Oriental brothers by isolating it from all the intellectual and cultural sources that nurtured and developed it.<sup>4</sup>

Here lies the importance of the popular heritage in Algeria, as it was the imaginary alternative to reality, especially after the change that took place at the social and political level, throughout the colonial period until the outbreak of the armed revolution, to support a people who lived long in slavery, to take development on its right path and to look forward to a future in which its desired horizon. in a dialectical

relationship, there is a conflict between the forces of attraction and push, between the former and the latter, between the positive and the negative.

This is why the Algerian man has resorted to popular literature, regardless of its various expressive forms, "because it achieves for him the life of justice and love he dreams of and provides by its own means a satisfactory answer to the question that the people have in mind, about their fate, as if they wanted to tell him this how they should live. light-hearted, adventurous-moving optimist, believing in the magical powers of the world of mystery you live in "<sup>5</sup> ».

That is why the Algerian theater was not unoccupied with the folk narrative and representational arts, which depict the tragic reality and the arduous life of the struggling individual, and on this basis we find the characteristic of the sincere hero is characterized by the exaggeration of the supernatural force, which uses legendary elements, to win and reach his ultimate goal, that is pried by the writer in his artistic work« through this, the playwright can create a new interpretation of history, and create the construction of history from the artistic point of view, the historical play is not intended for its events or the narration of its known characters, but for its symbols and the purpose of its writing<sup>6</sup>». because what is important for the writer in his use of the historical figure is to convey meanings and ideas of historical and political significance, and arouse the interest of the viewer, therefore, the playwright did not settle only for his showing of history, but he chose the historical events that serve his purpose, and isolate them from other aspects that have

nothing to do with those meanings and ideas, «the playwright had a specific purpose: to alert the masses in Algeria to learn about and remember the past of their ancestors, their heroism and their great works, which would awaken in the soul the patriotic fervor and throw a flame of light into the hearts from which the faith of the past, which is the starting point for the work of the present and the future. »<sup>7</sup>

«Almost all studies and research on the Algerian theater agree that the period of the twenties of the last century is considered the actual and real beginning of the Algerian theater, but the first beginnings of the theatrical acting movement were before this date». <sup>8</sup>

That is why we find the pioneers of the Algerian theater, in this period, relied in their establishment of the identity of the Algerian theater, on the one hand, on the use of the popular heritage, and the use of the third language – the colloquial language – on the other, because it is a language close to the popular consciousness, understood and interacted with the public.

The Algerian theater was not linked in its founding beginnings to the effects of friction between it and the French theater, which existed and prospered in Algeria, but on the contrary, the Algerian elite took a position of objection and boycott it despite its familiarity with it, as the French colonialism “in its settlement project, as he confirms (Saad Allah Abu al-Qasim), has brought several French theatrical groups, produced dozens of performances, including what is inspired by the Algerian reality, and rushed to build municipal theaters in major Algerian cities such as the capital, Oran, Constantine, Annaba, Skikda and others Especially since the occupation administration when it built the theater (Opera House) in 1850 was the

first show hosted by this house on September 29, 1853, was about the subject of the French occupation of Algeria, and this makes us claim that the emergence of the Algerian theater contributed to it effects beyond the logic of contradiction and conflict between the colonizer and the colonized .» <sup>9</sup>

«In this period, the Arabic-speaking theater practice appeared in Algeria, on the Aristotelian format, and in 1921 an Egyptian band led by George White came to Algeria, which performed two plays in classical Arabic» <sup>10</sup>

And many of the theatrical writings, in this period were subjected to terrible failure, as the audience refrained from watching the theatrical performances despite the propaganda that was promoting its presence, both plays (Salahuddin Ayyub) and (Arab Revolutions) failed terribly despite that were performed by the Egyptian theater group, led by George White.

Although this group received welcome and attention from the Maghreb countries, especially in Tunisia and Tripoli, and its influence in the field of theatrical art, it could not leave its mark in the Algerian theater due to the standard language used in acting and was difficult to understand at the time to the Algerian audience.

