

## Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Traditional Artistic Crafts in Algeria

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### Abstract

Traditional artistic crafts constitute an integral component of intangible cultural heritage, insofar as they embody inherited knowledge and skills that express people's identity and cultural legacy. Safeguarding this heritage represents an urgent necessity to ensure its continuity and transmission to future generations while also creating conditions that enable artisans to continue practising their crafts and improving their livelihoods. Such safeguarding is achieved through legislative frameworks and through the inclusion of these practices in intangible cultural heritage safeguarding lists at both the national and international levels, thereby contributing to their valorisation, transmission, dissemination, recognition, and promotion within international, national, and local fora.

**Keywords:** Traditional artistic crafts; intangible cultural heritage; Algeria.

### Introduction:

Every nation takes pride in its intangible cultural heritage, as it constitutes an essential component of its history, civilisation, and identity. It also represents a covenantal document linking past, present, and future generations, documenting the bonds among them and serving as a bridge

between ancestors, children, and grandchildren while preserving the distinctive identity that sets a nation apart from others. Algeria possesses a diverse intangible cultural heritage that reflects the various historical periods it has experienced, with each region maintaining a particular heritage that distinguishes it from others. This diversity contributes to strengthening the sense of identity and continuity while also fostering respect for cultural diversity and encouraging human creativity. Despite the significance of traditional artistic crafts as among the most prominent expressions of intangible cultural heritage, they currently face multiple challenges that threaten their continuity. Among these challenges are the lack of training, the declining interest among young people in practising traditional manual crafts, the confinement of the transmission of artisanal skills and knowledge within the family sphere, and the growing impact of globalisation. In light of these factors, the following problem is raised:

*How can the intangible cultural heritage of traditional artistic craft products in Algeria be safeguarded?*

### 1) Intangible cultural heritage and traditional artistic crafts

Intangible cultural heritage, encompassing inherited knowledge, skills, and practices, is one of the most significant manifestations of communities' identity and the continuity of their cultural diversity. Traditional artistic crafts fall within this heritage insofar as they represent a living expression that combines cultural value with inherited traditional skills.

### 1.1) Concepts of Intangible Cultural Heritage

The concept of intangible cultural heritage has changed considerably over recent decades, due in part to the instruments developed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). Intangible cultural heritage is not limited to monuments and collections of artefacts; rather, it encompasses several dimensions, which are examined through the definitions provided by UNESCO and by the Algerian legislature.

#### 1.1.1) Definition According to UNESCO:

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) defined intangible cultural heritage, pursuant to the 2003 Paris Convention for its safeguarding, as "the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their intangible cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of

identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.”<sup>1</sup>

In light of the above definition, intangible cultural heritage is manifested in the following domains: <sup>2</sup> oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle for the expression of intangible cultural heritage; performing arts; practices concerning nature and the universe; and skills associated with traditional craftsmanship.

#### 1.1.2) Definition According to the Algerian legislator:

The Algerian legislature defined it in Article 67 of Law 98–04 of 15 January 1998, concerning the protection of cultural heritage, as <sup>3</sup>a set of knowledge, social representations, know-how, skills, competences, or techniques based on tradition in various fields of cultural heritage, representing the true meanings of attachment to cultural identity and held by a person or a group of persons. It includes the following fields: <sup>4</sup> ethnomusicology; traditional and popular songs; chants and melodies; theatre; the art of dance and kinetic rhythms; religious celebrations; culinary arts; oral literary expressions; historical narratives; tales; maxims; myths; riddles; proverbs; aphorisms; homilies; and traditional games.

On the basis of the two preceding definitions, it may be concluded that intangible cultural heritage encompasses all social, mental, and anthropological works that collectively offer narratives of events through particular modes, distinctive dialects for storytelling, and individual and collective itineraries that constitute the shared identities of nations.

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO. “Intangible Cultural Heritage along the Silk Roads.” Accessed 17 July 2023.

<https://ar.unesco.org/silkroad/altrath-althqafy-ghyr-almady-ly-twl-tryq-alhryr>

<sup>2</sup> UNESCO. 2003. *Convention pour la sauvegarde du patrimoine culturel immatériel*. Accessed 20 July 2023. [https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000132540\\_fr](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000132540_fr)

<sup>3</sup> Algeria. 1998. *Law No. 98–04, dated 20 Šafar 1419 AH (15 June 1998), relating to the protection of cultural heritage*. Official Gazette, no. 44 (1998), 13.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

## 1.2) Definition of traditional artistic crafting in Algeria

Algerian artistic crafts have served as a means of expressing emotions; religious beliefs; and cultural, political, and social affiliations throughout history. They reflect the way of life and the characteristics of the societies in which they were produced, and they embody their history and local symbols. This rich artistic legacy is worthy of transmission from one generation to another to ensure the continuity of cultural identity and preserve its historical value.

