

## Colonial Viticulture in Algeria, 1830–1962 Agricultural Expansion, Economic Domination, and Social Transformations

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### Abstract

This study examines colonial viticulture in Algeria from the French conquest in 1830 to independence in 1962, analysing how grapevine cultivation evolved from a marginal agricultural experiment into a hegemonic colonial enterprise that fundamentally restructured Algeria's agrarian landscape, economy, and social fabric. Drawing on primary archival sources from the Archives nationales d'outre-mer (ANOM) at Aix-en-Provence, colonial statistical publications, legislative texts, and contemporary agronomic literature, the study demonstrates that viticultural expansion was not merely a response to ecological advantage, but the deliberate product of colonial engineering. Crucially, this paper uncovers the pivotal role of Saint-Simonian ideology \_particularly as articulated by Prosper Enfantin and Michel Chevalier\_ in shaping the institutional, financial, and infrastructural framework that accelerated viticultural development: the Banque de l'Algérie's agricultural credit system, the railway network, and the cooperative movement all bear the unmistakable imprint of Saint-Simonian 'productive colonialism.' The phylloxera crisis in France (1870–1890) provided the decisive catalyst, expanding Algerian vineyards from approximately 17,500 hectares in 1878 to nearly 400,000 hectares at their peak in 1936 making Algeria the world's fourth-largest wine producer and its largest exporter by 1954. Land legislation \_the Royal Ordinance of 1836, the sénatus-consulte of 1863, and the Warnier Law of 1873\_ systematically dismantled communal tenure and redirected Algeria's finest soils towards export monoculture. The study further analyses the social and cultural dimensions of viticultural expansion: the dispossession of Muslim Algerians from their land, the transformation of peasant communities into a seasonal agricultural proletariat, and the profound tension between a colonial wine economy and the Islamic prohibition on alcohol. By integrating political, economic, ideological, and cultural analysis, this paper argues that viticulture served as a central instrument of territorial control and economic extraction a legacy whose structural contradictions independent Algeria inherited in 1962.

**Keywords:** colonial Algeria; viticulture; Saint-Simonianism; phylloxera crisis; Warnier Law; Banque de l'Algérie; land dispossession; agricultural proletarianisation; Islamic prohibition on alcohol; colonial political economy; ANOM; cooperative viticulture

### Introduction

The history of French colonialism in Algeria presents a glaring paradox: at the very moment when colonial authorities were seizing the country's finest agricultural lands, they were simultaneously deploying every legislative, financial, and technical resource at their disposal to convert those same lands into vineyards producing wine for a distant metropolitan market; whilst the majority of the population living on those lands endured food scarcity and watched their traditional agricultural systems collapse. This paradox forms the focal point from which the present study departs.

This study is situated within the field of colonial political economy and employs a methodology that integrates economic history, social history, and the history of ideas. Its principal contribution lies in revealing the structural connection between Saint-Simonian ideology \_which nourished the great colonial enterprises in Algeria\_ and the land legislation, banking infrastructure, and physical infrastructure that propelled viticulture to the centre of the colonial economy. Within the Saint-Simonian framework, the grapevine was not merely an agricultural crop; it was a symbol of 'Mediterranean civilisation' and an instrument for integrating Algeria into the European capitalist system of production.

The study draws upon primary archival sources from the Archives nationales d'outre-mer (ANOM), original legislative texts, colonial agricultural statistics, and primary Saint-Simonian literature including the writings of Enfantin and Chevalier. It also engages critically with the major works of historians such as Nouschi (1964), Bouchène and Peyroulou (2014), Emerit (1941), and Bessaoud (1999), who laid the foundations of social and economic history in colonial Algeria.

The paper is organised into four chapters: Chapter One examines the historical and economic context of the foundational period (1830–1878); Chapter Two analyses the colonial mechanisms for intensifying viticulture, with particular attention to Saint-Simonian ideology; Chapter Three maps the stages of viticultural expansion and its geographical distribution, with statistical analysis; and Chapter Four is devoted to the economic, social, and religious consequences for Muslim Algerian society.

