
The Oral Communication System in the Traditional Algerian Society: An Anthropological Analysis of the Kabyle Folktale

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at highlighting the specific character of oral culture in the traditional Algerian society and of the most significant oral communication forms in circulation between individuals manifested in various artistic and literary forms handed down by generations through the ages, such as folktale, riddle, Bukala and Ziwrara, which are in fact oral literary and artistic forms of communicational dimensions, mainly related to women. Accordingly, we will try to highlight the women's attitude to these communication forms, especially to the folktale in the traditional Kabyle community and its role in socialization and development of communicative competence among children.

Keywords: *anthropology of communication, folktale, the Kabyle community, oral communication system, traditional Algerian society.*

INTRODUCTION

The traditional Algerian society is considered as a conservative society that possesses unique social, cultural and communication characteristics. Here people live according to a social system shaped by moral and religious values, as well as customs and traditions. To create a lasting interaction and communication between the members of this society, people have devised communication forms and literary arts, most of which are orally passed down through the generations, and this, is not limited only to Algeria, but to most African peoples rooted in 'Oral Tradition'.

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These are communication, artistic, and literary forms that have played certain role in imparting experiences, knowledge, social and cultural values, and they also became a way of expressing oneself or rather a sequence of accumulated social pressures, especially for women, who need some liberation from the male-dominated society. They are also means of entertainment, but at the same time, they contribute to developing the art of speech and abilities to properly handle various situations.

The same applies to the Kabyle community which is a part of the Algerian society. We define several popular communication and literary forms, whose roots extend to the ancient Amazigh civilization and they include poetry, riddles, and folktales. The latter seem to be the most prominent by virtue of their importance in the communication process and in creating the interaction between different generations; the producer is an elderly woman and the recipients are children. As for the message, it carries several meanings of wisdom and values that contribute greatly to socialization process of children and development of their communicative competence. All this, of course, takes place in a distinctive communication space, which adds a lot of specificity and suspense to the folktale.

Therefore, in this paper, we will address the importance of oral communication system in traditional Algerian society, with a focus on the folktale in the Kabyle region as one of the most important oral communication forms and literary arts that contributed to the shaping of the Kabyle community.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

Our introduction reveals that the topic of this research has a direct correlation with the so-called 'Oral Tradition', which carries a part of a people's culture, identity, history and civilization and continues to be the main interest of many researchers from different fields and specialities, such as history, anthropology and communication.

The oral way of transmission of 'Oral Tradition' from one generation to another has made it subject to criticism and scepticism with respect to historical information and social and cultural values it provides to societies. The narrator of a story, for example, may not tell it exactly as he heard it, as he can modify it either for the cause of memory lapses or deliberately to add excitement to the tale-telling process. However, oral traditions are used as the most important sources for the history of peoples without writing (The Oral Traditions of Africa N.d.: 1) and as the foundation of many written sources.

Chants, folktales, proverbs and poetry could be of potential value to ethnographers and historians who 'must regard these materials in much the same way as they had traditionally regarded written documents as capable of being exploited for both direct and indirect historical information' (Wilson 2015: 120). According to Jan Vansina, 'oral tradition is not necessarily untrustworthy as a historical source, but, on the contrary, merits a certain amount of credence within certain limits' (Vansina 1965: 1). Therefore, oral lore remains one of the most important sources that help us not only get acquainted or interact with our past but also build the future through their contribution to the children socialization. Besides, the power of spoken language catches children's imagination and takes them to another world full of ideas, dreams, myths, and fables (Wilson 2015: 122).

There are many definitions of oral tradition, but generally, they all agree that it is a group of messages that are passed down by word of mouth through generations and take different forms as indicated in World Affairs Council of Houston's definition:

Oral traditions are messages that are transmitted orally from one generation to another. The messages may be passed down through speech or song and may take the form of folktales and fables, epic histories and narrations, proverbs or sayings, and songs. Oral Traditions make it possible for a society to pass knowledge across generations without writing. They help people make sense of the world and are used to teach children and adults about important aspects of their culture (The Oral Traditions of Africa N.d.: 1).

The cultures of indigenous peoples are rooted in their oral tradition. This latter, as we said, is a cultural collection of spoken words that have been handed down for generations. Obviously, in oral tradition, words are the inheritance of an entire cultural community. According to David Henige, 'oral tradition, as a genre, regardless of their historicity, to qualify for that sobriquet, materials should have been transmitted over several generations and to some extent be the common property of a group of people' (Henige 1988: 232). According to Bruce Rosenberg, it 'is the transmission of cultural items from one member to another or others. Those items are heard, stored in memory, and, when appropriate, recalled at the moment of subsequent transmission' (Rosenberg 1987: 80). Accordingly, 'repetition' is the key to acquiring oral tradition by repeatedly listening to words and stories throughout the person's life to the point that it becomes an integral part of his/her identity. In addition to

that, the elders in the original culture are considered the essential mediator in the process of transmitting the oral tradition as they are the spiritual and cultural leaders and the living memory of their community. Therefore, their responsibility is to teach this knowledge and pass stories to the young, since the future generations will depend on those young people, who one day will become elderly, so they must learn and remember the ancestors' knowledge, culture and wisdom. Each generation is like a link in a chain that connects past to future (The Oral Tradition 2004: 2–3).