Despite the importance of these theatrical experiences, in the classical Arabic language, many researchers consider that they failed to attract the audience to remain limited to the educated category in Arabic, which made the Algerian theater live a period of stagnation<sup>11</sup>.

The theater, which speaks the classical Arabic language, even if it did not meet the original taste and traditions of the popular uneducated masses, has not

disappeared, but has still existed, and has flourished at the level of the free schools of the Association of Muslim scholars, which in religious events presented plays composed by the teachers of these schools and the representation of students. or at the level of associations and movements that were established at the time, such as the Islamic Scouting Movement according to Saad Allah, the period between (1937-1939) represented at least fifteen plays, between schools and others This includes the play (Bilal) by Mohammed Al-Eid Al-Khalifa, (Dajjalon) by Mohammed Al-Najjar, and (Religious Mission) by Mohammed bin Abed Al-Jilali and (Magician despite him) to Mahyiddine Bachtarzi <sup>12</sup>

According to Abu al-Qasim Saad Allah, "Societies and clubs are a social phenomenon that indicates maturity and responsiveness to the requirements of modern civil life" In this statement what expresses exactly the contradiction, in which the theatrical writings occurred at that time, as some of its writers admitted that those plays presented by George White (1921), it was the hole through which the first Algerian theatrical arcades saw the light, where some of the intellectual bourgeois and some students gathered, and tried to educate the public and develop its theatrical flair, as they founded the Association (the polite) on (April 5, 1921) and headed by Ali Sharif al-Taher, to be considered later, the first beginnings of the Algerian play that was influenced in its upbringing by the Oriental Arab theater and its passion in weaving the themes of its plays from the historical heritage. <sup>13</sup>

The Algerian theater's connection to the historical heritage of nations and peoples has made it a force for mobilizing and sensitizing the Algerian people to the need

for military engagement, commitment to the Algerian national issue, to reject oppression in all its forms, and support the struggle against French colonialism.

Algerian playwrights have led the scene of struggle by presenting plays and representations with clear national positions on stage "to combat French colonialism through language and gestures, or criticism of negative historical figures. <sup>14</sup>

The anti-colonial trend has bound the Algerian theater as it has been employed to serve national issues, and this has prompted the French authority to take several measures and positions to prevent Algerian theatrical activity, by besieging Algerian playwrights, preventing them from expressing and confiscating their theatrical works, and closing the Arab theater by the colonial administration in (1956).

The period (1938-1945), that is the Second World War, is a starting point and a transformation for the Algerian theater, where history formed its raw material, it derived its themes, characters, and events of its plays, and went to bring heroes to emulate them, to form the historical heritage in this period, one of the most important castles of the resistance. it was used by Algerian dramatists to educate the people about the necessity of the revolution and to eliminate the brutal French colonizer who stood by these developments, trying to demolish the Algerian personality and abolish its culture, customs, and history, which is characterized by momentum, diversity and wealth.

Despite all these tragic circumstances, the Algerian theater was "on the level of those events at which the national consciousness of the Algerian people reached its peak." <sup>15</sup>

Hence, the Algerian theater has become important, prestigious and is taking serious and new steps, and we find many playwrights who have taken this path, and perhaps one of the first two races to it " Ahmed Tawfiq Almadani" in his play " Hannibal ", which was shown for the first time, on the Opera Theatre, in Algiers, day and night on April 9, 1948,"<sup>16</sup> and the date of the presentation of this play is close to coinciding with a painful station embedded in the history of Algerians and humanity, which killed more than forty-five (45) thousand unarmed martyrs, killed by the French colonial, which demonstrated its power, in an attempt to push the Algerians to bury their hopes for independence.

It is known that from the intensity of the violence and cruelty of these massacres, the writer Ahmed Tawfiq sought to melt the ice and break the silence, which is not the available solution especially at this sensitive stage to form this metaphor a solid ground for this theatrical work. expressed by the scenes of the hero "Hannibal ", in which the writer translated some of the sufferings of the Algerians, he began to depict the brutality of the French occupation, through the restoration of the brutality of the Roman Empire, " to awaken the determination of the Algerian people to prepare for the battle of liberation".<sup>17</sup>

There are a lot of scenes where we see the hero " Hannibal " as he charges his army and people to resist, confront, and fight the Romans relentlessly.