### 1.2.1) Definition of Traditional Artistic Craftsmanship in Algeria

The Algerian legislature defined it, pursuant to Article 6 of Ordinance No. 96–01, as<sup>5</sup> "any production in which manual work predominates, and in which the artisan sometimes resorts to machines to manufacture utilitarian or decorative items of an artistic character that allow for the transmission of ethnically rooted skills. Traditional artistic craftsmanship is distinguished by its authenticity, unique character, and creativity. The list comprises 75 artisanal activities distributed across eight sectors, each sector designated by code 01. The activities are entered into the list under specified designations as follows:<sup>6</sup>

1. the manufacture of foodstuffs, comprising ten activities;
2. the manufacture of clay, stone, glass, gypsum, etc.,etc., comprising eleven activities;
3. the manufacture of metals (including precious metals), comprising eight activities;

4. the manufacture of wood and its derivatives, comprising eighteen activities;
5. Manufacturing wool and similar materials, comprising seven activities;
6. The manufacture of textiles, comprising four activities;
7. Manufacturing of leather, comprising six activities;
8. The manufacture of miscellaneous materials comprises eleven activities."

The artisanal artistic product constitutes an important part of intangible cultural heritage, notwithstanding the apparent contradiction between the tangible character of artisanal artistic products and the nature of intangible heritage. This contradiction arises because intangible elements are embodied in a material medium.<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, the cultural value of the artisanal product does not lie in its material form in and of itself, as much as in the stock of traditional knowledge and skills that it bears and transmits across generations. By way of example, the "burnous" constitutes, in this context, a tangible material element. However, its heritage value derives not merely from its physical form but also from the intangible reservoir of knowledge, experience, and traditional skills associated with its manufacture. Such knowledge includes methods for transforming raw materials (camel hair, wool, etc.) into fabric and for sewing it, drawing on the artisan's acquired knowledge and technical skills. For this reason, this body of knowledge is classified as part of intangible cultural heritage, insofar as it is the essence of the craft and the source of its continuity. In contrast, burnous products constitute the material medium through which that knowledge is embodied.

<sup>5</sup> Algeria. 1996. *Ordinance No. 96–01, dated 23 Sha‘bān 1416 AH (10 January 1996), determining the rules governing traditional crafts and handicrafts*. Official Gazette, no. 3 (1996), 4.

<sup>6</sup> Mahboub Ben Hamouda. 2012. "Al-Niẓām al-Ḍarībī al-Maḥallī Uslūb Fa‘‘āl li-Da‘m al-Ṣinā‘āt al-Taqlīdiyya wa al-Ḥirafīyya fī al-Jazā‘ir." *Majallat fī al-Iqtisād wa al-Tijāra wa al-Māliyya* 1 (1): 11–52.

<sup>7</sup> Ministère de la Culture. *Patrimoine culturel oral et immatériel de l'humanité en pays d'islam*. Algeria: Helium Communication Désigne, 13.  
<https://www.mama-dz.com/media/files/publication/le-patrimoine-culturel-oral-et-immateriel-de-lhumanite-en-pays-dislam.pdf>

### 1.2.2) Importance of Traditional Artistic Craft Products in Algeria

Traditional artistic craft products in Algeria are among the fundamental pillars of economic, social, and cultural development. Although it is difficult to measure their impact with precision owing to the absence of data and their prevalence within the informal economy, it is nonetheless possible to identify specific indicators that demonstrate their importance:

- Traditional artistic craftsmanship is an essential element of a society's culture, reflecting its traditions, values, and identity. It is transmitted across generations, thereby forming a rich repository of information about its civilisation and its material, intellectual, and spiritual history.<sup>8</sup> Traditional artistic products also serve as a means of communication between individuals and communities, conveying cultural and social messages through symbols, designs, and decorative motifs so that future generations may become acquainted with the customs and traditions of their forebears.<sup>9</sup> For example, the colours, motifs, and dimensions of the carpet serve as a means of communication among people; they also function as a guide for people across generations, assisting in understanding the development of civilisations over time.
- Traditional artistic craftsmanship supports tourism by introducing local culture, attracting tourists, and encouraging the purchase of traditional craft products, thereby increasing

tourism expenditures and state revenues. Conversely, tourist demand motivates artisans to improve production quality, develop their skills, and ensure the sustainability of their activity.<sup>10</sup>

