CHAPTER 3

FRENCH EDUCATION AND ITS IMPACT ON SOCIAL STRUCTURE
Maghreb society has considerable historical depth and has been subjected to a number of external influences. Fundamentally, Berber society in cultural and racial terms, was organised around the traditions of extended family, clan, and tribe and was adapted to a rural rather than an urban setting before the arrival of the Arabs and, later, the French (Abun-Nasr, 1987). However, an identifiable modern class structure began to shape during the colonial period. Despite the country's commitment to egalitarian ideals this structure has undergone further differentiation in the period since independence. In this social transformation of the Maghreb society the role of French education cannot be underestimated.

Due to the French colonialism in the region the social structure of the Maghrebian countries underwent a gradual social change, be it social stratification of the society, the family structure, family values, social practices, political culture or the emergence of civil society.

The Traditional Maghreb Society

In 1830, before the coming of the French, during the Ottoman period, the people were divided among a few ancient cities and a sparsely settled countryside where subsistence farmers and nomadic herdsmen lived in small, ethnically homogeneous groups. Although rural patterns of social organization had many common features, some differences existed between Arabs and Berbers, and between nomads and settled cultivators. The groups did not form a cohesive social class because individual behaviour and action were circumscribed by the framework of tribe or clan (Abun-Nasr, 1987; Ilahiane, 2006).

During this period, before the coming of the French, the concentration of urban population was very small. The cities were the location of the principal mosques, and the major sharia (Islamic law) courts and institutions of higher Islamic learning. Various Islamic legal schools, such as the Hanafi and Maliki as well as the Ibadi schools also had their mosques in the cities. In addition, cities had public baths and markets, where goods coming from various parts of the world were traded.
Local military forces were housed in citadels that towered over urban centres. The houses and administrative offices of the ruling elite were also located in some of the principal cities of Algeria and Tunisia. The cities were divided into quarters that were self-contained and self-sufficient. The quarters were closed off at night and during the time of crises for the security, and their own leading citizens used to manage the internal affairs of the quarters (Abun-Nasr, 1987).

The heterogeneous population of the cities included men of mixed Turkish and native tribal descent called Kouloughli Moors, (a term coined by the French to refer to descendants of Andalusian refugees) the Christian slaves from around the Mediterranean captured by Barbary Coast pirates, and African slaves who worked as labourers and domestics. The cities also had small Jewish communities that became more important under the French colonial system. Many cities had small groups of Mzab who owned grocery and butcher shops and operated the public baths, and Kabyles who came briefly to the cities before returning to their areas of origin (Alwan, 1959).

Social Organisation: Family and Kinship

In the rural areas, social organization depended primarily on kinship ties. The basic kinship unit was the ayla, a small lineage whose members claimed descent through males from a common grandfather or great-grandfather. The male members of such a group maintained mutual economic obligations, and recognized a form of collective ownership of pastoral or agricultural lands. Several ayla formed the larger lineage, whose members traced their origin to a more remote male ancestor. Beyond these lineages were the patrilineal clans called adhrum by the Kabyles and firq by the Arabs, in which kinship was assumed and the links between individuals and families were close.

The largest units consisted of tribes that were aggregations of clans claiming common or related ancestors or of clans brought together by the force of circumstance. Sharing a common territory, name, and way of life, member units of a tribe, particularly among the Berbers, had little political cohesion but tended to accept the authority of a chief when faced with the danger of alien conquest or subjugation. Tribal confederations were
common before the nineteenth century, but rare in the modern era under the French influence (Ageron, 1980).

Among settled and nomadic Arab groups, tribes and their components were arranged along a gradient of social prestige. The standing of an individual depended on membership in a ranked group and tribal rank depended on the standing of the highest ranking lineage of each tribe. The *shurfa* (nobles allegedly descended from the Prophet Muhammad) and *marabouts*, venerated for their spiritual power, held the highest ranks. For mutual interest of all the clans affairs were administered by the clan heads under the leadership of a *qaid* (tribal chief), who exercised nearly absolute authority. The settled tribal groups were democratic, social and egalitarian. A *jamaa* composed of all adult males used to govern the community, an aggregation of localized clans consisting of a cluster of hamlets or a village inhabited by a single clan (Abun-Nasr, 1987).

The kind of social stratification that is found in Arab groups did not exist in Berber villages. The typical Kabyle villages in the Aurès Mountains and the Atlas around Blida were always built above cultivated lands, on or close to mountain tops. They were enclosed by walls with doors that opened inward. The slopes were often terraced to allow the Kabyles to cultivate olive and fruit orchards and to grow wheat and barley. The animals kept by the Kabyles grazed on the vegetation that grew on rocky slopes which were unsuitable for agriculture.

French settlement and education brought far-reaching social changes. French took over the economic and political life of the country, monopolizing professional, large-scale commercial and administrative activities, exploiting agricultural and other resources of the land. The small *Maghrebian* middle class consisting of urban merchants and city artisans were squeezed out, and landowners of the countryside were dispossessed (Montagne, 1973).

The European population in *Maghreb* increased rapidly in the nineteenth century, more than quadrupling from 26,987 in the early 1840s to 125,963 a decade later, and reaching almost 2 million by the turn of the century of which the French were largest in number. This population growth was coupled with the appropriation of cultivated and pastoral
lands by colonials, which increased sharply in the early twentieth century. It created tremendous pressures on the cultivable land.

Displaced villagers and tribesmen flocked to towns and cities, where they added to an unskilled labour mass, ill-adapted to industrial work, scorned by Europeans, and isolated from the kinship units that had formerly given them security and a sense of solidarity (Wingrove, 2005). This urban movement increased after World War I and World War II. At the same time, large numbers of Maghrebians migrated to France in search of work. The Berbers were the principal migrants. During the 1950s, as many as 10 percent of the people of Kabyles were working in France at any given time and even larger numbers were working in cities of the Tell.

Europeans constituted a separate sector in the Maghreb society, and the European-Maghrebian dichotomy was the region's basic social division. The settlers who came to Maghreb in the nineteenth century included not only French but also large numbers of Italians and Spaniards, who could not find work in their home countries and came in search of new opportunities. The expression pieds noirs (black feet), used to refer to settlers, was allegedly based on the barefoot condition of many of the impoverished European settlers (Confer, 1966).

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

In the early twentieth century, a new Maghrebian merchant group began to intermarry the old upper-stratum families. Their children were educated in French schools, at home or in France, to become a new Western-oriented elite composed of lawyers, physicians, pharmacists, teachers, administrators, and a small scattering of political leaders. The opportunity for social mobility for these Westernized population, or évolutés, however, remained extremely limited. On the eve of the revolution, only a scattering of jobs
requiring professional or technical skills were held by Maghrebian those who were educated in French and had some experiences during French rule (Confer, 1966; Juin, 1957).

The peasant migrants to the cities tended to gather in separate quarters according to their ethnic origin, and certain people became associated with specific occupations. But overcrowding and housing shortages often forced persons of a given tribe or village to scatter throughout a city. Hence the solidarity of migrant groups decreased. Nevertheless, many migrants retained contact with family members. Nomadic clans no longer holding sufficient flocks or territory were obliged to accept the humiliation of sedentary existence.

The process of sedentarisation usually started with the settling of a few nomadic families on the outskirts of a town with which they had maintained trading relations. Accepted eventually as part of the community the original clan inhabitants and the former nomads often assumed as their own one of the traditional ancestors or marabouts of the community. Residential propinquity usually did not, however, overcome the social distance between traditional cultivators and former herders because each looked down upon each other.

The Status of Women

The Maghrebian society during the Arab rule was a patriarchal society where women had almost no authority in family or outside matters. During colonization, regions and local communities applied their own versions of Islamic law where women were segregated from mainstream roles. The French largely left the substance of family law untouched in part because they feared violent reactions to any alteration of the established family and kinship/ traditional norms.

Although women had more freedom in some regions than in others, on the whole, rules and practices placed them under the control of male relatives and husbands. There was no legal minimum age for marriage, which left room for child marriages. A woman’s consent was not required during the marriage ceremony. Consent to marriage was
expressed by a matrimonial guardian, typically the father, and it was his consent (not the bride's) that made the marriage valid.