It is worth mentioning that some forms of oral traditions like stories and folktales are also used for entertainment, especially in traditional societies where facilities are almost absent. Children and even adults usually use them as a way of recreation and to break the life routine. Nevertheless, it is the implicit messages these forms carry which are the most important. They often illustrate central values, such as good and evil, love and truth. According to The Oral Tradition Excerpt from Aboriginal Perspectives which is mentioned in 'Walking Together: First Nations, Métis and Inuit Perspectives in Curriculum':

The values are rarely stated outright; listeners have to think about and consider the consequences of the characters' behaviour... A child's understanding of a specific story might differ from that of a young adult or adult. Children might appreciate the entertainment. Adults might appreciate the spiritual teachings. The same story might offer something to listeners of all ages. Listeners are expected to learn from their experiences and to use stories to guide their decisions throughout their lives (The Oral Tradition 2004: 4).

The oral tradition is a means of communication and transmission of oral folk culture. Nowadays it endues in many traditional societies, including the traditional Algerian society, where folktales, chants, legends, myths, proverbs, memories and sayings are a vibrant part of the different communities. This variety of communication oral delivery helps people to understand themselves, their culture, and the world (The Oral Tradition 2004: 2).

Algeria is considered one of the societies known for its rich oral tradition thanks to its social and cultural diversity, wide surface and rich history. Throughout its history, the territory has known the formation of the Amazigh / Berber kingdoms (Indigenous peoples of North Africa) before coming under the partial domination of the Romans, Vandals, and the Byzantines. Then the region witnessed the beginning of

Islamisation and partial Arabisation of the population after the Muslim conquests of North Africa which later led to the emergence of several local dynasties: the Rustamids, Zirids, Hammadids, *etc.* Subsequently, Algeria was occupied by the Spaniards, Ottomans and finally, the French colonisation lasting from 1830 till 1962.

This historical and cultural accumulation and cross-fertilization of civilizations have led to the emergence and development of oral tradition as a weapon to defend the self and the land. Over time, it contributed to the shaping of an Algerian mosaic society, in which we can find many communities that are distinguished by unique cultural, social and linguistic peculiarities. Kabylia is one of those communities, and it is situated in the north of the country, and most of its population live in small villages stretching along Djurdjura Mountains and Soumam hills.

In this traditional society, people's lives are shaped by religious values, and by customs and traditions that are derived from the ancient Amazigh culture. They are transmitted from one generation to another thanks to the oral tradition which has many forms and genres such as poetry, riddles, and folktales. The latter, according to some references, usually have a spatial framework (Setting) and a group of characters, in addition to the plot and the solution (Hansen and Kahnweiler 1993). A folktale or a story describes a series of actions and experiences that a certain number of people perform or undergo, whether they are real or imaginary (Boje, Luhman and Baack 1999: 342). As for its structure, it was defined more than 2300 years ago by Aristotle who argued that every folktale or story has a beginning, middle and end. This structure was adopted by many other people as reflecting 'how the human mind organizes reality' (Ibarra and Lineback 2005: 67).

Oracy in the Kabyle community is of great importance to the extent that an individual's merit, position and social hierarchy is contingent on his sayings, that is individuals are evaluated according to their speech and truthfulness since the Kabyle proverb says, *Argaz d awal* which can be approximately translated as 'A man of his saying or word.' In this paper, we will focus on the Kabyle folktale which is a significant oral form full of wisdom and generally conveying a moral or teaching a lesson. The Kabyle folktale is above all an African folktale, so its themes are similar to the ones existing in all African stories wherever they may be found. According to Ngugi wa Thiong'o, the African folktales run upon gods and goddesses worshipped by their ancestors, as well as around kings, leaders and heroes who led fierce wars throughout history. They describe the essence of human experience, the struggles for

the land, migrations and conflicts between the kingdoms. The African folktale, in general, expresses the secrets of existence, life and death. It reflects the relations among humans and also between human beings and the animal world; this is reflected in the African concept *Ubuntu* which means 'I am what I am, because of you' or simply 'humanity'. African folktales provide explanations of natural phenomena, teach morality, foster the sense of belonging, educate and at the same time entertain. The most favoured stories among Africans are those that contain an animal character endowed with human customs, beliefs and weaknesses. These kinds of stories aim at instilling moral values into the community members (Tuwe 2016: 2–3). In the present research, we will refer to *Tafunest Igujilen*, one of the most important Kabyle folktales which are worth studying and analyzing, but we will shed light on the Kabyle folktale system of communication in general by analysing it from communication and anthropological perspective through applying the Anthropology of Communication Approach.

Moreover, the paper will deal with oral culture in the traditional Algerian society in general by giving some examples concerning the oral communication forms in circulation between individuals in different Amazigh dialects or in vernacular Arabic such as poetry, *Bukalla*, and *Ziwrara*. On the other hand, we will cite the most prominent local and foreign research on the Algerian oral tradition which has contributed not only to accumulation and preservation of this heritage but also to its analysis and making it well known.