- The field of traditional artistic craftsmanship in Algeria creates investment opportunities and new projects. By the end of 2022,<sup>11</sup> total activities had reached 232,142, representing approximately 32% of all activities in the traditional crafts and handicrafts sector, which confirms its pivotal role in supporting growth and sustainable local development. However, it has been reported that approximately 29%.<sup>12</sup> Many of these activities were struck off, indicating that many artisans have abandoned their craft despite the state's efforts to support this field. This is due to the presence of numerous difficulties, including fierce competition from imported industrial products, market barriers, the decline and erosion of the transmission of artisanal skills, limited financing, the complexity of administrative procedures, and low levels of education, in addition to subjective factors associated with artisans' personalities.<sup>13</sup> This calls for field studies to address obstacles and strengthen the sustainability of artisans' livelihoods.
- The field of traditional artistic craftsmanship is among the vital sectors in Algeria, as it provides employment opportunities and helps reduce poverty. The number of jobs reached 258526 posts by 2022,<sup>14</sup> which implies the creation of four jobs per activity,

<sup>8</sup> Qatāfi, al-Sa'īd. 2017. "Al-Tarābuṭ al-Takāmul bayn al-Šinā'āt al-Taqlīdiyya al-Fanniyya wa al-Siyāha fī al-Jazā'ir." *Majallat Dirāsāt fī al-Iqtisād wa al-Tijāra wa al-Māliyya* 6 (1): 45–46.

<sup>9</sup> Qatāfi, al-Sa'īd, 51.

<sup>10</sup> Aīt Saīd, Fawzi, and Mahboub Ben Hamouda. 2018. "Thaqāfat al-Istihlāk wa al-Šinā'āt al-Taqlīdiyya wa al-

Ḥirafiyya fī al-Jazā'ir." *Majallat Dirāsāt fī al-Iqtisād wa al-Tijāra wa al-Māliyya* 7 (1): 133.

<sup>11</sup> National Chamber of Traditional Crafts, statistics.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Arab Organisation for Education, Culture and Science. 1995. *Al-Khiṭṭa al-Qawmiyya lil-Nuhūd bial-Šinā'āt al-Taqlīdiyya fī al-Waṭan al-'Arabī*. Tunis, 133.

<sup>14</sup> National Chamber of Traditional Crafts, statistics.

reflecting its capacity to enhance the distribution of national income and welfare. This capacity is grounded in the ease and simplicity of establishment, allowing work to be carried out at home; low capital requirements; autonomy for the enterprise owner; its prevalence in rural and semirural areas; and its connection to the environment, which renders it an effective instrument for local development.

- Traditional artistic craftsmanship enhances women's role, given its complementary role in domestic activities. The number of female artisans in Algeria reached 97907<sup>15</sup> by 2022, representing approximately 69% of the total traditional artistic craftsmanship in Algeria. These figures are far removed from reality because most women's activities are carried out at home and constitute informal work.<sup>16</sup>
- The field of traditional artistic craftsmanship helps alleviate social problems by absorbing labour, reducing unemployment and poverty, and providing a stable income for vulnerable groups, thereby strengthening social stability.<sup>17</sup> It also contributes to achieving regional balance and balanced territorial development while preserving cultural identity and social stability across the country's various regions.
- Traditional artistic craftsmanship serves as a gateway to social and economic integration for people with disabilities. The number of projects they established was estimated at 222 activities as of 2021.<sup>18</sup> This figure is exceptionally modest in comparison with the potential

of persons with disabilities, which calls for further support and encouragement.

## 2) A National Strategy for Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Traditional Crafts and Handicrafts

The global arena is witnessing profound and rapid transformations driven by globalisation, which are imposing changes on Algeria, many of which are inevitable and align with the requirements of the modern era. However, these transformations have, in turn, led to a decline in interest and even to oblivion, obsolescence, and, at times, disintegration that affect, day after day, many fields, foremost intangible cultural heritage and traditional craft products. This is the result of the intensive promotion of incoming cultures, which often, inadvertently, expose this heritage to the risks of deterioration, disappearance, or even destruction.