Polygamy was legal, where a man was allowed in principle to marry as many as four wives, although there were very few men who had the financial resources necessary to support several wives and their children. The legality of polygamy remained a constant threat for women. Divorce was unequal between men and women. A man could terminate the marriage at will by "repudiating" his wife without court proceedings.

A woman could obtain a divorce by appealing to a religious judge and proving that she had been harmed in the marriage. As in other parts of the Islamic world, women had the right to own property and to continue to do so after marriage. Their individual property did not become part of the couple's common assets, which gave women of means a measure of security. Inheritance was unequal, however, in that the share of a woman was usually half that of a man in a similar situation.

The Economy

Maghreb region is historically an agricultural area, and agriculture now absorbs majority of the labour force. Rain-fed agriculture dominates and concentrates on wheat, olives, and animal husbandry. Wheat is mostly used domestically, and Tunisian region is a major world producer of olive oil. Animal husbandry for domestic consumption was significant, especially sheep and goats, but also cattle in the north and camels in the south. Citrus and other tree crops were produced both under rain-fed and irrigated conditions. Only very small portion of the arable land were irrigated and were used to grow the full range of crops, but perhaps is most typically used for vegetables and other garden crops. Dates are grown in irrigated oases.

Most aspects of life in Maghreb have been monetized apart from some subsistence farming. Subsistence farmers can be recognized because they cultivate a variety of crops, while market-oriented farmers concentrate on a few. Most farmers expect to sell their crops and buy their needs. The same applies to craftsmen and other occupations. Rural Tunisia is covered by an interlocking network of weekly markets that provide basic
consumption goods to the rural population, and serve as collecting points for animals and other products. Among the very poor are self-employed street vendors, market traders, and others in the lower levels of the informal sector.

Traditional Maghrebian cuisine reflects the taste of local agriculture. It stresses on wheat, in the form of bread or couscous, olives and olive oil, meat (above all, mutton), fruit, and vegetables. Couscous (semolina wheat prepared with a stew of meat and vegetables) is the national dish. Sweet or colourful dishes symbolized religious holidays, usually in addition to couscous. Animals are slaughtered for religious gatherings, and the meat is shared among the participants as a symbol of togetherness.

Against this general background of social transformation in the Maghrebian society, it would be useful to assess the impact of French education on select aspects of social structure, namely marriage, family and kinship, status of women, social stratification, religion, political culture and civil society. These institutions represent both micro and macro aspects of social structure of the Maghrebian society.

**Social Stratification**

Maghrebian society is marked by class distinctions, with considerable upward mobility and fuzzy class awareness. Class distinctions based on wealth are the most apparent, with enormous differences between the wealthy bourgeoisie living in the affluent suburbs of cities and the rural and urban poor. Wealth in one generation led to improved education in the next. Status through ancestry was relatively unimportant. The majority of native Maghrebi ans are poor. Those who are better off are almost always Arabs, and tend to be urban and well educated (Stone, 1997). The upper classes generally look down not just upon the Berbers, but also upon rural, semi-nomadic Arabs who speak a different dialect. However, most Algerians are racially a mix of Arab and Berber, and variations in skin tone and hair colour are not reflected in their social standing.
Table 3.1: Urbanisation in North African Countries, 1970-1992

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<td>Algeria</td>
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<td>Morocco</td>
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A wide gap existed between the very rich and the very poor. A strong belief in fatalism that things are meant to be exactly as they are, and the Islamic principal of giving to those in need lends to the acceptance of social and economic inequality. At the top level of the class system exists the rich and royal family, members of the government, and a group of very wealthy Moroccans who do not work. Wholesale merchants and the owners of large manufacturing, industrial, or international trading companies join them. The upper class often claims to be Arab, although there are as few pure Arabs as there are pure Berbers remaining. An upper middle and middle class is comprised of professionals, mostly educated in Europe (Knauss, 1987).

Another group, called Sherfa, are those who claim descent from the prophet Muhammad. Sherfa typically do not work, and those who have not inherited wealth live off the alms of others. A relatively new class referred to as the Muhajerin or emigrants live and work abroad, in order to send their wages back to support their families in native countries. Many of the Muhajerin are not likely to ever return to their native country. Berber farmers in the countryside have little access to the education and social climbing available to those in larger cities. Most remain poor and are looked down upon due to lack of their eligibility for good jobs where as Jews and other foreigners generally prosper as they are French educated and exposed to western culture. They hold an upper stratum of the Maghrebian society (Ilahiane, 2006).
The Elites

French departure from the region left a vacuum in the upper branch of the administration, which gave birth to the new strata in the Maghrebian society. These elites occupied the vacant position on high ranks as they were the small proportion of the Maghrebian native population who were French educated.

Historically, the elite enjoyed its greatest pre-eminence under the socialist regime in the region, with its emphasis on heavy industrialisation. The elite includes civil service employees, the technocratic top personnel in the state's major nationalised industries and enterprises (e.g., the National Company for Research, Production, Transportation, Processing, and Commercialisation of Hydrocarbons and the National Company for Electricity and Gas), and economic and financial planners responsible for the national development programme. Together these elite groups are responsible for planning, developing, focusing, and administering Maghreb's economic and industrial sector (Hermassi, 1972).

In Algeria, having expanded significantly under Boumediene, this sector contracted substantially with the economic liberalisation under Benjedid, although it remained a vital force and, historically, the most efficient and productive sector of the national elite. Because personal contacts and privileged access to capital account for personal status and class in Algeria and Tunisia, the administrative elite and its networks represent a major factor in the political environment. The administrative elites, although generally less politically visible than the party and military elites, can directly influence development by managing programmes linked to economic growth and political stability.

Since the late 1980s, the administrative elite has provided a pool of technocrats for the staff of both the civilian government and the military presidency, which rely heavily on them in modernising country's economy. At the same time, the administrative elite has increasingly been plagued by factionalism.

The other major elements of the elite consist of the FLN and the military. Within the FLN, the Party Congress is the highest political organ. It consists of national delegates,
representatives from the various mass associations and professional unions, local and regional elected officials, APN deputies, and military leaders. The congress determines general party policy, adopts and revises party statutes, and elects both the secretary general of the party and its Central Committee. The Central Committee, which is divided into various commissions, is an elected assembly that serves only during recesses of the Party Congress (Zartman, 1991).

The military, consisting primarily of the People's National Army (Armée Nationale Populaire – NP), has remained a constant force in Algerian politics, at times quite visible, at times more subtle. The military's most potent source of power emanates from its monopoly of the coercive instruments of force. Equally significant, however, is the military's symbolic role as "guardian of the revolution" and guarantor of state stability. Its technical and administrative skills have been critical to Algeria's political and economic development. A certain domestic prestige stems from the military's influential role in regional and international affairs. The military is also very active in local and provincial affairs. Army officials are represented on all major political institutions and frequently have more influence in regional administration than do the civilian provincial governors.

Historically, the army has interfered only when conditions "necessitated" military intervention to ensure the security of the state. In January 1992, only days away from national legislative elections that were likely to return a sweeping Islamist victory, the military resurfaced politically in a highly visible manner. Anticipating what the armed forces interpreted to be a "grave threat" to the secular interests and political stability of the state and defying the apparent government and national volition, the military demonstrated that it alone would determine the course of politics in the region.

**French Language and Social Stratification**

The French education has been one of the major determinants for the class structure of the Maghreb society. The number of languages spoken and the proficiency acquired are primary identifiers of social class in the region. Well-spoken French is perceived as a characteristic of a refined, sophisticated individual. The inability to know the French
language usually signifies a lack of education. Fluency in Arabic is accepted, and rather expected of any respectable individual, while those who speak only Berber dialects are looked down upon. (Ilahiane, 2006)

Other symbols of status are headgear and clothing. Maghrebian have occasion to wear both traditional and Western clothing, therefore it is not the style of the clothes, but rather the quality of what is being worn that symbolizes one's status. For example, the jellaba, the traditional one-piece hooded garment worn by both men and women, comes in many varieties (Nydell, 1996). Those of a higher class have tailor made with intricate needlework and fine fabric. The jellaba is also available at corner shops at a much lower quality. Among the rural poor a knit cap is worn, which would never be placed on the head of an upper- or middle-class man. Turbans worn by Berber men are often white while those of Arab men are orange. A more traditional, perhaps ceremonial, hat is the fez, worn by older upper-class men.

