

# Copperware

**The emergence of copperware in Algeria dates back to the Middle Ages. It reflects a variety of successive styles and a major Turkish influence.**

The copperware trade which relies on copper sheets to produce or decorate art objects, has been perpetuated around casbahs and communities devoted to that art. Vases and containers of unrivaled beauty from Kirouana to Mahbess and Tassa to Taftal demonstrate an incredible range of ornamentation.

Algiers, Tlemcen, Constantine, and to a lesser degree Ghardaïa and Tindouf are the main sources of this art form. For example, in spite of the passing of time and the disappearance of the famous Zenkat Ennahassia, Algiers is considered the birthplace of this art form, inherited from the Ottoman Empire. Among its specialties are Mahbess, Berreds (teapots), tebssi laâchouets (couscous steamers with a conical lid), l'brik and tassa (used to perform one's ablutions), El Mordjen, El Mahrez (pestle and mortar) and S'nioua (copper or silver tray).

The Ottomans, who lived in the city for many centuries, have influenced the art of Constantine known for its huge oriental-like decorative trays. Mahbess, Soukkhna, Cafatira, Kirouana, M'rach, and El Kettara are icons of this art form. They are produced by the skilled hands of brilliant artisans. They are, in fact, toiletry items used according to urban traditions.

Like Constantine and Algiers, Tlemcen has seen age-old Andalusian art, once under oriental influences, develop according to Almohade traditions, which clearly confirms the considerable artistic talent of this multicultural region able to combine authenticity and originality in specialized applications such as bookends, chandeliers, large trays, or the now famous door knockers, vestiges of a rich art form.

Ghardaïa and Tindouf are lesser-known centers of production of this art but they are deserving of a visit. As a matter of fact, the M'Zab valley, a highly dynamic cultural center, has found its niche. The production of coppersmiths is nonetheless limited to everyday utensils such as kettles and trays.