From this perspective, the importance of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage becomes evident, along with the need to disseminate it, transmit it across generations, and ensure its continuity, as a fundamental issue that requires the concerted efforts of all parties at every level without exception. It constitutes the most effective means of entrenching distinctiveness, highlighting national identity, revealing its civilisational particularities, and contributing to the formation of society's collective consciousness.

### 2.1) Legal Protection:

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Bensefa Hassiba. 1995. "Activité des Femmes dans le Secteur de l'Artisanat entre le Mythe et la Réalité." In *Actes de l'Atelier Femmes et Développement*, Algiers, 18–21 October 1994, 300. Oran.  
<https://www.ouvrages.crasc.dz/pdfs/femetdev-28-bensefa.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Ben Za'rūr, Shukri. 2022. "Al-Tadakhkhul li-Taḥsīn Adwār wa Natā'ij Qiṭā' al-Ḥiraf al-Yadawiyya fī al-Jazā'ir: al-Taṭallu' ilā al-Mustaqbal wa Taḥdīd 'Anāṣir al-Mumārasah al-Fa'ālah." *MPRA (Munich Personal RePEc Archive)*: 4–8.

<sup>18</sup> National Chamber of Traditional Crafts and Handicrafts, statistics.

The Algerian legislature has enacted laws and decrees to safeguard heritage,<sup>19</sup> foremost among them is Law 98–04 of 15 June 1998 on the protection of cultural heritage, the constitutional revision of 2016, and Executive Decree No. 03–325, which sets out the procedures for registering intangible cultural property in the National Information Bank, and the decisions dated 13 April 2005 concerning the organisation and collection of such property. The Ministry of Culture was tasked with identifying and inventorying these assets. The measures embodied in this legislation aim to ensure the survival of this heritage, promote artisanal knowledge and skills, transmit them, and protect them from extinction or any infringement on authenticity. This is achieved through:<sup>20</sup>

- establishing data banks for the registration and classification of intangible cultural property;
- having experts undertake studies and analyses of heritage materials to deepen their knowledge;
- preserving the integrity of traditions when transmitting and disseminating them;
- Ensuring appropriate preservation of the traditional cultural materials that are collected;
- organising exhibitions and events and establishing museum or museum sections for the dissemination of heritage;
- identifying bearers of intangible cultural property.

<sup>19</sup> Bouma'za, Marwa. 2019. "Al-Ĥimāya al-Qānūniyya lil-Turāth al-Thaqāfi al-Lāmāddi fī al-Qānūn al-Jazā'iri." *Āfāq lil-Abḥāth al-Siyāsiyya wa al-Qānūniyya* 2 (1): 77–88.

<sup>20</sup> Algeria. 1998. *Law No. 98–04, dated 20 Šafar 1419 AH (15 June 1998), relating to the protection of cultural heritage*. Official Gazette, no. 44 (1998), 14.

<sup>21</sup> People's Democratic Republic of Algeria. *Constitution de la République Algérienne Démocratique et Populaire* (March 2016). <https://www.joradp.dz/TRV/Acons.pdf>

The Algerian state has enshrined the safeguarding of cultural heritage through the constitutional amendment of 2016, particularly Article 45,<sup>21</sup> and Article 91 of Law 98–04,<sup>22</sup> encouraging the establishment of associations active in this field. Local and associative initiatives have also been supported, and university departments in heritage studies have been opened, such as at Yahia Fares University in Médéa and Abbas Laghrour University in Khenchela. This is in addition to the media's effective role in enhancing societal awareness of the importance of cultural heritage through various television channels and radio stations, as well as print media in various Amazigh languages, Arabic, and French, all of which contribute to highlighting and disseminating diverse heritage programs.

## 2.2) Establishing an Interpretive Centre with a Museum Character Devoted to Algerian Traditional Dress:

The interpretive centre for Algerian traditional dress and popular practices, with a museum character devoted to Algerian traditional dress, opened its doors in 2012.<sup>23</sup> The ancient Mechouar Citadel in the centre of the city of Tlemcen is the first national centre of its kind in the Arab and African worlds. It brings together the cultures of sixty-eight provinces. The reason for its establishment lies in the achievement of the Tlemcen *shadda*, which was inscribed on UNESCO's List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2012. This encouraged the creation of the centre, which recounts the development of the Tlemcen *shadda* and other traditional garments across the country's

<sup>22</sup> Algeria. 1998. *Law No. 98–04, dated 20 Šafar 1419 AH (15 June 1998), relating to the protection of cultural heritage*. Official Gazette, no. 44 (1998), 18.