Women who wish to show that they are Islamic fundamentalist cover their heads to the hairline with a scarf or the hood of the jellaba when in public. Young women are increasingly challenging traditions such as this, some even daring to sit in public cafés and smoke cigarettes with uncovered heads.

In the cities, most men, and some younger women, now wear European-style clothing. The traditional garb is a white woollen cloak, called a gandoura, worn over a long cotton shirt. A cape called a burnous is sometimes draped over the shoulders; it is made of linen for the summer and wool for the winter. Sometimes the burnous is plain, or sometimes it is adorned with fancy embroidery, indicating the wealth of the wearer. Women's clothing is similar, although more complete in its coverage. The haik drapes them from head to foot, and is worn over loose pants, which are gathered at the ankle. Tuareg men can be distinguished by the length of indigo cloth they wear, wrapped around the head in a turban, extending over their robes, and covering them completely with the exception of their eyes. The symbols of social stratification are basically in style and level of consumption.
Food for Daily Existence and the Social Etiquette

Food consumption is one of the most important cultural aspects of any region or country. It reflects the tastes of the various strata of society and cultural ethos of the region. Traditional *Maghrebian* cuisine highlights the local agriculture of the region as well. It stresses on wheat, in the form of bread or couscous (as locally named), olives and olive oil, meat (above all, mutton), fruit, and vegetables. The common dish throughout the region is *couscous*, steamed semolina wheat served with lamb or chicken, cooked vegetables, and gravy. *Couscous* (semolina wheat prepared with a stew of meat and vegetables) is usually topped with mutton, veal, or beef and a variety of vegetables such as tomatoes, turnips, and pimentos. It is served with soup, *harira*, is a thick paste that comes in many varieties, although it is classically made from water, bouillon, beef or mutton, onions, saffron, walnuts, and salt.

It is eaten by all sectors of society, and may be referred to as the national dish of all the three *Maghrebian* countries. Most of the people eat it daily in simple forms with *harira* (soup), but it is served in more complex forms for celebrations according to the financial status of the individual. But in Algeria *ta'am*, translates as "food" is the basic diet. Alternatively, couscous can be served sweet, flavoured with honey, cinnamon, or almonds. Lamb also is popular, and often is prepared over an open fire and served with bread. This dish is called *mechoui*. Other common foods are *chorba*, a spicy soup; *dolma*, a mixture of tomatoes and peppers, and *bourek*, a specialty of Algiers consisting of mincemeat with onions and fried eggs, rolled and fried in batter. The traditional Berber meal among the poorer people is a cake made of mixed grains and a drink mixed together from crushed goat cheese, dates, and water.

As the colonial culture is quite visible in the daily life of the *Maghrebian* population the fooding habits has also been affected, specially of those who are exposed to French culture through French education. Bread with stew is a growing alternative. Part of the region near the coast eat a lot of seafood, and eggs are also common. Breakfast in Morocco may consist of bread served with olive oil or butter, and coffee or mint tea. A light dinner of *harira* soup and bread is commonly eaten in the evening. Strong black
coffee and sweetened mint tea are popular in the region, as well as apricot or other sweetened fruit juices. Laban also is drunk, a mixture of yogurt and water with mint leaves for flavouring. Cakes and desserts made of fruits and marzipan, a sweet almond paste, are sold in pastry shops and on the streets. Imported foods that are not typically part of the traditional. Moroccan diet is available in major cities at French-style street markets. (Wolfert, Paula, 1987)

Most of the Maghrebian tends to eat in family groups at home, and restaurants are common in tourist areas and for travellers. As a part of common practice the schools and businesses close at noon each day for two to three hours for a midday meal. In the countryside, tea is served in preference to the urban coffee (Hargraves, 2005; Wolfert, Paula, 1987). The people also fasted from dawn to dark during the month of Ramadan. Though grapes are grown in the region and wine is produced, since it is forbidden by the Islamic religion alcohol is not widely consumed here.

The French exercised a great deal of influence on the social etiquette in the Maghreb region. In rural areas people carry on their own customs and they also very often mix them with the western ones. Though this cultural homogeneity is not visible that much in the rural areas but it is dominant in the urban city centres where people are French educated and exposed to modern culture.

Tunisians are relatively egalitarian in their interpersonal relations compared to Algeria and Morocco, but there is a strong sense of etiquette. When greeting one another Moroccans usually shake hands and touch their heart to show personal warmth. Greetings are lengthy and involving, including inquiries into health and family. Social interactions are much more common among members of the same gender than between men and women. People are supposed to be addressed respectfully. A man should not show too much curiosity towards the women in his friend's family, and may not even know their names. In some cases, men do not visit each other's homes because the women would inevitably be present. Some people with a sense of their own status do not visit those they consider lower in rank. These rules are however, relaxed in the urbanised French educated upper classes.
Segregation of the sexes is very important outside the home. Only very modern, westernised native women influenced by French education and culture are active in public life. Modesty codes for women prevail in some areas of the region. In the Berber countryside, the appearance of women in public may be slightly more common than in major cities as they are either Berbers, who still practice their traditional culture or they are French educated population who are exposed to modern culture.

In traditional urban society, women were supposed to be circumspect in their behaviour. They were supposed to limit trips outside the house to certain culturally approved destinations, such as the public bath or the tombs of their relatives in the cemetery. In certain sectors of Tunisian urban society, women cover head and body in public with a rectangular white cloth, the safsari. Rural women follow different dress practices, but may adopt urban forms on visits to the city. These older practices are rarer now, and the "modern" veil has been officially discouraged, so there is no common dress code throughout the region (Wolfert, Paula, 1987; Labidi Lilia, 1989).

Men are also supposed to show respect for each other. Traditionally, elders are respected and honoured by the entire community. A man is not supposed to smoke in front of his father, and he is not supposed to carry his own child in the presence of his father. Traditional male dress included loose trousers and shirt, with perhaps a robe over that, and a red-felt skullcap (Hargraves, 1999).

Again, practices are now less uniform than in the past, with the differences reflecting degrees of modernity, or level of education and income (Hargraves, 1999). These differences are not reflected only by the individuals but also from the basic component of the society which is family.

**Social Institutions**

The French education has not only broken the traditional tribal structure of the *Maghreb* region but has also redefined the traditional role of individuals in a family. Though the traditional social/tribal structure of the society was disrupted by the displacement process
after the coming of the French in the region, the tradition of strong family life still dominated most areas of the country until the early 1990s. A basic social principle affecting both the individual and the family was a kind of division between the sexes that made gender one of the most important determinants of social status. Seclusion of women was not universally practised, but men and women constituted largely separate societies in public life. In private they were bound by the same culture, values, traditions, and beliefs and the same closeness between generations found in other parts of the West Asia.

Most of the liberal leaders who held an important position in the country after independence were either French educated or had served under the French government. The War of Independence and the impetus given to education by the socialist governments reflects the affect of French education and social exposure of these leaders under the French in their policy making. Ahmed Ben Bella, Boumediene, Bendjedid, Mohammed V, and Ben Ali brought about some changes in the government's policy which directly or indirectly augmented the position of women in Maghrebian society. Girls were sent to school in large numbers; later, many continued their studies in university and then pursued professional lives, especially in urban centres (Anderson, 1986).

**The Household and the roles of Men and Women**

Before independence the basic Maghrebian family unit, particularly in the countryside, was the extended family consisting of grandparents, their married sons and families, unmarried sons, daughters if unmarried or if divorced or widowed with their children, and occasionally other related adults. The structure of the family was patriarchal and patrilineal, with the senior male member making all major decisions affecting family welfare, dividing land and work assignments, and representing it in dealings with outsiders. Each married couple usually had a separate room opening onto the family courtyard and prepared meals separately. Women spent their lives under male authority—first that of their fathers, then of their husbands—and were expected to devote themselves entirely to the activities of the home. Children were raised by all members of the group, who passed on to them the concept and value of family solidarity.
Members of a single patrilineage lived in one compound and shared the work on the family's common land. The lineage expressed solidarity by adhering to a code of honour that obligated members to provide aid to relatives in need and even in the clinging together of members who had gone to the city to find work. Among Berber groups, the honour and wealth of the lineage were so important that blood revenge was justified in their defence.

