



Anthropology of Kabyles in Marseille: An Early and Sustainable Migration

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ABSTRACT

This article aims at presenting Kabyle's people immigration and taking a census of the difficulties encountered by immigrants in the frame of their integration in the French society. Maghrebi immigration for years now constitutes a legitimate field for researchers in social sciences. Seeking a cheap labour is at the base of the Kabyle's people immigration in France and in factories in the city of Marseille particularly. The migrant originating from an economically underdeveloped region seizes this opportunity to expatriate himself in quest of a job or a better paid one. In spite of sociological and cultural difficulties, their overall integration has been a success. Nowadays, children issued from the integration register sound success and integrate the French society pretty fast, despite the barriers that still stand. In the mean-time, Kabyle's people immigration has -in the course of its history- remained constant in the affirmation of its Berber identity.

Keywords: France; Marseille; Kabyle; migration.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Immigration refers to the entry into a country by strangers for a short term or indefinite settlement. Today, immigration has become a matter of interest, politically, anthropologically and sociologically speaking. It's a however understudied thematic. For the migrant, immigration may be due to one or several reasons; political (political refugee avoiding persecution), security (in case of war in the home country), economic (poor country inhabitants seeking for better living standards in rich countries). However, the migrant can face a number of difficulties in the host country such as insertion problems, adaptation difficulties, racism or exploitation [1].

Along with several Mediterranean regions, Kabyle has been in the course of its history a region with an important rate of immigration [2]. Being a rural region, with no natural riches and weakly urbanized, it has been all along its history under concerned by economic development projects. Its seditious character (under the Ottoman conquest as well as under the French conquest) and its late pacification have made of Kabyle a marginal region with a greater portion of it kept away from agricultural colonisation policies and from industrial activities development [3]. Insufficient labour and local activities and the fast changing demography have precociously granted immigration a traditional character that roots in a long established mobility, regulated by the society. Movements have always been temporary and pertain to members appointed by the group. The strong social cohesion and the solidarity of kinship allowed repeated and organised departures to other regions or other countries as France, which early launched a request for Kabyle labour. Meanwhile, how did they establish their migratory flux towards France, and where did they establish themselves? How did their integration take place? What difficulties did they face? Lack of precise data peculiar to the migratory flux in France makes it an interesting research perspective. But up to our knowledge, the Kabyle's immigration has not been of great interest for researchers, and thus has not been explored [4,5]. This article aims at presenting Kabyle's people immigration and taking a census of the difficulties encountered by immigrants in the frame of their integration in the French society. To this end, the present paper attempts to answer to the questions previously raised and thus contributes to a better knowledge of the

anthropology of the Kabyle's people immigration in France.

2. METHODOLOGY

There is a lack of precise data concerning the migratory flux of Kabyle's people in France. Data reports concerning immigrant workers of Algerian origin do not always enable the establishment of necessary distinctions and the precise determination of the Kabyle's people implantation zones in France. To have a precise idea, one has to search within hardly consultable folders, generally incomplete census files, personal files consultable by derogation, obtained at the Marseille Council, third borough of the town. In the same way, enterprise hiring lists, in case we could get access to, were exploited. Definitely, the methodological approach consisted in using different research techniques, notably the semi-directive interview, direct observation and documentary research. This research was carried-out exclusively in Paris and in Marseille.

3. RESULTS

3.1 From the First Kabyle Recruitment to the Great Migration

It is evident that the passages from Algeria to France are not entirely new in the early twentieth century; because one find in Marseille, before 1900, the presence of several Algerians, as livestock conveyors, domestic or hawkers (and among them, already a strong prevailing Kabyle). But finally, it hardly counts. While a certain importance of population movement is taking place within the Maghreb, Kabylia was already the center of the "most important and most persistent" immigration for easily understandable reasons.

It is a mountainous area of relatively dense population, which is obviously not self-sufficient (this explains the early development of hawking) natural reserve of labor force, both towards mining operations in Tunisia and Algeria as to commercial cities, particularly to Algiers. Indeed, population movements date back well before colonization.