## **Chapter One:**

### **The Historical and Economic Context of Viticultural Development (1830–1878)**

#### **Section One:**

##### **The French Conquest and the Beginnings of Agricultural Settlement**

From the conquest of Algeria in 1830, the colonial authorities drew a direct connection between the success of the settlement project and the 'cultivation' and development of the land for the needs of the metropolitan economy. Agricultural exploitation of the land was regarded as one of the principal indicators of the 'rootedness' of the occupation (Nouschi, 1964). Within this framework, the first organised experiments in agricultural settlement began in the 1830s, when it was decided to establish settlement centres near military encampments in the fertile plains. Foremost among these was the centre of Boufarik in the Mitidja plain, whose origins date to 1836–1837 (Chouquer, 2020).

Accounts of this experiment reveal that the land was divided into approximately 160 small 'concessions' distributed among families of soldiers and settlers. Each family received two agricultural plots of approximately four hectares each, together with a residential lot within the village, in an attempt to create a nucleus of 'small European peasant farmers.' The system of land grants was governed by the Royal Ordinance of 27 September 1836, which obliged settlers to clear and prepare the land, to bring at least one-third of the plot under cultivation within three years, and to plant fifty trees per hectare (Ordonnance royale, 1836; Chouquer, 2020, p. 6).

These experiments took place within an extremely difficult security and sanitary context. The plains regions \_including the Mitidja and Boufarik\_ were notorious for their swamps, malaria, and epidemic disease. In such conditions, it was not feasible to contemplate crops requiring substantial capital investment and a long wait before returns. Accordingly, most settlers initially turned to cereal cultivation, which guaranteed a swift harvest at lower cost (Rouire, 1901, pp. 350–352).

The appointment of Governor-General Bugeaud in February 1841 gave the agricultural settlement project a sharper political dimension. In a celebrated speech, he declared his ambition to

'establish something useful and enduring for France' (Bugeaud, 1847, p. 34). This orientation took the form of a policy centred on spreading a network of villages and small family farms across the plains and basins near urban centers; representing the beginning of a transition from purely 'military colonisation' towards a project of 'organised agricultural colonisation' (Bouchène & Peyroulou, 2014, p. 72).

As regards viticulture, contemporary agronomic literature demonstrates that the colonial administration remained cautious during the early decades; the wine consumed in Algeria came primarily from France and Spain. This assessment was reflected in the Governor-General's view that grapevine cultivation should be permitted principally 'for table use and raisin production,' rather than to build a large-scale wine industry. Cereals thus remained the preferred option during the founding period, until the convergence of external factors \_chiefly the phylloxera crisis\_ with internal improvements in infrastructure paved the way for the transition to the 'era of viticulture' in the full sense of the term (Scotti, 1958, p. 23).

## **Section Two:**

### **The General Agricultural Situation on the Eve of Viticultural Expansion (c. 1850–1878)**

Cereal cultivation \_particularly wheat and barley\_ formed the cornerstone of Algerian agricultural economy both before and during the colonial period, extending across the coastal plains (notably the Mitidja), the interior plains (the Habra, the Mina, the Chelif valley), and into the Tell and the High Plateaux. With the onset of the colonial era, this predominance of cereals and livestock continued: wheat and barley remained the crops occupying the largest cultivated areas, forming the basis of the subsistence economy for the indigenous population and a significant portion of export trade towards Mediterranean Europe (Bessaoud, 1999, pp. 45–48).

From the 1850s onwards, Algeria experienced a series of environmental and economic upheavals whose consequences for the country's agricultural situation would be far-reaching. These disturbances reached their most devastating expression in the Great Famine of 1866–1868: a sustained sequence of agricultural catastrophes and epidemic disease that claimed hundreds of thousands of victims, with estimates suggesting the loss of no fewer than 17 per cent of Algeria's total population (Carlier, 2014, pp. 71–78). The causes of the crisis have been analysed as a combination of immediate harvest shortfalls, depleted grain reserves, the absorption of the subsistence economy into an export-oriented economy, and the dismantling of traditional solidarity networks under the pressure of colonial taxation.

Colonial agricultural statistics for the late 1870s reveal sharp fluctuations in cereal output, with harvests in some exceptional years reaching between 18 and 19 million hectolitres (*Statistique générale de l'Algérie*, 1875, pp. 160–161). European settlement concentrated primarily in the most fertile coastal plains, precipitating the displacement of large sections of the Algerian peasantry towards less productive areas (Nouschi, 1964, pp. 157–160). This agrarian and social transformation facilitated the absorption of Algerian agriculture into a colonial model premised on progressive specialisation in export crops—above all the vine.