Since independence there has been a trend toward smaller family units consisting only of a husband and wife and their unmarried children. Upon marriage a young man who can afford to do so sets up a household for himself and his bride, and on the death of the head of an extended family, male members and their dependent break off into separate households.

The trend toward the smaller nuclear family has affected the extended family structure in both urban and rural areas, although it is more pronounced in the former. The nuclear family is fast becoming the prevalent family structure. This change has occurred gradually in response to many factors, including French education which further led to urbanisation and the development of wage labour. In the early 1990s, younger and better-educated Maghrebian tended to favour smaller families than did previous generations. They preferred to live in separate quarters, have fewer children, and run their lives independently. Familial ties of loyalty and respect were not in question, although they tended to loosen. Rather, family relationships were rearranged with respect to living space and decision making.

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

In Maghreb family, as in the rest of the West Asia, women are traditionally regarded as weaker than men in mind, body, and spirit. The honour of the family is supposed to depend largely on the conduct of their women. Consequently, women are expected to be decorous, modest, and discreet. The slightest implication of impropriety, especially if publicly acknowledged, can damage the family's honour. Female virginity before marriage and fidelity afterward are considered essential to the maintenance of family honour. If they discover a transgression, men are traditionally bound to punish the offending woman. Girls are brought up to believe that they are inferior to men and must cater to them, and boys are taught to believe that they are entitled to the care and solicitude of women (Labidi, 1989).

Other than other social issues, marriage was one, which was criticised and checked by the French for its illegal practice of child marriage. The French as well as the French educated natives directly opposed this practice of child marriage. There are very less cases of child marriage where the majority of population is educated. The legal age for marriage is twenty-one for men, eighteen for women in Algeria and 20 years for males and 17 years for females in Tunisia whereas minimum marriage age is 18 years for males and 15 for females in Morocco (El Alami & Hinchcliffe, 1996).

The marriage below these ages require special permission from the court, which may be given only for pressing reasons and on the basis of a clear interest for both spouses. Marriage below the age of legal majority requires the consent of the guardian and (since 1993) of the mother; recourse may be had to the judge in the event of their refusal. The age of legal majority is 20 for males and females, but marriage also gives rise to legal majority in personal status affairs and civil and commercial transactions, provided the party is over the age of 17.

Upon marriage the bride usually goes to the household, village, or neighbourhood of the bridegroom's family, where she lives under the critical surveillance of her mother-in-law (El Alami & Hinchcliffe, 1996). Much marital friction centres on the difficult relationship
between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. Because a woman begins to gain status in her husband's home when she produces sons, mothers love and favour their boys, often nursing them longer than they do to the girls. The relation between mother and son remains warm and intimate, whereas the father is a more distant figure.

**Marriage, Domesticity and Kin Groups**

Parents still have considerable influence over the choice of their children's spouse, although in some less traditional and French educated families this practice is changing (Hopkins, 1977). Despite its prevalence in the region, the influx of Western culture has had little influence in this realm, as the majority of marriages still are arranged. It is considered not just the union of two individuals, but also of two families. Once a person with the appropriate economic and family background has been agreed upon, the groom offers a bride-price to the family of the bride-to-be. In return, the bride's family negotiates a dowry with the groom's family, and assures them that her virginity is intact. Weddings take place during summer months, and usually last for two or three days, depending on the financial circumstances. At traditional weddings, the bride is carried to the groom on a table, ornately decorated with henna-stained hands and feet.

Islamic law dictates that Muslim women must marry Muslim men; it is acceptable, however, for a Muslim man to take a non-Muslim woman as his wife. If divorce occurs, it is likely to be instigated by the man, as a divorced woman has little chance to remarry and may have a difficult time providing for herself (Dwyer, 1991). A husband could not only divorce his wife by repudiation, but he could also forbid her remarriage. Chaouia women fared much better because they were allowed to choose their own husbands. Life is both socially and economically difficult for women with no husband and no education. Female prostitution is widespread in the region.

Choice of marriage partners may be by arrangement between families or the result of individual selection based on acquaintances made at school or work. There is some preference for cousins, in part because cousins are considered to be of equal status. Girls
are not supposed to marry beneath them. Mothers search for brides for their sons, and may scrutinize possible candidates during the women's periods in the public baths (Labidi, 1989). Once an engagement is settled there is a complex series of visits between the two families. Sometimes disputes over gifts or etiquette leads to a collapse of the engagement, or one or the other of the partners may back out. The marriage ceremony itself involves the shift of the bride from her house to her groom's house, while the groom waits outside, so that he may enter into the bridal chamber where she is waiting. After the consummation of the marriage, there is a period of seclusion until the young couple re-enters society.

The legal aspects of marriage are covered by the Personal Status Code, introduced right after the independence of the Maghreb countries (1956, Tunisia and Morocco and 1962, Algeria) by. This code generally had the effect of protecting women's rights and encouraging companionate marriage. The code prohibited polygamous marriages and forced marriage for girls, established a minimum age for marriage, and required judicial divorce rather than repudiation. Later amendments allowed women to initiate divorce (only in Tunisia).

By a law passed in 1984 (Algeria), women gained the right to child custody and to their own dowries. However, the law also considers women permanent minors, needing the consent of their husbands or fathers for most activities, including working outside the home. The decision to divorce rests solely with the husband. It is still legally permissible, although rare, for men to have up to four wives, a code that is laid out in the Qurán (Koran) (El Alami & Hinchcliffe, 1996).

The household in Maghreb is based on the patriarchal family. Beliefs and practices sustain the notion of the dominant male head. Most households are based on the nuclear family but in Moroccan society the extended family is of utmost importance as it is a source of status and reputation as well as financial support.

Apart from the urban poor in the old city, most households at all income levels consisted of a separate house, together with its courtyard and annexes. Within the household, tasks are assigned on the basis of age and gender, as well as personal skills. Changes in
educational and employment patterns have made the companionate marriage between equals more common (Allman, 1979). The concept of *hshuma*, or shame, is spread to the entire family if one member of the family is known to have misbehaved.

Therefore, there is great pressure to protect the reputation of all members of the family. Moroccans view married life as the only normal way for adults to live, and the idea of living alone is abhorrent. Polygamy is allowed under Islam, although it is rarely practised. In such cases, the wives may live together in one house, or depending on the family's economic status, each wife may reside in her own dwelling with her offspring. Changes in educational and employment patterns have made the companionate marriage between equals more common (Allman, 1979).

In areas of the country with a stronger Arab influence, affiliations are based mostly on blood relations. Loyalty to family is more powerful than any other relationship or responsibility. Traditionally, kin groups have lived in close proximity. After the coming of French and implementation of French education these ties got somewhat weaker than what it was in the past due to the influence of urbanisation and modernisation, but even in the cities, life still centres around the family. One's personal dignity and honour are considered as an extension of the family name.

*Maghrebians* recognise the extension of kinship beyond the nuclear family, and maintain the network of connections. The extended family is of utmost importance as it is a source of status and reputation as well as financial support. As elsewhere, these links are more alive among the wealthy and powerful, where the stakes are higher, and among the very poor, where they are a major resource.

Where a family retains a connection with an ancestral "saint," the annual festival of this saint serves as a family reunion and sacramalises the group, of those descended in the male line from the ancestor. In the parts of interior where pastorals once dominated, these connections extend to a tribe. This is a larger identity based on extension of kin ties. These units and their chiefs were recognised in the colonial system, but were rejected by the independent government. The ties are now only occasionally activated, for instance in elections and marriages.
By a law passed in 1984 in Tunisia, women gained the right to child custody and to their own dowries. However, the law also considers women permanent minors, needing the consent of their husbands or fathers for most activities, including working outside the home. The decision to divorce rested solely with the husband. It is still legally permissible, although rare, for men to have up to four wives, a code that is laid out in the Qurán (Koran). In the Berber tradition, loyalty breaks down along the lines of village groupings, or sofs. These groups are political, and part of a democratic process governing life in the village.