Right from the fourteenth century, Kabylia provides to Mitidja a significant part of its farm workers. The colonial system has accelerated this movement both by allowing an undeniable population growth and by carrying out

expropriations, which heavily affect Kabylia just after the uprising in 1871. The dispossession of land accentuates the impoverishment of mountain areas and creates the conditions of excessive proletarianisation, which is itself a source of the great migration [6].

Before 1900, if there was not a significant population movement in the direction of France, it is obviously because the colonial system did not permit it. Just remember that the "code of citizenship" submit any travel to authorization and that the settlers appear unfavorable on the withdrawal of a skilled immigrant labor; they will constantly put pressure on the authorities to forbid free circulation for indigenous workers, let alone any sustainable and free establishment of these French subjects on the other side of the Mediterranean. Probably one has sometimes envisaged the use of "colonial" labor in France. Sayad appropriately cites the text of Masqueray, that was written in 1884, in the following terms: "In case of excess of forces, thousands of workers and Kabyle Chaouia will offer their services in France instead of Italians and Spaniards" [7]. This is precisely what is going to happen in Marseille in 1907. The great mass of migrant workers recruited at seaport and in factories was made up of Italian workers generally underpaid and ready to accept very harsh working conditions. But for several years, the Italians were more and more involved into protest movements. Repeated strikes in the oil mill industry lead the Marseille employers to seek beyond the Mediterranean a more compliant labor, with no particular qualification. A foreman of the factory Maurel and Prom, who had lived sometimes in the region of Tizi-Ouzou, will serve as an intermediary for the recruitment of the first Kabyle workers. The success of this operation encourages several companies to recruit Kabyle workers. So in 1910, when social unrest was particularly amplified and gaining, sugar refineries were able to restart work due to teams made up of non-strikers who are part of Kabyle workers. In fact "at the refinery in the Mediterranean, on May 9, 1904, on over two hundred and forty workers at work (about a third of the normal size), there were fifty-five women and, one hundred and thirty "Arabs". This situation generates strong reactions from the French and Italians against the "yellow", these "strike-breakers" that who took their place, temporarily or permanently [8].

For the Marseille employers, it is no longer in effect of a one-time operation, but a true labor

substitution, allowing in some cases, outright dismissal of the Italians. The success of the operation also encourages other regions and other companies to solicit the employment of Kabyle workers. And the General Government of Algeria could be legitimately concerned about a movement that is accelerating quickly.

In Marseille, in 1912, there were already more than two thousand Kabyle workers [9]¹. By 1914, in some companies, they constituted half of the working personnel. And refineries in St. Louis were planning the recruitment of 460 Kabyle, while the company's usual number is not much higher than 600 persons!

The recruitment of workers is remained probably much localized. The first immigrants came mainly from Great Kabyle and for the most from 'mixed communes', from Ain el Hammam (Michelet) from Larbaa (Fort-National) and from Dra el-Mizan and Guergour (Lafayette).

But on the eve of 1914, it has widely extended itself to Kabylia [10]². And it's even in these ancient emigration regions that recruitment had continued especially after 1918.

Such continuity may surprise. The Great War has indeed caused the return to North Africa of most of the workers who arrived in the previous years. However, it leads to an overall expansion of recruitment and expanding the recruitment pool to all Algerian departments. Despite the reluctance of the general government, 240,000 Algerians are mobilized or required, the worsening economic situation in Algeria even pushing the departure of 'free' workers who move outside military stationing. In Marseille, they find themselves in the center part of the city, traditionally linked to immigration, close to Porte d'Aix, where were already installed the first migrants. Free workers just pile up in furnished rooms overcrowded and largely held by their compatriots. Their gathering together in those already sullied buildings rather isolates them from the rest of the population, which is not necessarily considered as evil by the Phoenicians employers. In 1916, was the Marseille Chamber of Commerce of not planning to entrust the direction of St. Louis refineries to create a Kabyle village, in which could be grouped these immigrants "under the rules of the

¹About 5000 for the entire France.