<sup>23</sup> Khīḍir, Jamīla, and Ḥammānī Sulaymān. 2021. "Al-Tanawwu' al-Thaqāfi fī al-Jazā'ir min Khilāl al-Azyā' al-Taqlīdiyya: Muqāraba Sūsiyū-Anthrūbūlūjiyya li-Majmū'a Maḥafīyya Tābi'a lil-Markaz al-Tafsīrī lil-Libās al-Taqlīdī." *Majallat Ma'ālim* 13 (Special Issue): 203–212.



provinces. It includes more than 32 items related to traditional Algerian dress for women and men. The reason is that it provides a technical information card for each item of Algerian traditional dress, specifying the garment's origin, the history of its appearance, the occasion on which it is worn, all the materials involved in its manufacture, and the stages of its development.

The purpose of its establishment is to valorise culture and tangible and intangible cultural heritage.<sup>24</sup> By organising events, exhibitions, and cultural workshops to introduce traditional dress and the popular practices of each region and to revive various national, religious, and seasonal occasions and festivals, all the customs and traditions observed are highlighted, with a view to preserving them and acquainting the Algerian public and foreign tourists with them.

### 2.3) The Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Africa in Algeria (CRESPIAF):

- **Introduction to the Centre:** It was established through cooperation between the Algerian government and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). It operates as a nonprofit institution, financially and functionally,<sup>25</sup> and coordinates the efforts of experts and researchers at the national and African levels to study, develop, and safeguard intangible cultural heritage. It has a multistakeholder board of directors that is renewed every four years.

**Its objectives:** This centre was established to achieve the objectives of UNESCO's programme set out in the axes of action in the field of intangible cultural heritage and its safeguarding at the African level. Its objectives focus on the following:<sup>26</sup>

- safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and enhancing it at both the national and African levels;
- strengthening the capacities of African states to identify and safeguard intangible cultural heritage;
- supporting international and African cooperation for the exchange of expertise and information.

**Its importance:** The importance of the centre is reflected in the following:<sup>27</sup>

- developing administrative and legislative measures and policies to safeguard intangible cultural heritage in Africa;
- identify, inventory, document, digitise, and safeguard intangible cultural heritage in Africa;
- enhancing the exchange of information, expertise, and experiences among African countries in the field of intangible cultural heritage;
- coordinating communication and cooperation between experts and specialised centres in the field of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage at the regional, national, and subregional levels;
- raising public awareness, particularly among young people, of the importance

<sup>24</sup> Mīlūdī, Muḥammad, and Yāḥī, Fāṭima al-Zahrā'. 2020. "Al-Siyāḥa al-Turāthiyya lil-Libās min al-Wāqī' ilā al-Mawāqī': Dirāsa Waṣfiyya Taḥlīliyya li-Safḥat al-Markaz al-Tafsīrī lil-Libās al-Taqlīdī al-Jazā'irī Namūdhajan." *Silsilat al-Anwār* 10 (2): 134–148.

<sup>25</sup> Algeria. 2015. *Presidential Decree No. 15–333, dated 15 Rabī' al-Awwal 1437 AH (27 December 2015), ratifying the agreement between the Government of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and the United*

*Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) concerning the establishment and operation in Algeria of a regional centre for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in Africa, Category 2, under the auspices of UNESCO.* Official Gazette, no. 69 (2015), 4–6.

<sup>26</sup> Algeria. 2015. *Presidential Decree No. 15–333, 5.*

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

of preserving intangible cultural heritage.

### **3) Safeguarding Algerian Intangible Cultural Heritage in Accordance with UNESCO's 2003 Convention:**

In recent years, international interest in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage has increased markedly through the adoption of a range of conventions and policies, foremost UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Since the field of traditional artistic craftsmanship constitutes one of the components of this heritage, the Convention has focused on safeguarding artisanal skills and knowledge as the essence of traditional artistic craftsmanship while emphasising the importance of ensuring the continuity of craft practice and encouraging artisans to transmit their skills and knowledge within their communities rather than confining safeguarding to the craft product itself.

#### **3.1) Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)**

**3.1.1) Definition:** The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, known as "UNESCO," works to safeguard and transmit intangible cultural heritage, including traditional knowledge, arts, and skills. Member states adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage during UNESCO's thirty-second session in Paris in 2003. It entered into force in 2006. More than 181 states had ratified it by 2022,<sup>28</sup> in addition to numerous nongovernmental organisations.