## **Chapter Two:**

### **Colonial Mechanisms for the Intensification of Viticulture**

## **Section One:**

### **Land Legislation and the Reshaping of Agricultural Space**

From the second half of the nineteenth century, the colonial authorities turned increasingly to land law as a central instrument for reshaping agricultural space in the service of European settlement and nascent viticulture. Whereas property in traditional Algerian society rested upon multiple foundations—tribal communal ownership, religious endowments (*awqāf*), and extensive family holdings—the administration set about dismantling these structures in favour of individual, alienable, and mortgageable ownership (Bouchène & Peyroulou, 2014, pp. 96–101).

A succession of legislative texts reveals that the aim was not merely to 'modernise' the property system, as was officially proclaimed, but to transform land into a commodity subject to the logic of the market and credit. In this context, the *sénatus-consulte* of 22 April 1863 and the Law of 26 July 1873 known as the 'Warnier Law' played complementary roles: the former initiated the surveying of tribal lands and their nominal partition among individuals; the latter drove their registration in modern land registers, thereby opening the door to sale, confiscation, and judicial seizure. In practice, this amounted to a transfer of land from a communal-solidarity framework to a competitive-individual one; the pivotal transformation that paved the way for the emergence of a 'land market' in Algeria (Nouschi, 1964, pp. 157–160; Loi Warnier, 1873).

Colonial statistics demonstrate that this legal architecture was accompanied by the confiscation of millions of hectares of land during the second half of the nineteenth century. In the aftermath of the 1871 insurrection, more than 500,000 hectares of Kabyle tribal lands were seized as collective punishment and subsequently redistributed as concessions to settlers arriving from French regions devastated by phylloxera (ANOM, GGA, F80/1732, 1872; Nouschi, 1964, p. 158). It is thus apparent that land law was no neutral framework but an integral component of a 'colonial architecture' designed to create a landowning European peasantry in the most productive agricultural basins.

## **Section Two:**

### **Saint-Simonian Ideology and Colonial Viticulture**

The colonial viticultural expansion in Algeria cannot be adequately understood without invoking the ideological undercurrent that shaped the mental world of French decision-makers in the nineteenth century: Saint-Simonianism (Saint-Simonisme). Henri de Saint-Simon (1760–1825) developed a social philosophy grounded in faith in industrial progress, the transformation of nature through science and reason, and the conviction that society ought to be organised according to individuals' productive capacities rather than inherited class privilege (Saint-Simon, 1821).

After Saint-Simon's death, his disciples—in particular Prosper Enfantin, Michel Chevalier, and Saint-Amand Bazard—developed these ideas into a comprehensive social and economic programme. The principal intellectual themes relevant to the Algerian question may be summarised as follows.

#### **First – Productive Colonialism and the Agricultural Transformation of Nature:**

Saint-Simonian thought held that 'the exploitation of the globe' (*l'exploitation du globe*) through science and capitalist organisation was a civilisational imperative. Land that was unexploited or cultivated 'in a primitive manner' was, within this framework, a waste to be rectified. Algeria—with its fertile soils and sparse population following the conquest—was accordingly framed as a 'productive opportunity' not to be squandered. Advocates of agricultural colonisation found in this an ideological justification readily at hand for expanding commercial agriculture at the expense of subsistence farming (Enfantin, 1843, pp. 12–45).

#### **Second – Enfantin's Mission to Algeria (1839–1840) and 'Productive Colonialism':**

In 1839, Enfantin dispatched a group of Saint-Simonians to Algeria as part of the Commission scientifique de l'Algérie. In his foundational work *La Colonisation de l'Algérie* (1843), he advanced

a central thesis: colonisation should be built upon 'large associative estates' (grandes fermes associatives) managed according to modern capitalist logic, financed by long-term bank loans from private institutions, supplied with agricultural expertise from southern France, and operated using regulated local labour. This vision clearly prefigures the model of the large viticultural estate that would emerge in subsequent decades (Enfantin, 1843, pp. 78–123; Emerit, 1941, pp. 34–89).