Accordingly, the present study, in addition to the introduction and this general overview, will address in the first part: The methodological framework, in the second part: Traditional Algerian society and oral communication culture, in the third part: The folktale as an oral system of communication in the Kabyle community (The folktale in the Kabyle community, The communication system of the Kabyle folktale), as for the fourth one, it will be devoted to the results and discussion, and lastly, the conclusion where we will state our conclusions and suggest possible topics for future research.

Finally, the mention of scholarly sources related to a specific topic is also an important step in carrying out any scientific research. In this paper, we critically engage with existing literature about the academic understanding of oral tradition, anthropology of communication, Kabyle folktale, traditional Algerian society and its oral culture. In this context, the following are highlighted: Pierre Bourdieu (The Algerians, 1962), Redouane Boudjema (Traditional forms of communication in Kabyle Region. An Anthropological Analysis Essay, 2007), Amina

Boudjellal Meghari (Analyse de la Structure et des Procédés de Narration et de Contage: Approche Comparative des Contes de Perrault et des Contes Chaouis, 2008), Barbara Johnstone and William M. Marcellino (Dell Hymes and the Ethnography of Communication, 2010), David Wilson D (A Study on Oral Tradition as a Communication Tool, 2015), David Henige (Oral, but Oral What? The Nomenclatures of Orality and Their Implications, 1988), Bruce A. Rosenberg (The Complexity of Oral Tradition, 1987), Jan Vansina (Oral Tradition a Study in Historical Methodology, 1965) Camille Lacoste-Dujardin (Des Femmes au Maghreb: Regards d'une Ethnologue sur Cinquante Ans d'Etudes et de Recherches, 2010), Emmanuel and Nedjima Plantade (Libya Psyche: Apuleius' Narrative and Berber Folktales, 2014), Kudakwashe Tuwe (The African Oral Tradition Paradigm of storytelling as a Methodological Framework: Employment Experiences for African Communities in New Zealand, 2016), Nora Aitoufella (Amazigh Women: an Illusion-the Depiction of Different Forms of Gender Bias in Kabyle Folktales, 2018), *etc.* Furthermore, as we ourselves are members of the Kabyle community, our cultural and social background helped us to understand and explain some details of its oral communication system, and not to forget that the interview we took with one of the Kabyle elderly women unveiled some peculiarities of traditional forms of communication in this community.

THE METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Since we will delve into the depth of traditional Algerian society through studying its oral communication system, especially what relates to the Kabyle community's folktale, and given our living in this community and the direct contact with the folktale atmosphere, the anthropological approach to communication seems an appropriate methodology for this research. But before we talk about the anthropology of communication, we must first refer to what anthropological studies are in general.

Anthropology is a science devoted to the study of the human being in a holistic way. The term is of Greek origin and derives from 'Anthropos' (man) or (human) and 'Logos' (knowledge). Anthropology is an integrative science that studies individuals in the context of society and culture to which he/she belongs while combining approaches from natural, social and human sciences. In 1749, Georges-Louis Leclerc was the first specialist to consider anthropology an independent discipline. Its development rested on two postures: as an analysis of the physical diversity of the human species (comparative

anatomy) and as a result of the comparative project of the description of the diversity of peoples (Les Définitions 2011). It is important to highlight that several disciplines have branched out from anthropology, which allowed the analysis of various phenomena in a deeper and more precise way, according to the scientific and epistemological field in which it appeared, among which the anthropology of communication that concerns us in this regard.

The anthropology of communication emerged in the academic field in the United States of America in 1962 through the establishment of a new research field in the American anthropology that is concerned with the study of speech as a cultural phenomenon only. The theoretical foundation of this new branch was laid by the works of Ward Goodenough, Ray Birdwhistell, Erving Goffman, Yves Winkin and others (Boudjema 2007: 93). However, the contribution of Dell Hymes remains the most prominent. He wrote an essay on the ethnography of communication to make it a cornerstone of what became known in 1964 as the anthropology of communication (Boudjema 2007: 94). Dell Hymes argued to move away from considering speech as an abstract model and investigate the diversity of speech as it is encountered in ethnographic fieldwork.

... Speakers of a language in particular communities are able to communicate with each other in a manner which is not only correct but also appropriate to the socio-cultural context. This ability involves a shared knowledge of the linguistic code as well as of the socio-cultural rules, norms and values which guide the conduct and interpretation of speech and other channels of communication in a community ... the ethnography of communication ... is concerned with the questions of what a person knows about appropriate patterns of language use in his or her community and how he or she learns about it (Johnstone and Marcellino 2010: 4).

This means that anthropology of communication according to Hymes is not related only to a linguistic scope but rather an ethnographic investment of behaviours, situations and things of a particular group on the basis that it has a communicative value (Lohisse 1998: 10).

Communication is above all an anthropological experience because the communication process occurs in real life, and it is linked to a cultural model of a particular group. And for communication to be effective within the speech community, the individual must be charac-

terized by communicative competence. In this context, Hymes notes, 'Ethnographies of communication must discover and explicate the competence that enables members of a community to conduct and interpret speech' (in Johnstone and Marcellino 2010: 6). Learning the language grammar is important, but it is not sufficient. It is necessary to know how and when we use the language in real life. For this, exploring communicative competence within the speech community is the core of ethnography of communication. This is why Hymes defines social units and units of communication ethnography analysis.