²Up to now the counts indicate 13 000 Algerians living in France, for the vast majority Kabyle

hygiene, comfort and morality"? The project will have no result; but it reflects the desire to reserve special treatment to these people, almost exclusively male³.

3.2 The Endless Stream of the Interwar Period

When the migratory movement restarts from North Africa, with the increasing demand for labor following the Great War, it becomes clear that the recruitment area has expanded considerably and Marseille has become for these new arrivals a passage area than place of residence. It is only more remarkable to note the persistence of Kabyle dominant in the city of Marseille and in the neighboring cities⁴. "War, writes René Gallissot had widespread departures throughout Algeria, mixing Arabs and Kabyles according to colonial distinctions; the postwar period restored the preeminent position of Kabyle (over 80% of Kabyle in 1923). Acquired habits are strong and durable. When the Vichy regime concedes to two private companies the task of recruiting 16°000 North African workers, it is still essentially Kabyles.

This phenomenon is however explainable in a simple way, first by the continued migration from Kabylia, starting the reasons being hardly changed after 1918, then by habit taken by companies to recruit their personnel through co-option; an habit that persists and leads a group of workers from the same municipalities in a number of companies (the example of sugar refineries is still quite remarkable). This type of recruitment based on village solidarity or on family solidarity has nothing special in Marseille. It is particularly apparent in the city, simply because the Kabyle migration is more ancient than elsewhere. Above all, it has left its mark. The population permanently installed is partially composed of small traders and owners of hotels and cafes, which will serve as landlords, relays indispensable in search of jobs that sometimes financially, help the newly arrived immigrant and deprived of resources. Further this population, set in the old quarter of Porte d'Aix (from St. Barbara Street to Hatters), where one can find

most of the furnished rooms, is composed mainly of Kabyle⁵. It overlaps Belsunce and is found near the industrial centers of northern neighborhoods. It is difficult to quantify the importance, even to specify the exact size of the Kabyle element in an ever-changing Algerian population. It does not exist any Berber associations. The only attempts to create an associative or political movement certainly show the prominent place that "notables" of Kabyle origin can hold. There is nothing surprising in this, considering that the Algerians firmly established in the city nearly all from Kabylia.

Besides, all migrant workers (and Kabyles included) experience a real instability in their homes and in their work, and will be particularly sensitive to employment fluctuations.

3.3 Great Migration and War

Great Migration, which began in 1946, radically changes existing data. In ten years, the Algerian population in France will triple. In 1954, there were unsurprisingly within the Rhone delta more than 15,000 Algerians from all sources⁶. Perhaps there are notable changes, the appearance of a family migration, particularly early in Marseille and neighboring towns, being the most remarkable new thing.

But the Kabyle dominant remains evident in all business sectors. A census carried out in 1957 for the Algerian jobs in major companies of Marseille is significant for this state of things, starting of course by refineries of St. Louis whose 498 Algerian workers are from Azagza of Mizrana, from 'Akdadou or High Sebu. But other industrial establishments widely use Kabyle labor. It is the case for example of Rocca-De Tassy Roux in which 80 workers are originating from the Oued Marsa and Upper Sebu come or Kuhlman; it is located at L'Estaque and employs 50 workers from the Soummam valley, etc. As for the Dockers (812 being on that date from Algeria), they mostly come from Bougie, from Mizrana and Upper Sebaou.

In these circumstances it would be inappropriate to speak of a Kabyle district of Marseille. They are present in all "Arab" neighborhoods. And the Berber language is undeniably the dialect spoken

³See the report drawn up after the war, which underlines the interest of the indigenous village project designed in Marseille: "In Marseille, the Advisory Committee's Economic Action and the Chamber of Commerce studied a very interesting project for indigenous village ... Conclusion an establishment of an inn, a Dar Diaf for indigenous passage.

⁴It is appropriate to avoid the term suburb. Then it is incorrect in the case of Marseille.

⁵This seems especially true for independence movements (the North African Star) that were later implanted in Marseille.

⁶At least 11,000 for the only city of Marseille

most commonly on construction sites (of course apart from French)⁷.