### **Third – The 'Mediterranean System' and the Vine as a Civilisational Product:**

In *Système de la Méditerranée* (1832), Michel Chevalier elaborated a geo-economic vision that conceived the Mediterranean as the 'meeting-point of civilisations' and a unified economic basin through which goods, capital, and knowledge should flow freely. Within this vision, the vine and wine occupied a symbolically pivotal position: they were quintessentially Mediterranean products, embodying 'the civilisation of ancient Greece, Rome, and the Christian West.' The inclusion of Algeria within their production orbit was thus tantamount to integrating it into Mediterranean civilisation—a framing that invested viticulture with an ideological significance far beyond mere commercial exchange (Chevalier, 1832, pp. 34–56; Lorcín, 1995, pp. 23–48).

### **Fourth – Productive Credit and the Banque de l'Algérie:**

Amongst the most practically consequential Saint-Simonian ideas was the theory of productive credit: banks ought to be instruments of development rather than mere repositories of wealth. Enfantin advocated the creation of a 'colonial bank' to finance agricultural projects through long-term loans secured against real estate. This vision was partially realised in the powers granted to the Banque de l'Algérie following its establishment in 1851, and particularly in its agricultural lending practices during the 1870s and 1880s. The historian Marcel Emerit observed that 'the major Algerian banks were, in their institutional structure, a practical embodiment of the Saint-Simonian concept of productive credit' (Emerit, 1941, pp. 201–215; ANOM, Banque de l'Algérie, 1878–1890).

### **Fifth – Transport Networks and Infrastructure as the Binding of Productive Space:**

Chevalier was a convinced believer that networks \_railways, canals, and ports\_ constituted 'the circulatory system of the economic body.' This vision exerted a formative influence on Algerian infrastructure policy from the 1850s onwards: railway construction began in 1857, with the primary objective of connecting agricultural production zones to the ports; in direct application of the Saint-Simonian principle of the integrated economic space. As viticulture expanded, these networks became the vital arteries through which wine was exported to France (Chevalier, 1832, pp. 78–102; Prochaska, 1990, pp. 45–67).

### **Sixth – Productive Associations and Viticultural Co-operatives:**

The Saint-Simonians called for the organisation of workers into productive associations that would maximise efficiency and distribute returns more equitably. This principle found an echo in the viticultural cooperative movement (caves coopératives) that spread across Algeria from the early twentieth century, with cooperative cellars established in many rural centres bringing small producers together in shared facilities. That said, the actual beneficiaries of these co-operatives in Algeria were, in the overwhelming majority, European settlers rather than the indigenous population (Scotti, 1958, pp. 145–178).

### **Seventh – A Critique of Saint-Simonian Discourse: 'Modernisation' as a Cover for Exploitation:**

Saint-Simonian discourse deployed the logic of 'civilisation through production' to justify what was, in its essence, a system of colonial exploitation. When the Algerian peasant was portrayed as 'awaiting rehabilitation' through integration into the modern European agricultural system \_as in the

colonial literature drawing upon these ideas\_, the effect was to produce an ideological justification for dispossessing him and converting him into a wage labourer: he 'benefited' from the settler's 'technical knowledge,' whilst the settler 'benefited' from his cheap labour (Lorcin, 1995, pp. 48–72; Emerit, 1941, pp. 220–240).

A reading of the primary Saint-Simonian sources alongside the Algerian historical record thus reveals that the 'productive model' advocated by *Enfantin* and *Chevalier* amounted, in practice, to a blueprint for an 'organised colony' combining the profitability of European capitalism with colonial control over resources and people. Viticulture found its ideal niche within this framework: it was the 'civilised' crop that bound land, labour, capital, and market into a single productive system in the service of the metropolitan economy (Said, 1978, pp. 80–110; Emerit, 1941).

### **Section Three:**

#### **Investment Incentives and Bank Financing**

From the late 1870s, as the phylloxera crisis in France deepened, it became apparent that viticultural expansion in Algeria required substantial capital for land purchase, vine planting, cellar construction, and the acquisition of fermentation equipment. The testimony of *Paul-Ernest Picard*, Director-General of the *Banque de l'Algérie*, indicates that the Bank provided settlers \_directly or through intermediaries such as the *Comptoir d'escompte*\_ with the funds necessary to establish new vineyards 'complete with all their appurtenances: buildings, fermentation equipment, and livestock' (ANOM, *Banque de l'Algérie*, *Rapports 1878–1890*).