The Convention aims to enable Member States to:<sup>29</sup>

- ensuring the safeguarding and sustainability of intangible cultural heritage through its identification and documentation; the transmission of knowledge; its preservation, promotion, and enhancement; and the strengthening of formal and nonformal education;
- respect and safeguard the intangible cultural heritage of communities and raise awareness of its importance at the local, national, and international levels, as well as promote mutual appreciation, international cooperation, and assistance;

The Convention also provides support and international assistance to State Parties in the following forms:<sup>30</sup>

- conducting studies on the various aspects of safeguarding;
- providing experts and practitioners;
- training the necessary staff;
- adopting technical measures or other measures;
- establishing the requisite infrastructural and operational framework;
- providing equipment and technical know-how;
- Providing other forms of financial and technical assistance, as appropriate, such as granting low-interest loans and providing grants.

The 2003 UNESCO Convention specifically recognised the value of the techniques and knowledge employed in traditional artistic crafts rather than the value of the products

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<sup>28</sup> UNESCO. *Convention pour la Sauvegarde du Patrimoine Culturel Immatériel*. Accessed 20 July 2023. <https://www.unesco.org/fr/legal-affairs/convention-safeguarding-intangible-cultural-heritage#item->

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> UNESCO. *Convention pour la sauvegarde du patrimoine culturel immatériel*. Accessed 20 July 2023. <https://www.unesco.org/fr/legal-affairs/convention-safeguarding-intangible-cultural-heritage#item->



themselves.<sup>31</sup> Safeguarding efforts should, first, be directed towards encouraging artisans to continue producing their products and transmitting their knowledge and skills to others, particularly within the local community. This would help overcome the competition posed by mass production and the limited interest shown by young people in traditional artistic craftsmanship, whether as consumers or as potential heirs to this knowledge. In this sense, educational measures and the strengthening of specialised training can constitute important incentives since traditional crafts often contain professional secrets that should not be disclosed to outsiders. The lack of interest among local community members in learning traditional artisanal knowledge poses a real challenge to intangible cultural heritage.

### 3.1.3) List of Algerian Traditional Crafts Inscribed by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

Algeria has registered 10 elements of intangible cultural heritage on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity as part of the state's efforts to safeguard its intangible cultural heritage. This achievement spans the period from Algeria's accession to the Convention with UNESCO through the end of 2022. Among these elements are two that relate to the field of traditional artistic craftsmanship:

#### A- Rituals and Crafts Associated with the Wedding Costume Tradition of Tlemcen: “Shadda” (2012):

<sup>31</sup> Pagán, E. A., M. D. M. G. Salvatella, M. D. Pitarch, A. L. Muñoz, M. D. M. M. Toledo, J. M. Ruiz, et al. 2020. “From Silk to Digital Technologies: A Gateway to New Opportunities for Creative Industries, Traditional Crafts and Designers. The SILKNOW Case.” *Sustainability* 12 (19): 8279.

<sup>32</sup> Wassila, I., and Yamina, B. 2022. “Le patrimoine immatériel algérien classé par l’UNESCO.” *International*

The Tlemcen *shadda* is an element of intangible cultural heritage and was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2012. It is associated with the province of Tlemcen, a border province with Morocco, located on Algeria's northwestern coast, approximately 432 km from the capital. Tlemcen served as the capital of the Berber Zayyanid dynasty from 1236 CE to 1551 CE.<sup>32</sup>

The *shadda* represents women's wedding costume in connection with the region's most prominent celebratory event. It symbolises the alliance between families and the continuity of social ties across generations. This costume constitutes a mobile historical marker bearing considerable value and a profoundly rich background. It comprises<sup>33</sup> a harmonious set of garments and jewellery, beginning with the upper elements, namely, the “*shashiya*,” the “*abrouq*,” the “*blouza*,” the “*qaftan*,” the “*fouta*,” and the “golden belt,” whereas the jewellery includes *krafesh boulihya*, the *maskiya*, the necklace of white pearls, the *khayt al-rouh*, the *khorsa*, and the *assaba*. The wearing of this costume is accompanied by symbolic celebratory rituals, such as henna tattooing the bride's hands and adorning her face with circular red designs that symbolise warding off bad luck. These rituals play an essential role in expressing Tlemcen's identity, and their survival depends on the intergenerational transmission of artisanal knowledge and skills.