The Kabyle presence certainly helped by the continued recruitment networks and facilities merges with the Algerian migration. One can find them in the pens and slums, which extend particularly in the north of the city.

It remains particularly strong in the center city, where it seems to control all forms of political agitation. It's among its members that are recruited the first nationalists before the start of the Algerian insurrection, MTLN activists known and put on police files, which explains the measures taken against them in the first months of the Algerian conflict and also the arrival of new executives, whose origin is far from being uniform. The haul that beheads the FLN organization of Marseille and the Rhone delta, clearly shows the presence of a new generation of activists who came to part of the department of Algiers or even western Algeria.

This is undoubtedly a reflection of a wider trend, which matches the uncontrolled growth of the Algerian migration. In December 1962, after the recognition of the Algerian independence, the "Algerian Muslim" population is estimated within the Rhone delta to 30 000 persons (the double of the 1954's number). The greatest diversity of origins does not necessarily lead to immediate identity claim. The cities consolidation was not necessarily made according to ancient origins and solidarity. It was only very gradually and according to the Arabization will of the Algerian government, which will cause in Algeria even violent ruptures that the "Berberism" makes its appearance. And if there is segregation, it rarely opposes Arabs and Kabyles. At most, we can see, since the early 80s, the rise of a Berber speech, which finds some echoes in certain neighborhoods of Marseille.

3.4 A Berber Neighborhood in Marseille

It is no doubt that there is undoubtedly a Berber revival in Marseille, whose existence is manifested by the activity of associations defending minority language and sometimes uncompromising assertion of identity that seems threatened. But it is also clear that the Kabyle

Pedigree population has gradually melted in the Algerian or French ground⁸.

The investigation conducted by Karima Slimani on the Estaque-Plage is indicative of this trend. This is "perhaps the only place that has kept the brand and the physical footprint of a Berber population" [9] "One can say that this small neighborhood gathers to himself the structures of a typical Kabyle habitat with as the first social unit, known as the "l'akham", a term which designates at once the extended family and the space in which it operates [9]: "This is a real" recreated village "that has persisted for decades.

Nevertheless this cultural specificity "begins to crumble." It is lived "by a number of young people as marginality. The cultural marginality is coupled mostly to an economic marginality [9]. "Success means to leave the neighborhood. The renovation process of the island⁹ is accelerating this trend. Inevitably, the Kabyle district of Marseille will soon disappear.

Does this mean renunciation of any identity claim? Absolutely not.

It results otherwise by the linguistic defense and through song (both go together), by a kind of worship of the lost homeland (the songs of exile), who nostalgic accents [10-12]. But Kabylia is still far away. And well into francisation ... «Being Kabyle or Algerian is especially in my parents that I learned it," says one of the interlocutors of Karma Slimani. "Being Kabyle is to be an immigrant as another who wants (a little bit) to preserve its identity while interfering in French society"

4. CONCLUSION

Relying on non-native cultural differences reified and treated as "insufficiently modernized", recent researches provide new impetus to the National French homogeneity myth. In addition, they end up providing discriminating representations (thesis of disabilities to adapt to the host society), reinforcing the stigma schema tradition/modernity. It is also to show how to build continuity with other approaches that directly reflect the logic integration-acculturation-assimilation-insertion of migrants, while concealing social conflicts which pass through

⁷What is not absolutely original: "The claim that Berber was the most spoken language in the emigration is not excessive."

⁸However, the Kabyle associations are relatively fewer and less active than in the Paris region.

each society. While honor has its own history and refers to a given context, it was billed as cultural and a temporal trait, source of a difference that would prevent integration.

We tried to put into perspective the early and sustained issue of Kabyle migration in order to show how this mainly psychological character is in relation with otherness and identity definitions. In addition, we have shown that the concept of honor, as a form of meeting, articulates with the initial institutional and administrative categories such as public and private. We criticized such culturist perspective that makes as if all native migrants from North Africa shared the same code of honor and that it would thus provide the same normative device determining their community behavior.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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