From 1880 onwards, the *Banque de l'Algérie* effectively assumed the burden of 'agricultural credit' in the absence of a specialised institution. As vineyards expanded and the costs of planting, construction, and equipping grew, the volume of financing required became enormous relative to the capacity of a note-issuing bank obliged to maintain liquidity; a fundamental contradiction in light of the very Saint-Simonian thinking that called for 'specialised development banks' rather than banks of issue (Scotti, 1958, pp. 89–120).

The mounting debt burden, combined with fluctuating wine prices on the French market, exposed many producers to acute financial difficulties. Studies of Algerian viticulture record that the price per hectolitre, which had sold at approximately 35 francs, collapsed in 1885 to just 10–11 francs (Bessaoud, 1999, p. 51), compelling the Bank's management that same year to suspend agricultural lending operations. At the social level, this policy produced a vast network of indebted settlers; in cases of default, institutions such as the Algerian Land and agricultural credit (*Crédit foncier et agricole d'Algérie*) intervened to take possession of estates and resell them, thereby contributing to the concentration of viticultural landholding in the hands of large corporations.

### **Section Four:**

#### **Infrastructure and Equipment**

The success of the colonial viticultural enterprise would have been impossible without extensive investment in the infrastructure linking production zones to the ports; precisely what *Chevalier* had envisaged in his image of networks as 'the circulatory system of the economic body.' Railway construction commenced in 1857, and the lines connecting the plains of Oran and Mostaganem to the ports became the vital arteries for wine exports to France (ANOM, GGA, *Travaux publics*, 9H/45, 1898).

The ports of Oran, Algiers, and Annaba underwent successive expansions of their quaysides, warehouses, and loading facilities to accommodate the growing volume of exports. From the early twentieth century, the era of wine tanker ships (*pinardiers*) \_vessels such as the *Sahel*, *Bacchus*, and

Mascara dedicated exclusively to bulk wine transport\_ undertook regular voyages between Algerian ports and the ports of southern France and the Atlantic seaboard. Alongside this expansion, cellars (caves) of varying scales were constructed, equipped with fermentation vats and pressing machinery, together with cooperage workshops (tonnelleries) close to the major ports (Statistique générale de l'Algérie, 1907, tableau III).

### **Chapter Three:**

#### **The Development and Geographical Spread of Viticulture**

##### **Section One:**

#### **The Historical Phases of Viticultural Development**

##### **1. The Phase of Slow Foundation and Early Experiments (1830–1878)**

After 1830, viticulture did not occupy a central position in the colonial agricultural project; the initial focus fell upon cereals and general agricultural settlement in centres such as Boufarik. During this period, the first nuclei of viticultural activity formed around model farms and experimental centres, but the areas under vine remained limited to a few thousand hectares across the entire territory. The most significant feature of this phase was the emergence of a technico-ideological discourse \_deeply indebted to Saint-Simonian thought\_ advocating the vine as 'the colony's useful science,' as expressed in the 1861 text on viticulture (Scotti, 1958, p. 23).

##### **2. The Boom Phase Associated with the Phylloxera Crisis (1878–1914)**

The true transformation began with the devastation wrought by *Phylloxera vastatrix* upon French vineyards between 1870 and 1890, which destroyed the greater part of metropolitan wine production and forced France to seek alternative sources. Algeria assumed the role of 'saviour': within a relatively brief period, viticultural acreage rose from approximately 17,500 hectares in 1878 to between 150,000 and 160,000 hectares on the eve of the First World War, whilst production leapt to more than 5 million hectolitres per annum (Scotti, 1958, pp. 45–78). France's appeals to wine-growers from the south (Languedoc, Rhône, Provence) to emigrate to Algeria contributed substantially, supported by loans from the Banque de l'Algérie and by the climatic and pedological suitability of certain Algerian basins for cultivating high-alcohol, deep-coloured varieties such as Carignan and Cinsault.