" Hannibal: Raise your heads, and beware that you let despair take over your hearts, that the lives of individuals are years, and the lives of Nations are generations and generations, and if our hopes are disappointed today, our hopes will inevitably be realized tomorrow, and the unity of the

nation, and strengthen ranks, and believe that the hour of salvation is coming."<sup>18</sup>

The writer Ahmed Tawfiq does not stop there, using history politically to serve the purposes of the struggle of the Algerian people against the French occupation, but he sought to provide a comprehensive vision of the revolutionary and resistance movements to ignite the armed revolution by keen on unity, rejecting defections, uniting the ranks of the fighters and paying attention to the intrigues of the Jews. these indications are clear by alerting the hero " Hannibal " king (Antichelus) to the danger of the Jews and their intrigues, where he advises him saying: "But do not forget, my Lord, that a great danger awaits you, from the south, the Jews are there waiting for you circles, and they have ambitions that have no limit, then they do not forget. if the news of this defeat reaches them, they start to attack the Kingdom from behind, so send in the division of Commander Essam, who is keen on the Levant, to strike their pegs on the land of Judah, which stands in the way and separates the country in two parts."<sup>19</sup>

As the student of the play " Hannibal " by Ahmed Tawfiq Almadani, it is clear to him through its four chapters, the employment of the old Moroccan history, where the writer evoked the figure of the famous Carthaginian leader " Hannibal " in the period from his assumption of power in Cartagena until his death by drinking poison, as an alternative to being alive among his Roman enemies.

To remain the name " Hannibal " in the world is an example of the highest ideals in the championship outstanding intelligence, and good politics and planning, it is from the point of view of the writer of the most famous heroes of war in the world, old and new, with

his death, a page of glory, heroism and steadfastness on the right principle was closed for the sake of the homeland and freedom, the like of which history has never known and will never know<sup>20</sup>.

Thus, the historical hero of the theater, a symbolic and artistic figure, performs extraordinary deeds that reach the level of perfection and in this way seems capable of everything, "he never knows defeat, and there is no victory except at his hand, and his life is a series of great deeds and strange adventures that terrorize listeners. Thus the knight of the people becomes one of the brave of his time, and victory can be achieved only by his hand and by his life a series of great deeds, which terrorize the listeners. Thus he becomes the knight of the tribe and one of the brave in his time, victory is achieved only by him, and a virtue is issued only by him. " <sup>21</sup>

The play " Yoogharta" by Abdurrahman Madawi, is the second historical play in terms of evoking the image of the hero who is emulated, and the second play in terms of its inspiration for Algerian history in its depth of Numidi, and in terms of its call to resist his slavery French destruction. <sup>22</sup>

The events of this translation, which was written in 1952, in five chapters, to imagine the struggle of the Numdines led by (Yoghrata) against the Roman occupation, where the evoking of history and its famous figures, was a reaction and a response to the French colonial plans, which sought to obliterate the identity of the Algerian people and eliminate its elements and replace them with the history and civilization of France.

Therefore, both plays are historical and their aim is purely political libertarian,

the authors chose from the subject of the conflict " Hannibal " and " Yogharta " with the Romans, which serves the cause of the struggle of the Algerian people against the French occupation.

The hero in " Yughurata " does not give up nor retreat from his only goal, which was to unite Numidia, a quest rejected by the Roman Empire, which wants to keep Numidia scattered and conflicted, because it serves its interests.

Despite the suffering of the hero " Yoghrata " and being betrayed by the closest people to him, and the abstention (Bocus) from supplying him with weapons and the lack of followers, and despite his suffering and difficulty in reaching his goal, he offers great sacrifices, instead of retreating from his goal or surrendering to his enemy.