These customs play a pivotal role in expressing the identity of the province of Tlemcen and preserving its continuity as an ancient craft practice whose roots have gone back centuries.

*Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies in Heritage Research* 5 (2): 44.

<sup>33</sup> UNESCO. 2012. *Décisions no. 07 du Comité intergouvernemental de sauvegarde du patrimoine culturel immatériel: Septième session, 3–7 décembre 2012, Paris, 3*. <https://www.m-culture.gov.dz/images/DCRPC/DPCI/Les-rites-et-les-savoir-faire-artisanaux-associes-la-tradition-du-costume-nuptial-de-Tlemcen.pdf>

These traditions are transmitted primarily through familial socialisation,<sup>34</sup> where children are instilled with an awareness of the meanings of traditional dress as an object of pride and a symbol of community belonging through its revival at social occasions such as celebrations and festivals. In this context, mothers dress their daughters in the Tlemcen *shadda* at an early age, as although they were few brides, which has contributed to artisans' orientation towards producing silk textiles, delicate embroidery, and small-scale traditional jewellery. This handicraft is also transmitted by inheritance from father to son and from mother to daughter, stemming from an awareness of its cultural importance and its role as an important economic resource. However, some of these crafts are at risk of disappearing because young people disengage from them. This necessitated its inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2012 to safeguard it and ensure the continuity of its transmission, in accordance with the following criteria:<sup>35</sup>

- transmitting the customs and crafts associated with the Tlemcen wedding dress across generations as a symbol of local identity;
- strengthening cultural dialogue and openness to dress practices in the Mediterranean region and elsewhere;
- grounding safeguarding in research, dissemination, and promotion, with the effective participation of the inhabitants of Tlemcen;
- Involving civil society, the authorities, and academic institutions in the nomination process, with prior consent to the inclusion of the "*shadda*" in the

national inventory in 2010, administered by the Ministry of Culture.

## **B- Couscous: "Knowledge, Know-How, and Practices" (2020):**

Couscous is a culinary art and a component of intangible cultural heritage. It is a dish with cultural and social dimensions, all of which are associated with sharing, coexistence, solidarity, and communal living. It was inscribed as intangible cultural heritage of humanity after four Maghrebi states (Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, and Tunisia)<sup>36</sup> Submitted a joint file entitled Couscous: 'Knowledge, Know-How, and Practices'" to the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage during its fifteenth session in 2020.

The knowledge associated with couscous encompasses its preparation method, the conditions and tools required for its production, and the circumstances of its consumption. It is regarded as a food made from semolina, flour, water, and salt. The couscous is prepared by grinding grains to obtain semolina, to which flour or fine semolina is added; it is then rolled several times, sieved to obtain the desired type of couscous, steamed, and finally dried.<sup>37</sup> This dish is accompanied by different types of vegetables and various meats, depending on the country, region within a given country, season, and prevailing circumstances. The process of preparing couscous varies from one country to another, depending on the setting in which it is prepared. For example, Tunisians follow the same overall preparation process as Algerians but differ in their mechanisms and steps, adding fine semolina to the semolina–water mixture. In

<sup>34</sup> *Patrimoine Culturel Immatériel Algérien, Liste Représentative du Patrimoine Culturel Immatériel de l'Humanité du 31 mars 2011*. Online. Accessed 25 July 2023. [https://www.cnrpah.org/pci-bnd/images/tlemcen/tlemcen\\_formulaire.pdf](https://www.cnrpah.org/pci-bnd/images/tlemcen/tlemcen_formulaire.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> UNESCO. 2012. *Décisions no. 07 du Comité intergouvernemental de sauvegarde du patrimoine culturel immatériel*, 3.

<sup>36</sup> Wassila, I., and Yamina, B, 44.

<sup>37</sup> Klalīlī, Māmma, and Ben 'Ubayd, Rashīda. 2017. "Al-Šinā'a al-Taqlīdiyya al-Ghidhā'iyya: Muqāraba Sūsiyū wa Anthrūbūlūjiyya li-Šinā'at al-Kuskus Namūdhajan bi-Wilāyat Adrār." *Āfāq al-Fikriyya* 3 (7): 42–62.

contrast, in Algeria, flour is added instead of fine semolina.

It may be concluded from the foregoing that UNESCO's inscription of rituals and handicrafts associated with the wedding traditions of Tlemcen, namely, the "*shadda*," as well as couscous, namely, "knowledge, know-how, and practices," on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity constitutes international recognition of their cultural value and their belonging to Algeria's intangible cultural heritage. This inscription contributes to safeguarding them from disappearance and imitation, ensuring the continuity of intergenerational transmission of the knowledge and skills associated with them, and promoting them locally and internationally.