##### **3. The Phase of Quantitative Peak and Regulation (1918–1939)**

After the First World War, the area under vine reached approximately 399,447 hectares in 1936, with output hovering around 18 million hectolitres. This expansion aroused mounting concern among producers in Languedoc-Roussillon, who felt that cheap, strong Algerian wine was flooding the French market and depressing prices. This tension ultimately led to the integration of Algeria into the 'viticulture statute' (statut viticole) framework from 1931 onwards, signalling the end of 'unrestricted expansion' and the beginning of a phase of 'managed regulation' (Statut viticole, 1931; Bouchène & Peyroulou, 2014, pp. 280–295).

##### **4. The Phase of Restriction, Crises, and the End of the Colonial Model (1939–1962)**

The Second World War and its aftermath brought new conditions: disruptions to transport, labour shortages, and restrictions on maritime trade. Nevertheless, the Algerian vineyards continued to produce in large quantities. Signs of saturation became apparent, however: legislation limiting new planting, compulsory distillation schemes, and the withholding of wine in cellars all constrained further expansion. At the regional level, the department of Constantine experienced a marked decline between 1939 and 1959, with the number of producers falling by roughly 36 per cent and some 7,820 hectares of vineyard lost (Scotti, 1958, pp. 190–215).

**Table 1: The Evolution of Viticultural Area and Production in Colonial Algeria (1830–1962).**

| Year | Area (hectares) | Production (hectolitres) | Key Note                                             |
|------|-----------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| 1830 | ≈ 2,000         | Undocumented             | Small plots around the major towns                   |
| 1878 | ≈ 17,500        | ≈ 550,000                | Start of the boom following the phylloxera crisis    |
| 1914 | ≈ 155,000       | >5,000,000               | First peak on the eve of the First World War         |
| 1936 | 399,447         | ≈ 18,000,000             | Largest viticultural area in Algerian history        |
| 1959 | 349,670         | 18,600,000               | Relative decline in area; high production maintained |
| 1962 | >350,000        | ≈ 17,000,000             | On the eve of national independence                  |

Source: Compiled by the author from Scotti (1958); Statistique générale de l'Algérie (1875, 1907); Bouchène & Peyroulou (2014).

### Analysis of Table Data

The figures in Table 1 reveal an unprecedented dynamic of viticultural expansion: over a mere 38 years (1878–1914), the area under vine increased more than eightfold, reaching approximately 155,000 hectares. This was not simply a reflection of natural advantages; it was the direct result of colonial engineering in which land legislation, bank loans, and organised migration from phylloxera-devastated regions of southern France operated in concert (Bouchène & Peyroulou, 2014, p. 280).

In terms of productive efficiency, the table documents a sustained rise in yield per hectare: from approximately 31 hl/ha in 1878, to 32 hl/ha in 1914, to 45 hl/ha in 1936, reaching a peak of 53 hl/ha in 1959. This trajectory reflects three converging factors: technical improvements in vine management, variety selection, and fertilisation; the consolidation of producers' experience and the accumulation of local knowledge; and improvements in irrigation systems and soil preparation; all principles central to the Saint-Simonian philosophy of productive agriculture (Enfantin, 1843, pp. 100–110).

The striking gap between 1936 and 1959 is revealing: a fall in total area of more than 49,000 hectares (12.5 per cent) was accompanied by a rise in total output of approximately 600,000 hectolitres. This paradox points to a natural selection process: marginal, low-yield vineyards contracted whilst cultivation concentrated in the most suitable basins and the largest, best-equipped estates; expressed in the rise in average yield from 45 to 53 hl/ha (Bessaoud, 1999, p. 51).

It should be noted that these aggregate figures conceal significant geographical disparities. The department of Oran alone accounted for approximately two-thirds of the national viticultural area and more than half of total production, whilst Constantine remained marginal (roughly 16,360 hectares). Available data indicate that the proportion of European ownership amongst producers exceeded 90 per cent, implying that this vast sector \_which represented some 10 per cent of gross national product on the eve of independence\_ was, in its essence, a European enterprise serving an external market (Bouchène & Peyroulou, 2014, pp. 290–295).