The Status of Women

In almost every aspect of Maghrebian life, the status of men is higher than that of women. For the most part, women remain in private, domestic places, and are subject to ridicule and harassment by men in public life on the streets. Worship in mosques is generally reserved for men and all Muslim leaders are male. A few hours, however, are set aside each week to allow women to worship. Within the family, the maintained virginity of a young woman is guarded, as it is vital to her acceptance for marriage (Mernissi, 1987). On the other hand, male sexual activity before marriage is regarded as normal.

Within the confines of the traditional system, there was considerable variation in the treatment of women. In Arab tribes, women could inherit property but on the other hand in Berber tribes, they could not. In Berber society, Kabyle women seem to have been the most restricted. A husband could not only divorce his wife by repudiation, but he could also forbid her remarriage. Chaouia women fared much better because they were allowed to choose their own husbands. Life is both socially and economically difficult for women with no husband and no education. Female prostitution is widespread in the region.

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

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

By the mid of the 20th century many of the Maghrebian women population were educated and exposed to the modern French culture which enabled them to fight during the War of Independence, alongside men or, at least, maintained the household confidently in their absence. They thus achieved a new sense of their own identity and a measure of acceptance from men that they had not enjoyed before. In the aftermath of the war, some women maintained their new-found emancipation and became more actively involved in the development of the new state, whereas others returned to their traditional roles at home.

Compared to the other Maghreb countries after independence, Tunisia made a major effort to improve women's status by encouraging education and employment, improving the conditions of marriage, and encouraging family planning. This has reduced rather than eliminated the gap between the status of women and men. Women still endure a lot of stress trying to follow a career or enter public life in a male-dominated society. Some men resent the formal employment of women when unemployment of educated men remains high, and also scorn the idea of women in public life.

After independence the status of women began improving in the region, primarily because of the increased education of family members, broader economic and social development, and the willingness or necessity for ever-larger numbers of women to seek gainful employment. In the mid-1950s, about 7,000 women were registered as wage earners; by 1977 a total of 138,234 women, or 6 percent of the active work force, were
engaged in full-time employment. Corresponding figures for the mid-1980s were about 250,000, or 7 percent of the labour force. Many women were employed in the state sector as teachers, nurses, physicians, and technicians. (Labidi, 1989)

Although by 1989 the number of women in the work force had remarkably increased, women still constituted only a little over 7 percent of the total work force. The number of women in the work force, however, may be much higher than official statistics suggested. The increasing trend of female work force and their contribution in annual growth rate can be clearly observed from the data. Women in the rural work force were not counted and the reason for their omission was their position as unpaid family members. Culturally, heads of households in a patriarchal society did not acknowledge publicly or to census workers that the women of their household were workers. In fact now, the majority of rural women worked full time and their contribution is considered as a part of the Maghrebian work force.

**Family Code**

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

Although some of the earlier code's provisions were more liberal than those of the amended version, the code essentially reflects the influence of Islamic conservatives. The family unit is "the basic unit of society"; the head of the family is the husband, to whom the wife owes obedience. According to the *sharia*, a Muslim woman may not marry a non-Muslim; polygamy is permitted under certain conditions (although it is rarely
practised); and women do not inherit property equally with men. A woman cannot be married without her consent, and she may sue for divorce in specified circumstances, including desertion and non-support. Custody of children under age seven in divorce cases passes to the wife but reverts to the husband when the children are older. Divorce rates have risen steadily since independence, but divorce remains much easier for men than for women (El Alami & Hinchcliffe, 1996).

**Family Planning**

Attitudes toward family size and family planning in villages in pre-Saharan Maghreb were assessed through a questionnaire administered to 75 women 13-44 years of age and 40 men. The *ksars* in which the interviews were conducted were located in Arab Sebbah Ziz, a rural population area. Children are important in this region, both as a source of agricultural help and to care for their parents in old age. The total fertility rate in Morocco is 7.4. Among male respondents in this study, 36.5% wanted 10 or more children. Although female respondents expressed the belief that they had no control over family size, the largest proportion (37.5%) wanted 5-6 children and only 7.5% wanted 9-10 children.

All the men in the *ksar* of Mengara had some awareness of the concept of family planning, but the women indicated a lack of knowledge. When family planning was explained to female respondents, the characteristic response was a reluctance to interfere with God's will. Even respondents who did not want more children expressed a reluctance to do anything active to prevent pregnancy. Women in the *ksar* of Okba displayed a more active interest in family planning, especially to prevent the adverse health effects caused by continuous childbearing.

The main reason for not using family planning was fear of side effects. There was also awareness of the beneficial effects of birth spacing on child health. The Moroccan family planning programme emphasises the use of oral contraception; there appears to be marked resistance to the IUD. These findings indicate that mass media efforts and
increased availability of family planning supplies are not sufficient measures to expand family planning acceptance. Women must learn what family planning involves, how it applies to their lives, the benefits and disadvantages of available methods before they can reach decisions about contraceptive usage.

The causal relationship between numerous and frequent pregnancies, and poor health must also be stressed. An approach focused on advantages to the health of the mother and the well being of her children is most likely to convince rural women of the validity of family planning.

Before 1980 Algeria lacked an official birth control programme, in contrast to other Arab countries, nearly all of which had some kind of family planning programme or a policy of limiting population. To a large extent, this situation reflected the conviction that Algeria was not overpopulated, given the vast empty expanse of the Sahara and the High Plateaus and the scattered population clusters even in the Tell (Bowen, 1983). There was also a desire to make up the alleged 1.5 million population loss in the War of Independence and the conviction of many parents that their well-being lay in producing as many children as possible, a common view held by peasants. Despite an employment problem arising from overpopulation, Boumediene favoured economic growth over birth control as the solution to overpopulation and unemployment. His policy received the blessing of the Islamic religious establishment.

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

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

Perhaps by the mid-1980s, family planning met with some success. The number of PMICS had risen to 300, and the demand for information about the programme reportedly outstripped supply in some areas. It was estimated that about 10 percent of the population of childbearing age were using some form of contraception, and the government was increasing its publicity to encourage still greater participation (Armitage, 1993).

In 1986 the government created the National Committee on Population. Its charter promoted a balance between social and economic development needs on the one hand, and population growth on the other. Three years later, in 1989, the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) launched a US$8 million programme. The objective the programme was to support maternal and child health care, help create a centre for the production of oral contraceptives, and develop an effective education system to inform the general population on the use of contraceptives.
Table. 3.2: Demographic Trend in North Africa: 1970-1992

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Crude Birth Rate (per 1,000 Population)</th>
<th>Crude Death Rate (per 1,000 Population)</th>
<th>Total Fertility Rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
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The UNFPA programme also supported demographic research and advised the government on population strategies and policies. In 1989 it was estimated that 35 percent of Algerian women of childbearing age used some form of contraception. This percentage would account in part for the sharp drop in population growth from 3.1 percent in the mid-1980s to 2.8 percent in 1990 (Bowen, 1983; Armitage, 1993).

In Maghreb, men often influenced women’s family planning decisions including the methods they chose. Traditional religious and cultural customs, as well as legal dicta, emphasised the responsibility of men over their wives and family. A survey conducted in Algeria showed that out of 47% of married women in reproductive age who had never used contraception, 12% cited the opposition of their husbands/partners and 4% had quit contraceptive use because of partner pressure (Armitage, 1993). Acceptors also prefer oral contraceptives because of the fear that IUDs can be discovered. The husband is required to sign a written consent form for tubal ligation, de jure in Morocco and de facto in Tunisia and Algeria.

Tunisia is the only country that allows abortion on request until the 3rd month of pregnancy without consent of the partner. In Algeria and Morocco, abortion is illegal except for maternal health or legal reasons with partner approval. In Algerian society, however, women have traditionally used their fertility for negotiating better status in the extended family comprising mother-in-law, father-in-law, son, and daughter-in-law.
(Nasir, 1990). The only source of power of the daughter-in-law is producing offspring, preferably sons.

