



# International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Social Science

e-ISSN: 2544-9435

Scholarly Publisher  
RS Global Sp. z O.O.  
ISNI: 0000 0004 8495 2390

Dolna 17, Warsaw,  
Poland 00-773  
+48 226 0 227 03  
editorial\_office@rsglobal.pl

---

## ARTICLE TITLE

THE EVOLUTION OF ANTHROPOLOGY IN ALGERIA: FROM COLONIAL REJECTION TO CONTEMPORARY RECOGNITION

---

## DOI

[https://doi.org/10.31435/ijitss.3\(47\).2025.4541](https://doi.org/10.31435/ijitss.3(47).2025.4541)

---

## RECEIVED

11 March 2025

---

## ACCEPTED

31 July 2025

---

## PUBLISHED

09 September 2025

---

## LICENSE



The article is licensed under a **Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License**.

---

© The author(s) 2025.

This article is published as open access under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0), allowing the author to retain copyright. The CC BY 4.0 License permits the content to be copied, adapted, displayed, distributed, republished, or reused for any purpose, including adaptation and commercial use, as long as proper attribution is provided.

# THE EVOLUTION OF ANTHROPOLOGY IN ALGERIA: FROM COLONIAL REJECTION TO CONTEMPORARY RECOGNITION

**Bridja Cherifa**

University Mohamed Benahmed - Oran 2, Algeria

ORCID ID: 0009-0009-9256-0358

**Latreche Fairouz**

University Echahid Cheikh Larbi Tebessi - Tebessa, Algeria

ORCID ID: 0009-0008-6734-1789

---

## ABSTRACT

Anthropology was introduced to Algeria through colonial military studies conducted by the French military class. These colonial anthropological studies provided an overview of Algerian society, facilitating the rapid invasion of the region. Consequently, after independence Anthropology was marginalized in Algerian academia and labeled a "colonial science". However, due to changing political, social and cultural conditions Anthropology gradually gained recognition in Algeria. This article examines the historical development of Anthropology in Algeria, focusing on the process of teaching Anthropology and its current status.

The research aims to trace the historical trajectory of Anthropology in Algeria and clarify its present status. The methodology of this article includes an introduction, presentation and conclusion. The introduction provides a comprehensive explanation of the topic and its problematic aspects.

The presentation is divided into four sections:

1. The Concepts.
2. The state of Anthropology in Algeria before and during the colonial period.
3. The process of teaching Anthropology in post-independence Algeria.
4. Anthropological studies and research in Algerian academies post-Covid-19.

The conclusion presents the findings, highlighting the transformation of anthropology in Algeria into a distinguished and significant field of study.

---

## KEYWORDS

Anthropology, Algerian Academies, Anthropological Studies, Colonial Military Studies, Covid-19

---

## CITATION

Bridja Cherifa, Latreche Fairouz. (2025) The Evolution of Anthropology in Algeria: From Colonial Rejection to Contemporary Recognition. *International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Social Science*. 3(47). doi: 10.31435/ijitss.3(47).2025.4541

---

## COPYRIGHT

© **The author(s) 2025**. This article is published as open access under the **Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0)**, allowing the author to retain copyright. The CC BY 4.0 License permits the content to be copied, adapted, displayed, distributed, republished, or reused for any purpose, including adaptation and commercial use, as long as proper attribution is provided.

---

### Introduction:

Algeria was colonised by France between 1830 and 1962, so what is important to know here and which must be emphasised is that before and during the first years of the occupation, the French used: **Anthropology** - as one of the means of helping colonization - starting from the idea that it is a science which studies primitive societies and the science of the study of the other as the Algerian society.

From this point of view, immediately after the occupation the military class and part of the religious elite and French scientists were interested in this type of study to know the social situation of the local population, its cultural composition, its rites and customs with the aim of developing strategies to overcome the popular Algerian resistance they encountered during the early years of their expansion.

It should be noted that the use of anthropology in Algeria was linked in particular to the emergence of colonial military studies which served the colonial ideology in such a way that it could be said that they

facilitated the process of occupation. Due to this use of this science, anthropology was shunned by the Algerian academic and political community in general after independence.

Then, over time and due to changing political, social and cultural conditions the status of anthropology gradually changed and it was recognised in Algeria. From there, we wonder about the effects of the clash of anthropology and ideology in Algeria. What is his current state of affairs today? Through this paper, we will try to document the history of the development of anthropology in Algeria.