TRADITIONAL ALGERIAN SOCIETY AND ORAL COMMUNICATION CULTURE

African culture, in general, is related to 'Oral tradition' in the first place, where the African peoples give unparalleled attention to oral communication, which emerges in various forms and genres. The individuals build relationships with imagination and mythology which make a part and essential component of their unique civilization and culture that differs from other cultures of the world.

In many parts of Africa, villagers gather around fire after dinner to listen to tales and legends that are often told in an engaging and attractive style that makes them forget their hardships. Once the topic is determined, a storyteller starts telling a folktale or myth. The storytelling is subjective and accompanied by songs, drums, clapping and dancing, as Chinua Achebe says. In addition, the storytellers use different expressive and artistic means: for example, they use proverbs, and the transition from one tone to another and from one rhythm to another to attract the listeners' attention and express different characters of the story. Thus, as Ngugi wa Thiong'o argues, the process of telling and listening to a story in all its meanings of art, creativity and communication is not only generally aimed at achieving entertainment, but also has psychological dimensions for the members of a society, especially children (in Tuwe 2016: 2).

Most of the African tales cover historical events, wars and the gods worshipped by their predecessors. The written traditions did not live up to the language in every sense of the word. Rather, it was the oral traditions that contributed to preserving their history and collective memory (Tuwe 2016: 2). The folktale is a vivid example of the importance of oral tradition in transmitting history, values, thoughts, and lifestyles, as it is a communication form and a very ancient artistic oral expression, which, as Bernard Colin says, dates back to about fifty thousand years (URL: <http://www.samcannarozzi.com/accueil>).

As to the traditional Algerian society, which is an integral part of Africa, the circulating oral culture and used communication forms do not differ much from the ones existing in other parts of the African continent. Algeria is a vast country characterized by its cultural peculiarities that are still preserved despite the harsh conditions that North Africa has endured throughout its history. In fact, it is just the oral traditions that have ensured its continuity through a set of communication, literary and artistic forms such as folktales, poetry, riddles, proverbs, *etc.* Given their importance and multiple functions within the Algerian social milieu and their distinctive aesthetic templates, they attracted the attention of many curious foreign and local researchers who attended to their collection and codification and studied them as communication, literary and artistic phenomena within traditional Algerian society.

The starting point for the foreign research was the 1880s, when the American Secretary of State Henry Clay under the rule of President John Quincy Adams assigned the linguist and diplomat William Brown Hodgson to North Africa. In order to best accomplish his mission in assisting the Consul General in Algiers, Hodgson first pursued training in the Amazigh linguistics, and it was at that time that he began his lifelong fascination with the Berbers and their ancient language. His efforts culminated in the publication of a group of Amazigh folk songs and folktales in 1828 (Johnson 2006).

As for the period of the French occupation of Algeria, the interest of foreign researchers in general and of the French in particular in the Algerian oral culture grew. This happened for two main reasons: the first was the curiosity in getting to know the other, and the second was the attempt to combine the military mission and social sciences, which was one of the most important strategies employed by France in its colonies to know more about their peoples and then to control them. For instance, the French settler Gustave Mercier published two articles on the folktale in the Aures region, which were republished in the form of two brochures in the Chawi Berber dialect with a translation in French. The first entitled '*The Chawia of the Aures*' was published in 1896, while the second came out in 1900 and was entitled '*Five Berber texts in the Chawi Dialect*.' Moreover, Gaudefroy-Demombynes and Abdelaziz Zenagui published the so-called '*Tales in Tlemcen Vulgar Arabic*' in the '*Asian Journal*' in 1897. Later, many other studies appeared, like the one by Bou-Yabès about the Kabyle folktale (Boudjellal Meghari 2008: 117–118).

Undoubtedly, most of those interested in the Algerian culture and oral communication forms in the period between the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century are foreigners, mostly French by virtue of the French occupation of Algeria. However, this did not prevent the emergence of some valuable contributions from local researchers despite the harsh social conditions they were enduring. One example is Si Amar U Said Boulifa, who is considered as the first to write in the Berber language about Kabylia and its history. Another example is the academician Mohamed Bencheneb, whose many works contributed to preservation of part of the Algerian oral tradition such as *'Vernacular Proverbs in Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco,'* which was issued in three parts in 1907 (Boudjellal Meghari 2008: 119–120).

One should also mention the French ethnographer Joseph Desparmet, who paid much attention to the study of the oral vernacular Arabic during his stay in Algeria between 1890 and 1940; in 1913, he managed to describe in French the oral rituals of Algeria, including poetry, especially the *Bukalat* (Plural form of *Bukala*) that were in circulation in vernacular Arabic among women in some cities like Blida, Constantine, Cherchel, Tlemcen and Algiers. *Bukala* is a poem of four to ten lines or more which ends by the rhyme and carries many implied meanings and values (Slyomovics 2014: 146).