This recognition contributes to introducing consumers, locally and internationally, to products that express the identity of the province of Tlemcen by endowing them with a designation indicative of geographical origin and cultural identity, for example, associating the name of the Tlemcen *shadda* with the Tlemcen region and couscous with Algeria. This, on the one hand, enhances cultural tourism and, on the other hand, facilitates the entry of these products into local and international markets, provided that the artisan adheres to high-quality standards in production, whether through the use of high-quality raw materials or the reliance on qualified labour, in addition to applying a "Made in Algeria" mark to distinguish these products from their counterfeit counterparts. This helps to build a positive mental image of Algerian products in consumers' minds, thereby strengthening trust and loyalty, which may lead to increased demand, a higher level of consumer satisfaction, increased artisan profits, and an expanded market share, thereby enhancing competitiveness, survival in the market, and the possibility of expansion into new markets. Accordingly, the inscription of these elements constitutes an effective mechanism for

safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, enhancing investment in culture and the economy, supporting tourism, and consolidating societal awareness of the importance of preserving traditions and local heritage.

In this context, the necessity emerges for the state to inventory traditional artistic products and include them in the national databases of intangible cultural property overseen by the Ministry of Culture and to prepare nomination files for their inscription on UNESCO lists of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, thereby making it possible to benefit from the symbolic and economic advantages that this international recognition provides.

### **Conclusion:**

Traditional handicrafts constitute a component of intangible cultural heritage, as they represent a fundamental pillar in preserving cultural identity and enhancing civilisational diversity. Their safeguarding remains a shared responsibility that requires activating the mechanisms of inventorying and documentation, thereby ensuring their continuity and protecting them from disappearance amid contemporary transformations. Through this study, we have reached a set of findings, among which the following may be noted:

- The number of activities in the field of traditional artistic craftsmanship reached 232,142, of which 69% were established by women. The number of jobs created reached 258,526 posts. Conversely, 59,585 artisanal activities ceased operating in the same field, representing approximately 29 percent of the total registered artisans.
- Traditional artistic crafts constitute an essential component of intangible cultural heritage, as they embody inherited knowledge and skills across generations.

- The transmission of artisanal knowledge is a fundamental objective for safeguarding traditional artistic crafts from disappearance and theft and for ensuring their continuity.
- The Algerian state has recognised the importance of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and has therefore enacted laws and ratified international conventions, foremost the 2003 UNESCO Convention.
- Specialised institutions have been established to protect traditional artistic crafts from disappearing, including the interpretive centre for Algerian traditional dress and popular practices, a museum characterised by its focus on Algerian traditional dress, and the Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Africa in Algeria (CRESPIAF).
- The inscription of both the Tlemcen *shadda* and the couscous on UNESCO lists of intangible cultural heritage has helped introduce Algerian cultural identity internationally.
- Many traditional artisanal products remain unregistered, necessitating their inventory and inclusion in national and international databases to prevent their disappearance and imitation.

On the basis of the findings of this study, several recommendations have been reached, among which the most prominent are as follows:

- benefiting from the intangible cultural content value of artisanal products and developing them in a manner that meets the needs of local and international markets without losing the local identity and authenticity of these products; improving the quality of these products through the optimal use of high-quality raw materials and the continuous development of artisans' skills to keep pace with new developments, while

preserving traditional knowledge and transmitting it to new generations to ensure the continuity of the craft;

- strengthening the mechanisms for intergenerational transmission of artisanal knowledge through training and vocational programmes and introducing specialisations at the university level to preserve the continuity of traditional crafts;
- accelerate the inventorying and documentation of all traditional artistic craft products and incorporating them into the national database of intangible cultural heritage;
- supporting the registration of traditional artistic craft products of cultural value on UNESCO lists of intangible cultural heritage to protect them from imitation;
- encouraging artisans, especially young people, to practice traditional artistic crafts through economic incentives, financing facilities, and accompaniment;
- integrating intangible cultural heritage and traditional artistic crafts into educational curricula to increase awareness of the importance of culture;
- adopting audio-visual and print publicity as a means of raising consumers' awareness and educating them at the national level;
- activating the role of cultural institutions and specialised centres in promoting traditional artistic crafts locally and internationally.

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