The subject generally revolves around the most important historical stations that anthropology has crossed in Algerian academies since its emergence in Algeria until today.

Hence the importance of the subject which lies in the enrichment of a historical scientific aspect on the paths of science in the Algerian scientific space. The importance of this science also emerges in the light of the specificities of Algerian society and its need for this science and its studies to describe and diagnose its various social phenomena.

The topic has already been addressed by a group of researchers, including:

- Abdul Baqi Ghafoor research titled: The reality of Anthropology in Algéria after indépendence 2021.

- P. Lucas & J. C. Vatin, Algeria of anthropologists, 1975.

During the research the qualitative approach was followed in collecting and analyzing data until we obtained results. The study also adopted a historical and analytical approach providing a rigorous examination the documents.

## **1. The Concepts:**

### **1.1 Definition of Anthropology:**

According to Wikipedia: Anthropology is defined as the scientific study of humans, human behavior and societies in the past and the present. Others define it as the science that deals with origins, physical and cultural development, biological characteristics and social customs and beliefs of humankind. Also the study of the similarities and divergences between human beings and other animals. It is as well considered as the study of the general activities of the human being.

Anthropology, “the science of humanity,” which studies human beings in aspects ranging from the biology and evolutionary history of Homo sapiens to the features of society and culture that decisively distinguish humans from other animal species. Because of the diverse subject matter it encompasses, anthropology has become, especially since the middle of the 20th century, a collection of more specialized fields. Physical anthropology is the branch that concentrates on the biology and evolution of humanity. It is discussed in greater detail in the article human evolution. The branches that study the social and cultural constructions of human groups are variously recognized as belonging to cultural anthropology (or ethnology), social anthropology, linguistic anthropology, and psychological anthropology. Archaeology as the method of investigation of prehistoric cultures, has been an integral part of anthropology since it became a self-conscious discipline in the latter half of the 19th century (<https://www.britannica.com/science/anthropology> 11/03/2025).

Anthropology takes a broad approach to understanding the many different aspects of the human experience. Some anthropologists consider what makes up our biological bodies and genetics, as well as our bones, diet, and health. Others look to the past to see how human groups lived hundreds or thousands of years ago and what was important to them. Around the world, they observe communities as they exist today, to understand the practices of different groups of people from an insider’s perspective. And they study how people use language, make meaning, and organize social action in all social groups and contexts.

In the community of anthropologists in the United States, these four fields—human biology, archaeology, cultural anthropology, and linguistics—are understood to be the pillars on which the whole discipline rests. Any individual anthropologist will probably specialize in one or two of these areas but have general familiarity with them all.

We understand these varied approaches to complement one another and give a well-rounded picture not only of what we all share as humans, but also of our rich diversity across time, space, and social settings. For example, everyone needs to eat, but people eat different foods and get food in different ways, so anthropologists look at how different groups of people get food, prepare it, and share it. They look at the meaning of different food traditions, such as what makes a dish appropriate for a special occasion. They focus on the intersection of culture and biology to understand what food is available in a community, why people make the choices they do, and how these choices relate to health and well-being. They compare these practices with others around the world, as well as what they can learn from the ancient archaeological record. And they use these insights to work toward a world where everyone has enough to eat and traditional foodways are celebrated and maintained. (<https://americananthro.org/learn-teach/what-is-anthropology/> 11/03/2025)

### **1.2 Colonial Military studies:**

We mean by colonial military studies are written research on Algerian society before and during the early years of the French occupation of Algeria, and military generals were the ones who conducted most of these studies.

### **2.The state of anthropology in Algeria before and during the colonial period:**

It is not possible to know the reality of the path of Anthropology as a science in Algerian universities without historical research and knowledge of the many stages it has gone through and perception of the past and present issues of the Algerian scientific space:

The first stage:

The birth of Anthropology in Algeria dates back to the period preceding French colonialism in 1830 through some studies carried out by **Clerics** following field studies they conducted among the population of the region under the pretext of religious proselytism.

Immediately after the occupation Anthropological studies were carried out by the French military class which attached importance to this type of study to know the social and cultural structure of the local population in order to understand the operating mechanisms of the various traditional institutions and to modify their functions to serve them during the first years of the occupation.