In 1932, in his second analytical study on the political and social connection between the Algerian colloquial Arabic, classical Arabic, French, and Tamazight (Berber or Amazigh language), Joseph Desparmet pointed out that when observing the linguistic map of Algeria, one can perceive the Maghreb linguistic genius that hid behind a triple linguistic wall. The first and earliest defensive line is the Amazigh dialects, the second is the colloquial Arabic, while the third is the classical Arabic (Slyomovics 2014: 148–149). It is worth mentioning that the psychologist Nouredine Taoualbi tried to revive Joseph Desparmet's works to evaluate the roles of feminist rituals that stood as linguistic and cultural barriers against the ongoing French acculturation policy (Toualbi 1984).

During the Algerian Liberation War (1954–1962), the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu analysed the increasing political awareness among citizens. This was evident in the various forms of communication, oral literary expression, and folk songs, which had the same social impact and emotional power as a newspaper, a heroic epic, or a historical story. Oral traditions are usually anonymous and inspired by certain events, condemning the atrocities of war, praising the heroism of the *Mujahedeen* and expressing hope and peace. Whether it is

in Tamazight or Arabic, they were simple and often accompanied by traditional musical rhythms (Bourdieu 1962: 189).

In the post-independence period, local researchers started to get interested in such studies, whilst French researchers kept working on the same field and at the same pace, like Jeanne Scelles-Millie who was intent on making bridges between Islam and Christianity and contributed to preserving a part of the cultural heritage of North Africa by her various works such as *'Saharian Tales of Souf'* in 1964, and *'Mysterious Tales of North Africa'* in 1972 (Boudjellal Meghari 2008: 124). As for the Algerian investigators who gained their reputation in this field, we should mention Mouloud Mammeri who published several books on the Algerian oral culture, especially on the Kabyle poetry, including his poetry collection *'Poems of Si Mohand U M'hand'* in 1965.

Contrary to poetry, *Bukala*, folktales and riddles that many local and foreign researchers discussed and wrote about, many other forms of communication and other oral literary arts did not receive attention. A relevant example is *Ziwrara*, which is one of the most important forms of oral communication in Algeria that circulated in Kabylia. The villagers used it as a means to stimulate and entertain while harvesting olives in the fields. It can be considered a kind of ritual circulating in the Kabyle community and an artistic form of communication similar to chanting. Women from one of the families who harvest olives would begin addressing other women from another family who, in turn, harvest olives in another nearby field, with a discourse that carries many messages such as complimenting the owners of the fields (men) and the *Mujahedeen*, as well as about poverty, hope and others. Then, it is the turn of women from the opposite side, who respond to them in the same way and with the same performance. The communication process continues until the end of the day, but intermittently (Khokha, personal communication, September 1st, 2019). Thus, *Ziwrara* that was circulating in an open communication space (field) was a real breath of fresh air to women who suffer, in a way, from a male-dominated society, and it was also a way or a ploy by which the villagers forget their tiredness from work, hunger and the cold weather in the fields.

THE FOLKTALE AS AN ORAL SYSTEM OF COMMUNICATION IN THE KABYLE COMMUNITY

The folktale in the Kabyle community

The Amazigh society, like other societies in the African continent, relies on oral communication to impart experiences, knowledge, social, cultural and religious values. That is why we find many artistic communication forms, including folktales that have been very popular in different Amazigh communities. There is a group of historical references that demonstrate the interest of the Amazighs in this folk art, like Ibn Khaldun and the Amazigh king Yuba II who mentioned in his encyclopaedic book 'Lybica' the well-known folktale '*The Venomous Lion*' that is still being told by grandmothers in the countryside (Hamdaoui 2011). '*The Metamorphoses*' by the Amazigh writer Lucius Apuleius or *Afulay* is considered the first completed novel in the history of humanity which dates back to the year 125 BC. The references confirm that the events that permeate the novel are inspired by ancient Amazigh oral sources. It is only natural to consider that Apuleius may have heard the story during his childhood in Madauros (the present-day Souk Ahras), on the borders of Roman Numidia, where the 'Libyan' culture was pervasive in the second century CE (Plantade E. and Plantade N. 2014: 174).

It is worthwhile to note that in 1920, the French Henri Basset was the first who pointed out the relationship between Amazigh oral traditions and Apuleius's narrative after translating his collection of several Kabyle folktales. Meanwhile, the German ethnologist Leo Frobenius had an insight into the role that the Amazigh oral narratives had played in the formation of a certain number of motifs that existed in the Greco-Roman written culture (Plantade E. and Plantade N. 2014: 174). During the period of French colonialism, he collected in Kabyle an Amazigh folktale that is entitled '*The Son of the Ogress*,' and he suggested a three-fold classification of Kabyle narratives (Wisdom, The Monstrous, and The Fabulous) (Zerar 2012: 26). Knowing that, '*The Son of the Ogress*' immediately struck two early readers of Frobenius: the philologist Weinreich and the archivist Dermenghem (Plantade E. and Plantade N. 2014: 176).