This suffering, which the play depicts, reflects the military and political conflicts that Algeria witnessed before the outbreak of the armed liberation revolution, which he referred to by devoting a whole scene to the hero " Yoghrta" as he appeals to his homeland:

"Poor you, my town.....whenever you look up to rise, you find those who oppose you, from among your children, not what your enemies have hurt you at all, but what has hurt you except the disobedience of your leading sons, I do not know if this is a judgment of fate or the bad luck, your nature or your pure intention, my country, I have stuck with men's morals whenever you have to stick to the morals of wolves and monsters." <sup>23</sup>

He also expressed this inaction, "by some Algerian leaders, who argued that the Algerian people are not ready to carry out the task of liberating the homeland, through a

dialog (Yograta) to (Mazig) expressing his anger at the objection of (Fraxin) the chief notary of his support, " the same arbitrary method was used almost by the Romans and the French together, and the same position was taken by the Algerian people against the occupation, which is the position of resistance and steadfastness, and there is another similarity not less than the previous one: the Algerian people divided against themselves in the two Covenants, and it was the radical revolutionaries, and the defeatist moderates, and sometimes enemy collaborators.<sup>24</sup>

**Yoghorta says:**

«The power of the Rome's friendship? The idiot depends on the friendship of Rome..... I make people know what the honeyed smile of the Romans implies..... I knew them in Spain as monsters, Bromakhantha, and in Africa as thieves..... Friendship of Rome..... Rome expresses to us its friendship by taking over our land, and its men prevalence their impact in every village and setting them on an inch of our land like a fire which will consume our whole soil, whoever wishes to preserve the friendship of Rome..... it is necessary to throw a dagger on the table (or he throws a bundle of a dirham) and the sheik (Pharaksin) knows this and knows it with certainty, and all its tusks are nothing but ashes thrown into the eyes of the people for their illusion.<sup>25</sup>

It is clear from the in-depth study of the two plays - the play " Hannibal" by Ahmed Tawfik Madani and the play " Yoghorta " by Abdurrahman Madawi, that the two plays have hidden connotations, as they meet and seek a common noble national goal, which is to instill the principles of the revolution in the minds of Algerian youth, to achieve liberation. The patriotic spirit that

grapples with tyranny is emboldened in both plays.

The two plays genuinely reflect the realities of Algerians, in the 1950s, because the authors' goal is beyond the limits of invoking these heroic figures, who offer many utopian solutions to many issues. Or praise it, as they revived these bright pages of the nation's history and took it as a means of art. or a mask to present a political vision of the Algerian people's attitude towards French occupation This is illustrated by the author's choice of certain historical stations, from the life of the heroes. "Yogarta" and "Hannibal" are woven into theatrical art to charge the recipient with hatred and resistance to the occupiers, through the entire chapters of the two plays, by connecting the Algerian people to their past bringing them down and provoking them.

The writer Ahmed Tufiq al-Madani, who reformed Moroccan history «and selected a national hero, fought ruthlessly against Rome's ambitions». And the writer Abdul Rahman Al-Madawi conjured the character of the hero "Yogarta", to mention most of the historical incidents relating to the ancient Roman occupation of Algeria, to provide a new interpretation of history, that the resistance of the Algerian people is not a new demand, but a phenomenon that has been rooted in the past.

This is evidenced by the saying of Yogarta, while he was in captivity addressing his enemies, " soon there will be another Yogarta for Africa because Africa does not have a star in her orientale only, will be blown away by another star in her Morocco. for her, only in her brightness and another star has appeared for her in her West .....Woe to the colonists ..... Woe to the Roughnecks..... Woe to the hypocrites, the



traitors, "26 and is also evidenced by Hannibal's conversation with his ministers, refusing to surrender and bowing," Our mothers have born us free, we are not content to live the life of slaves, and what is the value of the lower life, comrades, if life is not pride, honor, and dignity?"

These excerpts are nothing but libertarian political messages, immortal in the pages of Algerian history for generations rich in revolutionary values, which call for self-sacrifice and forgetfulness, for the sake of freedom and pride in the homeland, to take the right path and foresee a future in which it sees its desired horizon.

Thus, "historical play contributed to national sentiment and the people's call for revolution and freedom from the domination of colonial rule", through the awareness of the writers of this stage of the various heritage elements inspired by the creative theatre and its re-projection of the needs inherent in society, which gave the dramatic work its strength and artistic significance.

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