What can be seen from these Anthropological studies is that they did not contain an exactly anthropological science, but that they contributed to collecting a considerable amount of information interspersed with non-scientific analyses published by their authors according to their status and the political objectives they pursued.

These Anthropological studies were carried out by military personnel, particularly officers and administrators using the Anthropology then in force in European laboratories, which disdained the cultures of non-European peoples and non-Christian religions, all in the service of specific objectives aimed at consolidating the domination of European ethnocentrism tendencies.

It should be noted that they initially relied on military translators, then they learned the Arabic language in order to facilitate the process of communication and negotiation with the tribes and groups that showed heroism in front of them in fierce battles and showed great strength and courage in their resistance... What also helped them in discovery and research was their help with the ancient plans that existed in noble families, oral memory and participatory observation.

To clarify this we can say these monographic studies before and during French colonialism sought to uncover the secrets of Algerian society and the keys to its domination. They revealed important details resulting from high-precision field research on the culture of Algerian society including beliefs, way of thinking, perceptions and values, such as hospitality, generosity, charity, religious rituals, corners and songs and studied the most important aspects, precise social and cultural practices.

In this context, we mention the most prominent military men who wrote many anthropological studies: Daumas Eugène , Jules Combon and Corneille Trumelet... We also mention the most important orientalist who were interested in the study of the social structure of people, such as Louis Massignon, Jack Berque and Germaine Tillon(Tillon, 1966 :60), Ernest Gellner-Clifford Geertz.

### **3.The process of teaching anthropology in post-independence Algeria:**

Second stage:

After the independence of Algeria Anthropology took another unexpected turn as it became the science of the colonizer, based on the belief that it facilitated the process of colonization and served it.

Due to its clash with revolutionary nationalist ideology, it was subject to interpretations that hindered its teaching and policy makers insisted on rejecting it, while Algeria is a cultural and social field that needs this type of study, and benefit from it scientifically. However, he remained a prisoner of the idea that it was a tool of espionage that helped establish colonialist hegemony. In addition to these reasons, after independence, the State also turned to the teaching of exact and technical sciences due to their need for development, and marginalized everything that was not related to industrialization and technology.

Third stage:

It dates back to the period between 1971 and 1982. A real revolution took place in the field of higher education in general and sociology in particular, and the first university modification or reform took place which meant that teaching and training This process was rethought by linking it to the development project

adopted by the political power at that time, which is based on the idea of a socialist economy centered on the principle of planning in all areas.

During the 1980s, with the beginning of the new political and cultural movement of Algerian society (the events of October 1988) this stage saw the timid return of anthropology and social sciences in general to the forefront.

Due to the awareness and evolution of mentalities (revolutionary and historical) the view of this science changed and the idea of the need to re-teach it became firmly established. Because this studies that serve society and contribute to the development of its development projects.

As a result, the new breath of Anthropology was launched through these institutions:

- A national institute was opened for the first time at the University of Tlemcen to study folklore and teach anthropology, it is the "National Institute of Higher Education of Popular Culture" in 1984<sup>1</sup>.
- The research unit in anthropology, society and culture, URASC, was launched from the Institute of Sociology of Oran in 1986.
- This unit developed and became a research center in social and cultural anthropology (CRASC).
- The National Center for Research in Prehistory and Anthropology of Algiers.
- Institute of Amazigh Languages and Cultures of Tizi Ouzou.
- The specialization in anthropology was opened at the University of Constantine in cooperation with the National Center for Research in Social and Cultural Anthropology at the end of 2000.

Through these institutions, the status of anthropology in the Algerian academic community changed and an interest was shown in it with the aim of knowing the Algerian identity in its many ethnic and social differences began to train many students by opening master's and doctoral projects.

As well as "the Center for Research in Anthropology and Prehistory inherited from France the CRAPE -under the direction of Mouloud Mammeri- published a famous journal in which he describes the political, economic, social, cultural and general news religious situation.

Robert Julian also made attempts in the journal LA LYBIKA for all regions of Algeria, entitled La Pié Blanche.

Anthropological studies have also been conducted by Algerians and Westerners, such as: Pierre Bourdieu, and the works of certain novelists (Mouloud Pharaon, Mouloud Mammeri, Rachid Mimouni...) that Pierre Bourdieu classified as ethnographic research. Jean-Claude Vatan Philip Lucas(Lucas, 1975) is also cited.