Family programmes in Maghreb must centre on the increasing acceptability of family planning programmes while sensitising males to grant more freedom to wives. Such a programme is underway through the Moroccan Association for Family Planning. Similarly, in Tunis a new programme targeting males has been developed. Partner communication is an essential component of this, particularly in rural areas where family planning is still taboo. The redefinition of male responsibility and equality in decision-making increases the acceptability of family planning and promotes the status of women within the family and society.

The reforms made under the French rule for the uplift of women and their status in the society was not restricted to family and society within but also cross questioned the religious beliefs which propounded the segregation of women in public life.

**Religion**

Islam, the religion of an overwhelming number of the Maghrebian people, pervades most aspects of life. It provides the society with its central social and cultural identity and, gives most individuals their basic ethical and attitudinal orientation. Orthodox observance of the faith is much less widespread and steadfast than is identification with Islam.

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

North Africa, and by the beginning of the eighth century the Berbers had been for the most part converted to Islam. Orthodox Sunni Islam, the larger of the two great branches of the faith, is the form practised by the overwhelming majority of Muslims in Maghreb
especially in Algeria. Shia Islam is not represented apart from a few members of the Ibadi sect, a Shia offshoot (Laremont, 2000).

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

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

The turuq (sing., tariqa, way or path), or brotherhoods, were another feature of Islam in the Maghreb from the Middle Ages onward. Each brotherhood had its own prescribed path to salvation, its own rituals, signs, symbols, and mysteries. The brotherhoods were prevalent in the rural and mountainous areas of the region and other parts of North Africa. Their leaders were often marabouts or shaykhs. The more orthodox Sunni Muslims dominated the urban centres, where traditionally trained men of religion, the ulama, conducted the religious and legal affairs of the Muslim community (Laremont, 2000; Abun-Nasr,).

Islam and the Maghrebian State

The Prophet enjoined his followers to convert non-believers to the true faith. Jews and Christians, whose religions he recognised as the precursors of Islam and who were called "people of the book" because of their holy scriptures, were permitted to continue their own communal and religious life as long as they recognised the temporal domain of Muslim authorities, paid their taxes, and did not proselytise or otherwise interfere with the practice of Islam. This practice was continued by the French in the early days of colonialism.
Soon after arriving in Algeria, the French colonial regime set about undermining traditional Muslim *Maghrebian* culture. According to Islam, however, a Muslim society permanently subject to non-Muslim rulers is unacceptable. Muslims believe that non-Muslim rule must be ended as quickly as possible and Muslim rulers restored to power. For this reason, Islam was a strong element of the resistance movement to the French.

After independence, throughout the region, the government asserted state control over religious activities for purposes of national consolidation and political control. Islam became the religion of the state in the new constitution and the religion of its leaders. No laws could be enacted that would be contrary to Islamic tenets or that would in any way undermine Islamic beliefs and principles. The state monopolised the building of mosques. Imams were trained, appointed, and paid by the state, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs issued the Friday *khutba*, or sermon, to them. That ministry also administered religious property (the *habus*), provided for religious education and training in schools, and created special institutes for Islamic learning (Barakat, 1985).

The French in its earlier days only had imposed its control on *habus* property and French education system was incorporated with the traditional Islamic studies in *khutba*. Through this mixed system of education the French were successful in giving birth to new generation of *Maghreb* population who supported the liberal ideas of French education and culture. The pressure created through the French education was so intense that even the rigid Islamic laws seemed to be melting. The Muslim population in the region brought various reforms in practice. Exposure to the modern society gave new vision to the segregated traditional *Maghreb* society. This changing outlook of traditional society towards modernity brought unrest among the radical Muslim section of the society, which led to the formation of new radical militant groups to fight against the western fronts.

Those measures, however, did not satisfy everyone. As early as 1964 a militant Islamic movement, called Al Qiyam (values), emerged and became the precursor of the Islamic Salvation Front of the 1990s. Al Qiyam called for a more dominant role for Islam in Algeria's legal and political systems and opposed what it saw as Western practices in the
social and cultural life of Maghreb. But they were not enough strong to over rule the
dominance of French culture and liberal ideas that were injected in the Maghreb society
through education.

Although militant Islamism was suppressed, it reappeared in the 1970s under a different
name and with a new organisation. The movement began spreading to university
campuses, where it was encouraged by the state as a counterbalance to left-wing student
movements who supported liberal ideas and modernity in practices. These left-wing
students were those who had some background of French education and were exposed to
European culture. By the 1980s, the movement had become even stronger, and bloody
clashes erupted at the Ben Aknoun campus of the University of Algiers in November
1982. The violence resulted in the state's cracking down on the movement, a
confrontation that would intensify throughout the 1980s and early 1990s

The rise of Islamism had a significant impact on Maghreb society. More women began
wearing the veil, some because they had become more conservative religiously and
others because the veil kept them from being harassed on the streets, on campuses, or at
work. Islamists also prevented the enactment of a more liberal family code despite
pressure from feminist groups and associations. Comparatively the Moroccan and the
Tunisian society reformed itself to be more liberal and modern where as the Algerian
society still seems to be more rigid (Laremont, 2000). The marks of French colonialism
have not yet faded due to its great loss and long period of struggle for independence.

Religious Minorities

Christianity came to North Africa in the Roman era. Its influence declined during the
chaotic period of the Vandal invasions but was strengthened in the succeeding Byzantine
period, only to disappear gradually after the Arab invasions of the seventh century
(Ganiage, 1959). The term Islam means submission to God. It shares certain prophets,
traditions, and beliefs with Judaism and Christianity, the main difference being the
Muslim belief that Muhammad is the final prophet and the embodiment of God, or Allah.
The Roman Catholic Church was reintroduced after the French conquest, when the diocese of Algiers was established in 1838. Proselytization of the Muslim population was at first strictly prohibited; later the prohibition was less vigorously enforced, but few conversions took place.

Several Roman Catholic missions established in Maghreb were concerned with charitable and relief work; the establishment of schools, workshops, and infirmaries; and the training of staff for the new establishments (Barakat, 1985). Some of the missionaries of these organisations remained in the country after independence, working among the poorer segments of the population. In the early 1980s, the Roman Catholic population numbered in lakhs, most of whom were foreigners or natives who had married French or Italians. In addition, there was a small Protestant community. Because the government adopted a policy of not inquiring about religious affiliation in censuses or surveys to avoid provoking religious tensions, the number of Christians in the early 1990s was not known (in Algeria).

The Jewish community is of considerable antiquity, some members claiming descent from immigrants from Palestine at the time of the Romans. The majority are descendants of refugees from Spanish persecution early in the fifteenth century (Allman, 1979). They were in large number before the independence movement in the region but by 1962 nearly all of them left the country. Because the 1870 Crémieux Decrees, which aimed at assimilating the colons of Algeria to France, gave Jews full citizenship, most member of the Jewish community emigrated to France (Allman, 1979; Udovich, 1984). There also are remnants of the indigenous Berber religion, which has been almost entirely subsumed by Islam. Despite opposition by both the French colonisers and the Algerian government (who viewed this religion as a threat to the unity of the country), there are still some organisations, called brotherhoods, that hold on to their magical practices and ceremonies (Laremont, 2000).

Though the Maghreb society is considered to be more liberal compared to their eastern counterparts there are some religious restrictions and laws that are not to be broken. Minority religious populations are free to perform and practice in the region but they are
not supposed to ask for the same to the native people. The distribution of religious books, pamphlets and religious preaching is strictly prohibited.

**Political Culture**

*Maghrebian* political culture and government reflect the impact of the country's colonial history. The legacy of the revolutionary War of Independence (1954-62) and its lingering implications are still evident in recent political events and in the evolution of political processes. A strong authoritative tendency and the supremacy of the military, both remnants of the war for liberation, have resulted in a sharply divided society in which the political elite remains highly remote from, and generally unaccountable to, the masses of its impoverished, unemployed, and dissatisfied citizens. State-supported socialism, largely fed by petroleum exports, and "depoliticisation" of the masses during the 1970s replaced any real source of legitimacy for the regime and left the masses almost no form of political expression short of violent confrontation (Barakat, 1985).