According to Pierre Henri Savignac, the French soldiers were the first to care about the Amazigh folklore during the period of occupation of Algeria. This is evidenced by the writings of the Baron Henri Aucapitaine who wrote extensively about the Kabyle community, and the General Adolphe Hanoteau who published a book in 1858 entitled

'*A Kabyle Grammar Essay.*' These contributions remain limited as most of them were intended to satisfy the soldiers' curiosity and nothing more. In this regard, Adolphe Hanoteau considered the collected Kabyle folktales 'simple, naive and not important' (in Savignac 1978: 199–202); however, his research facilitated the path for other contributions, for example, for William Brown Hodgson.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, William Brown Hodgson collected the folktales in the Kabyle region and conveyed them from the Amazigh oral tradition to the Latin script; whereas in 1882, the clergyman Le Père Rivière devoted three books to the Kabyle folktales with partial translation. Still the most remarkable work in this field remains the one by Auguste Mouliéras who between 1893 and 1897 published two volumes of Kabyle texts entitled '*Myths and Wonderful Tales of Grand Kabylia*' (Hamdaoui 2011) which was partially translated in 1965 by the specialist in the Kabyle folktale Camille Lacoste-Dujardin (Boudjellal Meghari 2008: 117).

As for the local researchers, between the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, Si Amar u Said Boulifa collected some folktales in the Kabyle region and thus, became one of the local pioneers, alongside Belkacem Ben Sedira, who also got interested in the Kabyle folk culture. His aim was not only to collect folktales but also to correct the misconceptions and mistakes made by some foreign researchers in their reproduction, translation and analysis of those folktales. Moreover, his contribution paved the way for other Algerian intellectuals to engage in research of their oral heritage, here one may speak about Mouloud Feraoun, Malek Ouary, and Mouloud Mammeri who published '*Machaho, Berber Tales from Kabylia*' and '*Tellemchaho, Berber Tales from Kabylia*' in 1980. As for Taos Amrouche, she published a collection of Kabyle folktales in a book entitled '*The Magic Grain.*' She collected them directly from her poet mother Fadhma Ath Mansour in the region of 'Ath Abbas' in Bejaia. After that, there came another generation of Kabyle researchers who assumed the responsibility for preserving their oral heritage and their Amazigh language, the examples here are Tahar Oussedik and Youcef Alliouï who published many notable books, including the Kabyle folktales '*The Orphans' Cow*' in 2017 and '*Wisdoms of the Olive Tree*' in 2009 (Alliouï N.d.).

The communication system of the Kabyle folktale (*Tamacahutt* or *Tameayt*)

To preserve the traditions of union and foster the group spirit among members of the Kabyle family in the context of the communication space 'home', the elderly started to use various traditional forms of oral communication, such as poetry and riddles. As for the folktale, it is the most important among these forms, as it reflects social and religious meanings and values, thus performing cultural, educational, philosophical and religious functions, not to forget its important role in entertainment.

The folktale in the Kabyle community is a system of oral communication which contributed to the development of communicative competence, especially of children as one of the parties in the communication process. A folktale is told at bedtime and never in the daytime, otherwise, both children and narrator will be cursed. Children would gather in the room with the stove (*Lkanun*) and form a circle to listen to a storyteller who is often a grandmother or an elderly woman with enormous communication abilities. As for men, they do not pay much attention to folktales, and this is, firstly, because they have other recreational forms, and secondly, they consider telling folktales to be female business, and it is unreasonable in traditional Kabyle society that men and women participate in the same forms of entertainment (Boudjema 2007: 141). And given that the Kabyle community is considered a male-dominated society, oral productions allow women to escape the silence imposed on them, and to escape the individuals who impose that 'men' (Aitoufella 2018: 110).

In some other countries of the world, for example, in peasant Russia of the first half of the last century, there was general enthusiasm for storytelling, and the best storytellers were often men. But in the Mediterranean countries, in North Africa, and in particular, in Kabylia, the best storytellers, according to Nora Aitoufella, are 'illiterate old women who narrate with art, magic and detail. They respect the time, place, gender and age of listeners and also respect the obligations related to the narrative of this kind of tale that we call *Tamacahutt*' (Aitoufella 2018: 112).

Accordingly, the storytelling session, which consists of a producer (mostly a grandmother) and a recipient (mostly children) begins with an opening phrase, '*Amacahu qed llahu yer tameayt-iw ad telhu, ad timyur anect n wejgu, ad teɣvae amzun d saru*' (its approximate translation is 'Oh folktale! My folktale will be fascinating and as

long as a pole or a textile thread') and listeners after that repeat the word '*Ahu*' which means that they are ready to receive messages (The folktale's content). The storyteller responds with the phrase '*Tafat ad telhu,*' which carries the storyteller's wish that the folktale is associated to the audience with goodness. And when she finishes the narration, she usually says, '*Tameayt-iw lwad lwad mliy-tt-id i warrac lejwad, cwaṭen ad ten-yexzu Rebbi, ma d kunwi ad awen-yeefu Rebbi,*' which is a kind of compliment to children and a way of asking God's forgiveness. The listeners, then, thank her and ask Allah, in turn, to bless and forgive her, by saying '*Ad am-yeefu Rebbi.*'

As for the narration itself, the grandmother uses the suspense style, physical movements (body language), and tones of voice that change as the situation and the expressed character changes. Thanks to all these skills and techniques, the grandmother can draw the children's attention and make them interact and immerse in the depth of the folktale and its values, especially since the silence of the night adds a lot of meanings to the communication space and communication process. The folktale, then, not only develops the communicative competence of the listening child but goes beyond that in making him able to imagine, visualize and analyze, in addition to entertainment and learning many values such as good and evil.