There are other works by: Muhammad Boukhbaza, Ahmed Ben Naoum, Nadhir Maarouf, Claudine Chouli, Malek Chebl, Ashrati Ahmed, Tassadit Yassin, Wasila Tamzali and university studies, doctoral theses, and several works written by academics and students.

Concerning the university training sector, the year 2004 is the year of the establishment of the LMD system, which saw the opening of certain sectors with a master's degree in anthropology.

Finally in 2014, the Department of Anthropology was created as an independent specialty within seven departments of social sciences.

#### **4. Anthropological studies and research in Algerian academies post Covid-19:**

Since this negative view of anthropology has changed, it has taken a different turn and interest and its treatment has begun on the basis that it is a science at the service of society and humanity. Then the awareness of the importance of the studies it produces has increased after the Covid-19 health crisis, due to the awareness of the importance of studies of this type thanks to the efforts of researchers, anthropology has therefore found a new lease of life like other sciences and interest in it has increased.

In this new phase after the health crisis, Anthropology has experienced a series of changes, including:

- The publication of a set of publications and reports on the study and analysis of social phenomena and changes induced by the health crisis in particular the transformation of wedding and funeral rituals in Algerian society.
- Writing some articles addressing various subjects after Covid19 (Anthropology journal).
- Organizing many national and international forums and conferences in Algeria on various social, psychological, political and other phenomena addressed by Anthropology by study laboratories and research centers (Center for Research in Social and Cultural Anthropology).
- Ensuring that courses related to the Anthropology training program are taught in English because the important sources and books in this specialty are written in English Language.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/32763> le 12/09/2024 saidi med

### Conclusions

Based on what was presented in the above article, it can be concluded that the process of teaching anthropology in the Algerian academic scientific space initially faced rejection but has since undergone rehabilitation. Currently, anthropology holds a significant position among the sciences taught in Algeria.

This shift is attributed to the evolving perspectives of decision-makers and their recognition of the cognitive and political awareness that anthropology contributes as a discipline. Anthropology now serves the Algerian society by addressing its social, cultural, political, economic and ideological phenomena.

Comparing the historical and contemporary trajectories of anthropology in Algeria reveals a notable transformation. There is a marked increase in interest and recognition of the discipline, which aligns with the broader progress and development within the country. This evolution underscores the growing importance of anthropology in understanding and addressing the complexities of Algerian society.

### REFERENCES

1. Cambon, Jules, (1897), *Les Confréries religieuses musulmanes*, imprimeur-libraire-éditeur 4, place du gouvernement, Alger.
2. Edmond Pellissier (1847), *Quelque mots sur la colonisation militaire en Algérie*, Librairie Garnier Frères, Paris.
3. Jane E. Goodman and Paul A. Silverstein (2009), *Bourdieu in Algeria*, Nebraska Paperback, France.
4. Daumas, Eugène (1853), *Mœurs et coutumes de l'Algérie, Tell, kabylie, sahara*, Librairie Hachette, Paris.
5. Khatibi Abdelkébir, (1983), *Décolonisation de la sociologie (Double critique)*, Denoël, Paris.
6. P. Lucas & J. C. Vatin (1975), *L'Algérie des anthropologues*, FM/Fondation, Paris.
7. Rabah Aissaoui, Claire Eldridge (2017), *Algeria Revisited History: Culture and Identity*, Bloomsbury Publishing, UK.
8. Tillon Germaine, (1966), *Le Harem et les cousins*, éditions du seuil, Paris.
9. Trumelet, Corneille (1892), *l'Algérie légendaire en pèlerinage aux tombeaux des principaux thaumaturges de l'islam (tell et sahara)*, Editeur Augustin Challamel Librairie Adolphe Jourdan imprimeur-libraire, Paris.
10. Addi Lahouari, (2014) « Pierre Bourdieu l'Algérie et le pessimisme anthropologique », in the journal of Sociale Sciences, university of Sétif, (n° 19) pp 11 12 13
11. مادوي محمد "السوسيولوجيا المغربية من الرفض إلى إعادة الاعتبار" مجلة /إضافات، العدد 32 بيروت
12. www.jadaliyya.com/Details/32763 12/09/2024 saidi med
13. www.americananthro.org/learn-teach/what-is-anthropology/ 11/03/2025
14. www.britannica.com/science/anthropology 11/03/2025