## **Section Two:**

### **The Geographical Distribution of Viticulture**

In the years immediately preceding independence, the department of Oran was the largest viticultural region in both area and output: more than 26,000 producers cultivating approximately 246,000 hectares and generating an estimated 11.5 million hectolitres in an average year; roughly two-thirds of the national viticultural area. Oran's vineyards spread across the Mostaganem plains, the plateaux of Mascara and Sidi Bel-Abbès, the area of Aïn Témouchent (which alone accounted for a quarter of the department's vineyards), and the Dahra hills between the Chelif and Mostaganem. These areas were distinguished by wines of high colour and high alcohol content (12–14 degrees), widely used for blending with lighter French wines (Scotti, 1958, pp. 140–160).

The department of Algiers ranked second, with approximately 87,150 hectares yielding some 6.27 million hectolitres in the late 1950s, a higher average holding size (17.22 hectares per producer), and a significantly higher yield (around 72 hl/ha). Viticultural space in this department was composed of the fertile coastal plains of the Mitidja and the interior basins and hills \_Médéa, Miliana, Bouira\_ where vineyards at altitudes of 500 to 1,200 metres produced fine wines, some of which were classified under the V.D.Q.S. appellation (Isnard, 1951–1954, vol. 1, pp. 200–230).

The department of Constantine was the smallest and least dynamic of the three viticultural regions: its area did not exceed 16,360 hectares by the end of the 1950s, with output of approximately 781,770 hectolitres. Scotti's data show that the department lost roughly 36 per cent of its producers between 1939 and 1959, its viticultural area shrank by some 7,820 hectares (32.33 per cent), and output declined by approximately 29.4 per cent; reflecting the fragility of Constantine's viticulture in the face of economic crises (Scotti, 1958, pp. 190–215).

## **Chapter Four:**

### **Economic and Social Consequences for Muslim Algerian Society**

## **Section One:**

### **The Transformation of the Agricultural Structure and Food Security**

Colonial Algeria underwent a profound transformation of its agricultural structure as viticulture rose to prominence. The colonial authorities redirected the finest agricultural lands towards export crops \_vines, citrus fruits, tobacco\_ producing what contemporary scholarship has described as a 'dual agriculture': a commercial sector oriented towards the French market alongside a fragile subsistence sector for the local population (Bouchène & Peyroulou, 2014, pp. 84–88).

The Great Famine of 1866–1868 starkly demonstrates the connection between food crises and agricultural structural change. The catastrophe was not merely the consequence of drought and locusts; it was also the product of the absorption of traditional cereal and pastoral farming into 'a new agricultural economy oriented towards export,' in the context of depleted grain reserves (Carlier, 2014, p. 75). Food crises recurred in subsequent decades even as the wine sector continued its upward

trajectory, entrenching in Algerian consciousness the perception that colonial policies privileged wine over bread.

The works of Bessaoud, Benachenhou, and Henni describe the formation of 'food dependency' in Algeria as a consequence of the colonial model: increasing quantities of cereals were imported whilst large volumes of wine and other produce were exported. The transformation of the agricultural structure was thus not merely a shift in the balance of crops; it was the founding of an economic structure that rendered food security hostage to revenues derived from a commodity forbidden by religion to the population and oriented primarily towards export a structural contradiction that would persist into the independence period as Algeria sought to reduce its dependence on imported wheat (Bessaoud, 1999, pp. 49–52; Benachenhou, 1979, p. 45).

## **Section Two:**

### **The Division of Labour and the Transformation of Peasants into Vineyard Workers**

The dissolution of communal landholding and the transfer of the finest lands to settlers deprived large numbers of Algerian peasants of their land or confined them to plots too small to sustain a living. It is estimated that some 1.31 million individuals out of a rural population of 3.7 million in 1911 fell within the category of 'agricultural labourers and khammès' (Direction générale des affaires indigènes, 1912, tableau 12), reflecting the vast scale of peasant 'proletarianisation.' As viticulture expanded, this class became the primary source of cheap labour for viticultural estates.

Settlers employed multiple labour arrangements: the khammès system, under which the worker was allocated a parcel of vineyard to tend in exchange for one-fifth (1/5) of the harvest; the *colonnage* system (*colons partiaires*), a form of share-cropping on the owner's terms; and the permanent wage-earner on a low annual or monthly salary. These arrangements enabled settlers to exploit Algerian labour at minimal cost whilst transferring much of the risk from harvest fluctuations to the workers and share-croppers. In essence, this represented a distortion of the Saint-Simonian model of 'productive associations': rather than an equitable distribution of returns, what obtained was a transfer of risks combined with a monopoly of economic decision-making (Nouschi, 1964, pp. 200–215).