If we apply Dell Hymes's 'Speaking Model' (Milburn, N.d.) of Anthropology of Communication to the Kabyle folktale, the result would be:

– **Situation:** which includes both the scene and the setting (Place: In the room where the stove (*Lkanun*) is located. Time: at night at bedtime. Atmosphere: The night silence and tranquillity, the darkness and fear).

– **Participants:** This component includes the people present and the roles they play (The storyteller or the sender is often the grandmother and the receiver is the children).

– **Ends:** Transmission of knowledge and history and fostering social, cultural, educational and religious values. Besides, it aims at developing the children's communicative competence).

– **Acts:** or speech acts include both form and content. That is, any action can be considered a communicative action if it conveys meaning to the participants (Form: The grandmother generally uses a simple language but from time to time, she can use proverbs, poetry, jocks and chanting. Content: The Kabyle folktale conveys several meanings and lessons that can help a child to better understand his/her

community, it is characterised by the diversity of its themes and genres like tragedy and comedy).

– **Key:** How the speech sounds or is delivered (The grandmother's tone of voice changes as the situation and the expressed character change. This may lead to the creation of suspense, thrill, enthusiasm, and interaction).

– **Instrumentality:** or the channel through which communication flows can be examined (The process of telling a folktale in traditional Kabyle society is always oral, from one person – ‘a grandmother’ – to a group of people – ‘children’ – that is a face-to-face communication. However, the storyteller can use the decor, objects and even the body language to explain the folktale events and increase the level of suspense).

– **Norms:** of communication or the rules guiding the talk and its interpretation can reveal meaning (Both grandmother and children follow some rules in the process of telling/listening to a folktale and its organisation, for example, the expressions like *Amacahu*, *Tafat ad telhu Ahu*, *Ad am-yeefu Rebbi* not only guide the sender and the recipient, but also spark interaction between them).

– **Genres:** A folktale in the traditional Kabyle society is an oral system of communication through which a grandmother may use other oral artistic, literary and communication forms such as proverbs, poetry and chanting. Moreover, the folktale discourse can include apologies and prayers, etc.

‘*Tafunast n yigujilen*’ or ‘The Orphans' Cow’ is considered one of the most popular folktales, not only in the Kabyle community but in all parts of Algeria, as it is derived from the ancient Amazigh oral tradition. It differs from one region to another in some details, but the general content is the same. The story is briefly about the orphans Aisha and her little brother Ali who suffered a lot from their stepmother's jealousy. She hated them because of their beauty and good upbringing, different from her daughter Betellis.

Fortunately for them, they had a cow, whenever they feel hungry, they milk it secretly. But the stepmother quickly caught them and asked Betellis to go to suckling the cow as well, but the cow butted her and blinded one of her eyes. The stepmother could not bear what happened to her daughter, so she sold the cow for the cheapest price as revenge... The sister and brother were very sad. They went to their mother's grave, weeping for their condition and sufferings; suddenly two sources of honey and butter came out of the grave. Thus, whenever they felt hungry, they went to their mother's grave, and that contin-

ued until the stepmother was on to them. So, she demanded from Bettelis to accompany her sister and brother in law to the grave and drink from the sources, but the surprise, instead of honey and butter, was blood and pus that coming out! ... The stepmother set fire to the grave, and nothing is left for Aisha and Ali except to escape from home. Indeed, the sister and brother left and walked for weeks to an unknown destiny.

One day, Ali felt thirsty and drank from the fountain from which he should not drink, as a result, he turned into a gazelle, and the situation became more difficult for Aisha. However, her destiny led her to marry the Sultan of the town and she lived in happiness along with her brother Ali the Gazelle. Unfortunately, the stepmother found their place, and she decided to send Bettelis to work inside the Sultan's palace. One day, Bettelis threw Aisha, who was pregnant, into the well. She seized the opportunity and took her place as the Sultan's wife. She ordered the slaughter of Ali the Gazelle, but he managed to escape. He used to go every morning at dawn to the edge of the well, repeating in a sad rhythm: 'They are sharpening knives for the poor Ali the Gazelle,' and Aisha responded him in the same rhythm: 'Escape! Escape! Ahsen and Elhussin on my lap and the snakes are around me!' Fortunately, the Sultan, with the help of the town's Imam, heard the sister and brother, so he hurried to take Aisha and his two sons out of the well. In the end, Bettelis was killed; Aisha and Ali the Gazelle lived in peace and happiness.

After presenting this summary, we deduce that this folktale carries a lot of values that mostly deal with the topic of good and evil, such as love and hate, brotherhood, a spirit of responsibility, jealousy, revenge... *etc.* It also gives a lot of lessons and wisdom, especially as it relates to mother and the extent of her importance for every person's life. She is the pillar of home, as soon as she is lost, the family disperses. As for the second topic, it touches the orphans, so the folktale shows us the sufferings of orphaned children and the hardness of their life after losing their mothers. As for the last topic, it is hope. No matter how hard life is, with patience flourished future will come.