In Algeria as a consequence of this political tradition, materialised in January 1992, a conservative military coup overturned four years of significant political and economic liberalisation undertaken by President Chadli Benjedid in the late 1980s. Benjedid's extensive political and economic reforms, pursued to restore political legitimacy and public confidence in the government leadership, had opened the way for political opposition. The rise of the Islamic Salvation Front (Front Islamique du Salut – FIS) as the most significant opposition group threatened to challenge the secular orientation of the state. The coup took place only days before the second round of the first freely contested national elections, elections that were likely to usher in a new government dominated by Islamists (sometimes seen as fundamentalists).

Since then, the virtual elimination of constitutional government and the resurrection of military authoritarianism have returned Algeria to the familiar situation of placing power in the hands of small elites, nullifying almost all of the democratic freedoms and many of the free-market reforms of the preceding few years (Zartman, 1991).
Algeria's bloody overthrow of colonial rule resulted in independence in 1962 and a legacy of an authoritarian political structure dominated by several competing interests. The main actors in the national revolution continued to govern the Algerian polity after independence, struggling during the immediate post independence period and throughout post independence Maghrebian history for political control. The condition in Morocco and Tunisia was little different because they opted for different form of government i.e. - Monarchical rule in Morocco.

This tradition has evolved into a triangular system of government in which the army, party, and state apparatus share power but continually compete. Benjedid's reforms in the 1980s effectively eliminated the party (the National Liberation Front--Front de Libération Nationale – FLN) from a prominent position in the political configuration while strengthening his hand as president through constitutional reforms. The military, also having suffered a reduction of authority with the political changes implemented by the 1989 constitution, appeared to have little tolerance for the liberalisation visualised by Benjedid and the more liberal faction of the FLN. Resurfacing in the early 1990s to "ensure the security of the state," the military has demonstrated once again that the army remains the dominant arm of the political triangle.

Recent political events are as much a reflection as a determinant of political culture in Algeria. The nation in late 1993 was under a state of emergency, its condition since the military coup in January 1992. Martial law ruled, essentially invalidating all political structures and institutions. The outcome of this period would generally be less politically visible and the party and military elites can directly influence development by managing programmes linked to economic growth and political stability.

Since the late 1980s, the administrative elites have provided a pool of technocrats for the staff of both the civilian government and the military presidency, which rely heavily on them in modernising Maghreb's economy. At the same time, the administrative elites have increasingly been plagued by factionalism. The other major elements of the elite consist of the FLN and the military. Within the FLN, the Party Congress is the highest political organ. It consists of national delegates, representatives from the various mass
associations and professional unions, local and regional elected officials, APN deputies, and military leaders. The congress determines general party policy, adopts and revises party statutes, and elects both the secretary general of the party and its Central Committee. The Central Committee, which is divided into various commissions, is an elected assembly that serves only during recesses of the Party Congress.

The military, consisting primarily of the People's National Army (Armée Nationale Populaire--ANP), has remained a constant force in Algerian politics, at times quite visible, at times more subtle. The military's most potent source of power emanates from its monopoly of the coercive instruments of force. Equally significant, however, is the military's symbolic role as "guardian of the revolution" and guarantor of state stability. Its technical and administrative skills have been critical to Algeria's political and economic development. A certain domestic prestige stems from the military's influential role in regional and international affairs. The military is also very active in local and provincial affairs. Army officials are represented on all major political institutions and frequently have more influence in regional administration than do the civilian provincial governors.

Historically, the army has interfered only when conditions "necessitated" military intervention to ensure the security of the state. In January 1992, only days away from national legislative elections that were likely to return a sweeping Islamist victory, the military resurfaced politically in a highly visible manner. Anticipating what the armed forces interpreted to be a "grave threat" to the secular interests and political stability of the state and defying the apparent government and national volition, the military demonstrated that it alone would determine the course of Algerian politics. The French contribution to the Maghrebian political stability is clearly reflected from the type of reforms demanded by the people for their stability. The liberal ideas and policies which French taught through their educational policies still hold the legacy of French rule.

Maghreb's current political culture is a result of the French colonial legacy, the War of Independence, the Arab and Islamic cultural traditions and the part these play in national unity and cohesion, and the integral role of the military. The consolidation of authority and the institutionalisation of political structure characterised the post-independence
years as the new independent Maghrebian nations struggled to overcome the instability of the revolutionary period. National integrity and national institutions were viewed as equally important as Maghreb worked to consolidate its independent political structure and tradition and to overcome the administrative and economic vacuum that resulted from the departure of most Europeans who had lived in the region.

Emerging from more than 132 years of French colonial domination and nearly eight years of the War of Independence, Maghreb was officially declared independent of France. Exhausted from so many years of warfare and internally divided into fiercely competitive factions, the military/political leadership of the victory quickly deteriorated into incohesive groups vying for control of the new state. The three major contenders for political predominance were the provisional government, the military officials, and the wilaya commands (administrative district councils established by the military in the pre-independence period). The confrontation was characterised by fierce personal and ethnic loyalties as well as ideology and surfaced even before independence was officially declared. But the issues, which made the government stable in the region, were always close to the reforms that French had introduced in the region through French education.

Judicial Culture

The judicial system, in common with other aspects of Maghreb’s culture, shares features of its French and Arab traditions. Throughout the French colonial period, secular courts prevailed as the final judicial authority, although Islamic sharia courts had jurisdiction over lower level cases, including civil cases, criminal offenses, family law, and other personal matters (Susain, 1995). Secular courts in Maghreb owed their existence to the earlier Turkish administrative control, however, not French imposition. The French courts replaced the Turkish courts and, in so doing, modified them to reflect French principles of justice.

The secular courts were authorised to review sharia court decisions, although for the majority of Maghrebian, the sharia court was the final source of judicial authority. Following independence, the government promised to create a new judicial system that would eliminate the French colonial legacy and reflect more accurately the ideological
orientation of the new state, which was committed both to socialism and the Arab and Islamic tradition. However, the revised legal system was not created but new civil and criminal codes were announced.

These codes reflected the divergent nature of socialist and traditional Islamic notions of justice. Family law, personal status (especially regarding the rights of women), and certain criminal penalties were divisive issues and many were simply omitted from the new judicial codes (Nasir, 1990). The executive branch appoints judges, and only the High Judicial Council may challenge their appointment. Judges are not tenured, although they remain relatively free from political pressure.

The judicial tradition has stipulated that defendants be fully aware of the charges against them, that they have free access to legal counsel, and that they be able to contest a judicial outcome in a court of appeal. The constitution upholds basic principles of personal liberty and justice and prohibits the unnecessary holding of individuals for questioning for longer than forty-eight hours (Christelow, 1985). Under different political liberalisation, respect for individual freedoms expanded in the constitution. A number of political prisoners were released, and the elimination of exit visas and the legalisation of political associations facilitated the exercise of free speech, movement, and expression.

Individual freedoms were, however, subordinate to military concerns and issues of national security and have been regularly suspended under periods of martial law. The military leadership in the early 1990s suspended almost all institutions of state, including those of the judicial branch in Algeria. Islamist leaders and other criminal offenders have been tried by military tribunals and have received heavy sentences of imprisonment or death. Even at the best of times, the executive is not subordinated to the judicial branch and the president serves as head of the High Judicial Council.

**Civil Society**

Politicised *Maghrebian* civil society owes its origin to the pre-revolutionary period when it absorbed most of the French notions of associational life and state-society relations.
From the 1920s until the War of Independence, *Maghrebian*, mainly Algerians, were allowed to participate in French professional and trade unions and other mass organisations (Jamil, 1987). Through most of Algeria's independent history, civil society and mass organisations have been subordinate to the state-party apparatus and relegated to roles of recruitment and propaganda. From 1968 until 1989, all mass associations were incorporated under the direct administration of the FLN.

From the party's perspective, integrating the independent organisations enabled the party to become a true "front," a unique body representing the populace, while simultaneously inhibiting the development of any independent political opposition. Subordinate to the party administration, the associations quickly became engrossed in mobilising mass support for the party and government and less occupied with pursuing the interests of the groups they represented (Christelow, 1985).