This pattern produced a broad class of seasonal and permanent agricultural workers with no long-term security, confronting low wages relative to the cost of living, seasonal unemployment, and a severely limited capacity to save or invest in their children's education. In contrast, the settler occupied the position of 'mediator' between land and market, channelling a substantial share of the added value to France through exports and financial networks (Nouschi, 1964; Bouchène & Peyroulou, 2014, pp. 290–295).

## **Section Three:**

### **The Religious and Cultural Dimension and the Tension over Alcohol**

Muslim Algerian society's rejection of vineyards destined for wine production rested upon a clear religious foundation: alcohol is forbidden in the Holy Qur'an and the Prophetic Sunnah, and Islamic jurisprudence has consistently prohibited its production, sale, transportation, and service; not merely its consumption. The spread of viticulture was therefore perceived not as a mere agricultural expansion but as the entrenchment of an economy based upon a commodity forbidden to the majority of the population.

Colonial discourse \_deeply inspired by Saint-Simonian ideology\_ offered a diametrically opposite view: the vine and wine were presented as symbols of Mediterranean civilisation and European 'progress,' an idea expressed explicitly in the writings of Chevalier and Enfantin, who regarded wine as the heritage of Greece and Rome and an integral component of the civilising mission

of 'refining' Algeria (Chevalier, 1832, pp. 34–56; Enfantin, 1843, pp. 12–45). This discourse effectively cast Islam itself, by virtue of its prohibition on alcohol, as an obstacle to 'viticultural renaissance,' thereby placing religion and indigenous culture in opposition to a colonial economic-cultural project (Said, 1978, pp. 80–110).

Studies demonstrate that by the late colonial period the alcohol sector had become the dominant economic activity, and that Algeria had become, by 1954, the world's fourth-largest wine producer and its largest exporter. Nevertheless, the colonial administration placed virtually no specific restrictions on the consumption of alcohol by Muslims, save for a brief interval under the Vichy régime when the Law of 25 October 1941 prohibited the sale of wine and alcoholic beverages to Muslim Algerians a law that was repealed in 1944 (Loi du 25 octobre 1941; Bouchène & Peyroulou, 2014, pp. 445–460).

In practice, this tension generated deeply ambiguous situations. Many Algerians refused on principle to work in wine cellars or wine production, yet poverty and unemployment drove many others to accept employment in the harvest or on estates, accompanied by a persistent sense of dissonance between their livelihood and their religious values. This forced coexistence between the wine economy and the Islamic framework produced what might be described as a 'values duality': on one hand, a religious and moral discourse rejecting alcohol and holding it responsible for social decay; on the other, an economic reality compelling broad sections of the population to integrate into a sector that represented their only available source of income in certain regions. This duality would become one of the deep ideological drivers of the national independence movement (Bouchène & Peyroulou, 2014, p. 450).

## Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that colonial viticulture in Algeria was not merely an agricultural phenomenon but a complete economic-ideological structure. From the Saint-Simonian ideas that shaped the vision of 'productive colonialism,' to the land legislation that dismantled communal ownership, to the loans of the Banque de l'Algérie that financed cellars and estates, to the railway network that bound the interior to the ports; all these elements constituted a fabric of domination that placed the vine at the very centre of the colonial economy.

If Saint-Simonian thought furnished the ideological cover for 'civilisation through production,' the Algerian historical record reveals that this discourse was, in reality, a veil over a system of flagrant colonial exploitation: the fertile lands that had once sustained the food needs of millions of Algerians were redirected towards producing a commodity forbidden to them by religion and oriented primarily towards external markets (Lorcin, 1995; Said, 1978).

The legacy that this model bequeathed was far from straightforward. Independent Algeria in 1962 inherited a vast and well-structured sector but one bound to a religiously problematic product and to an external market (France) that would rapidly close its doors at the beginning of the 1970s. The decision to uproot the vineyards and reallocate the land to cereals, vegetables, and fruit trees was therefore logically coherent from political, religious, and reformist perspectives, even if its economic consequences for output, employment, and export revenues remained the subject of prolonged academic debate (Bessaoud, 1999, pp. 70–90).

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