We also deduce that due to their oral transmission from one generation to another, the Kabyle folktales have been affected by other cultures over time. For example, the names 'Aisha' and 'Ali', were probably derived from the Islamic culture, just like the names 'Ahsen' and 'Elhussin' that are considered the names of the Prophet Muhammad's grandsons, peace be upon him (Al-Hassan and Al-Hussein), and the same applies to the character of the mosque's Imam. Moreover, we

have understood that Ali's transformation from human to gazelle confirms the importance of these animal figures in the Amazigh folktale in general, just like Apuleius's 'Metamorphoses' when a man turned into a donkey.

Since the folktale is a form of communication and a literary form related to woman, it probably helps her to escape from the male-dominated society in which she lives. For this reason, the absence of men's role and status is evident in this folktale while the role of women emerges as a form of revenge and self-assertion, even if imaginatively. Aisha is the protagonist and the stepmother is the antagonist, while the role of the father and his son Ali, despite their importance, remains secondary. Accordingly, the gender issue is one of the most important topics of this folktale. In this regard, Camille Lacoste-Dujardin says:

The Kabyle women have exploited the imagination, by creating a formidable character, which they handle in the form of a weapon intended for men: this famous *Teryel* 'The ogress' is a wild, free, rebellious, and antisocial woman who refuses house arrest to serve men, cook, and have children, on the contrary, she always seeks to devour them (Lacoste-Dujardin 2010: 85).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the traditional Algerian society, several oral communication and literary art forms are distinguished. They initially attracted the foreign interest especially on the part of the French, and this is obviously due to historical reasons and the long French occupation of Algeria. However, in the course of time, many Algerian researchers and intellectuals conducted different anthropological studies on their traditional society and its oral culture.

These oral forms of communication and literary arts greatly contributed to activating the communication process and interaction between individuals within a conservative male-dominated society. For example, sessions for telling poetry, riddles, *Bukalat* and folktales create exceptional communication spaces, especially for women who need such an escape not only for entertainment, but also to express freely their thoughts, pains and hopes. Despite this, the issue of misogynistic oppression remains urgent in the traditional Algerian society, depending on each region and its customs. The Tuareg people, for instance, attach a great importance to women within society and show respect as well as esteem for them. Women in the Tuareg community

enjoy social authority and status, imposed by traditions and by the history of the prominent Tuareg personality and spiritual mother, the Queen Tin Hinan, whose influence on the social organisation appears to be still perceived (Lacoste-Dujardin 2010: 81). Also, some Algerian women have remarkably contributed to social and political life throughout history, for example, Queen Dihya or Kahina who succeeded King Kusaila in the rule of the Amazighs for 35 years, Princess Cyria, the sister of the leader Firmus who fought alongside her brother in his battles against the Romans in the fourth century AD, and other personalities who were and still remain a source of inspiration for many Algerian women, for example, for Lalla Fadhma n'Soumer, the iconic figure of national resistance movement during the first years of the French colonial invasion of Algeria.

In relation to the content of these communication and literary forms, we can assert that most of them contribute to socialization of children, as they convey profound lessons, values and principles inspired by the diverse cultural and social mosaic in Algeria. The Kabyle folktale, being one of the most significant oral communication systems, highlights the role of women as an engine of communication process with account that they are simultaneously the senders and the source of information. As for the receptive audience, it is a group of children who need to develop their cognitive, linguistic and communicative competences to become active members of society. The folktales, then, contain a great deal of implicit messages and wisdom that a listener extracts when reaching the story endings, and this is exactly what we have deduced after a brief analysis of 'The Orphans' Cow' tale.

Regarding the spatio-temporal setting of narration, the folktale is supposed to be always told at night; this must be respected, otherwise, the parties of the communication process would be cursed. These thoughts and traditions, in addition to grandmother's skills of narration (tones of voice, selection of words, mimicking, body language, chanting, *etc.*), make the folktale in traditional Kabyle community remarkable and prominent.

CONCLUSION

We conclude that Algeria's size, its cultural patchwork and multilingualism are all factors that have contributed to the emergence, spread, and diversity of oral culture within traditional Algerian society. This oral heritage may appear in different popular, literary and artistic forms of communicational dimensions where they are considered as

entertaining tools and as a way to enable the young children's socialization, in addition to the fact that it helps to spark and enliven interaction between women as they freely express themselves in a male-dominated social milieu.

A folktale in traditional Kabyle community, for instance, is of great importance as it is a bridge between two or more generations, that is, between the ascendants (grandmothers) and their descendants (children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren), or even the neighbours' children; a folktale also connects the world of imagination to that of reality by enabling people to deduce lessons and embody them in everyday life. All this occurs within the communication space 'a room where *Lkanun* is located,' and by means of an oral communication system that is controlled by women, as they are the senders and the source of the message or information. As for the recipient, they are the listening children.

Given the importance of our oral heritage, it is now paramount to collaborate to find new ways to protect the remainder from loss, especially with the emergence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) that may allow it to appear in digital communication forms, and then, they may transcend their oral communication system to other systems. The social networking sites like YouTube can be an alternative and a communication medium for the emergence of the interactive audiovisual *Bukalat*, proverbs and folktales in the virtual space. Therefore, they do not only contribute to their preservation, but also help to disseminate them worldwide.

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