The political crisis of the late 1980s radically altered the dynamics in which the people accepted central control in return for economic security by shifting some of the initiative away from the state and toward civil society. "Associations of a political character" were legalised and allowed to organise, recruit, and demonstrate (Waltz, 1995). In 1989 the legalisation of political parties resulted in a large number of independent interest groups emerging as political parties, attesting to the pervasive nature of associational life in *Maghrebian* political culture despite government efforts at "depoliticization" and heavy government supervision.

A loosening of government regulations facilitated party proliferation. Government authorisation became necessary only for those organisations having a "national character," and legalisation was extended to any party that did not pose a direct threat to national sovereignty (Zartman, 1991). Hundreds of independent institutions emerged in the following years. In the wage of this movement several NGOs cropped up in various fields to support the voice of the *generale*. Though their motives were high to support the general mass, existence was restricted through various political policies as well as due to religious constraints.
Non-Governmental Organisations and Other Associations

The importance of NGO's in the Maghreb region is almost restricted. They are not free to carry on with their programmes according to their wishes. Some liberty is given to the NGOs in Morocco but only in prescribed field. Otherwise its existence is nullified.

Since independence, the Tunisian government has worked to create a sense of individual citizenship, with citizens dealing individually with the state. Thus, in practice it restricts the activities of nongovernmental organisations. The more political organisations, such as human rights, women's rights, or environmental organisations, are either co-opted or suppressed (Waltz, 1995). The government and the party themselves offer a range of associations for women, youth, and labour, and it is difficult to compete.

After independence, the labour union organisation entered into a long struggle to maintain its independence of government control, but eventually succumbed. Efforts to create water user associations in rural areas were limited by laws restricting their right to collect and spend their own money. An important form of nongovernmental organisation is the sports clubs, essentially football clubs, which are usually dominated by figures from the national elite.

Most of the nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) in Morocco came to the country in the early 1990s. The monarch's opening to human rights issues resulted in an inflow of NGOs, especially those concerned with the treatment of the Saharawi people. In 1994 the monarch allowed Human Rights Watch to conduct a fact-finding investigation on violations of human rights and to publicise the results. Some of the major NGOs active in the country include the Moroccan Organisation of Human Rights, the Moroccan League for the Defence of Human Rights, and the Moroccan Association of Human Rights. Amnesty International has chapters located in Casablanca, Rabat, and Marrakech, although it is not officially recognised by the central government.

The Algerian General Workers' Union and the Workers' Movement

If any one element of civil society has consistently presented a cohesive and substantive constituency, it is the workers' unions. The explosion of union activity following political
liberalisation in the late 1980s indicates that the affiliational role of the unions has persisted despite years of subordination to party directives. The organisation owes its origin to French, as they were part of trade union during French rule.

The Algerian General Workers' Union (Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens-UGTA) was created in 1956 after Algerian participation in French trade unions was banned. Despite the union's efforts to remain independent, it was taken over by the FLN leadership in 1963. Under the party structure and the socialist tenets of the National Charter, the UGTA became more of an administrative apparatus than an independent interest group. The UGTA consistently opposed mass strikes and public demonstrations that threatened productive economic activity and supported government legislation to prohibit strikes in certain industrial sectors.

Until the mid-1980s, all member unions were integrated into federations spanning several industries. After 1984 and in response to increasing independent activity on behalf of the workers, these large federations were broken down into smaller workers' assemblies, greatly reducing the political force of the large unions and strengthening the managerial control of the UGTA authorities. The number of strikes sharply declined in the following years.

From 1989 until January 1992, union activity increased to intensity not previously witnessed. Splits within the UGTA, the creation of a number of new, smaller, and more active unions – including the formation of an Islamic labour union--and a rapid rise in the number of strikes and demonstrations have quickly politicised a previously dormant workers' movement. The frequency and size of labour strikes jumped; Ministry of Labour figures placed the number of strikes for 1989 at 250 per month, four times that of the previous year.

The growth of the workers' movement illustrates the genuineness of democratisation in the period up to the January 1992 coup. Labour has generally not supported economic liberalisation, and strikes have hampered a number of the government's free-market reforms. The government's response to and tolerance for increased mass politicisation
and especially union activity undoubtedly provides clear evidence of the desire for successful democracy in the 1990s.

Youth and Student Activism

Youth in any country holds an important position in country's growth as they are considered as the future of the country. During the time of independence there were Young Algerian and Young Tunisian group who were active and had good control over the masses. They were none other than the French educated native youth. They played an important role in propagating the idea of independence and nationalism.

On the similar ground, to get control over the mass and to prepare leaders for tomorrow, FLN formed the National Union of Algerian Students (Union Nationale des Étudiants Algériens – UNEA), but party directives had less impact on the UNEA than on other FLN-influenced bodies such as the UGTA. The student union was quite active throughout the 1960s despite government attempts to quell the movement. Strikes, boycotts, and other violent clashes between student groups and government officials continued to upset numerous university campuses until the union was suppressed and dissolved in 1971.

The student movement was subsequently absorbed into the more docile National Union of Algerian Youth (Union Nationale de la Jeunesse Algérienne – UNJA), a national conglomerate of youth organisations controlled by the FLN. The UNJA was the only youth group to be recognised officially in the list of national associations enumerated in the National Charter of 1976.

Despite a brief surge of student demonstrations in the late 1970s, the UNJA leadership has increasingly met with apathy and a lack of interest on the part of both high school and university students—in part because of the existence of a number of local organisations that parallel UNJA activities. Most of the UNJA's roster in 1993 did not consist of students.

As has been true for most other elements of civil society, FLN has dominance translated into a greater emphasis on party propaganda and mobilisation than on the association's
own objectives. Implementing these objectives posed a challenge to the student union leadership. Union leaders face a disillusioned constituency—students who upon completing years of education cannot find jobs, masses of impoverished and unemployed youth with little confidence in distant authorities, and youth without nostalgia for the War of Independence they are too young to remember. When the population exploded onto the streets in October 1988, it was the students who were the first to organise and who made up the bulk of demonstrators in the six days of rioting.

The demonstration led by the students proved the inefficiency of the government and its policies. If we calculate by years and see then the youths at that time must not have got the proper education in French as they must have been born under the government's policy of Arabisation.

**Conclusion**

Due to its geographical location the *Maghreb* region has been a regular pass through for Europe. Throughout history it has witnessed the presence of several cultural groups, and because of that it has also been called the "melting pot" of various cultures. But the *Maghreb* society was not influenced as much by other cultures as it was by Arab first and later by the French. The French culture flourished during colonialism due to the introduction of the French education. Thus, the implementation of French education and exposure to the outside world greatly influenced the social structure of the region. French education became one of the major factors that determined the social stratification throughout the region.

Further, French education accelerated the migration process and marked a great impact on the social transformation in the region. The immigration policy adopted by France towards the *Maghreb* population welcomed major chunk of skilled as well as unskilled labourers. These policies directly affected the cross cultural exchange in the region. The French education in the region or in France created a class of people who emulated the
French way of life. The traders, merchant class, etc. acted mainly in strengthening the French culture in the region.

French education directed the immigration on large scale towards the urban centres minimising the earlier social values and practices and created a class-based society whose reflection can be seen in day to day life activities. Though the Islamic practices are more rigid, the exposure to the French culture has made it more liberal through reforms and modern practical approaches. The classes, which were exposed to French culture and education, had got their children enrolled in French schools in the region or in France. This cross-cultural connection gradually transformed the social practices to some extent. The social institutions and practices support this notion, as the region witnessed cross cultural marriages, food habits, family structure, kinship etc.

The French education has not only influenced the social and cultural practices, it has also affected the political culture of the region, and various reforms have been made since independence in the judiciary, executive and legislative units by the different committees mostly led by the French educated natives. During the French rule, for the first time, unions were allowed to be formed, and at present one can find different unions at different level of work. Different types of organisations exist in the region and are very active in their respective fields. The culture of different organisations and unions is not a regional product but is one of the various results of the French education and influence.