

**MORAL HOMELANDS:
LOCALISM AND THE NATION IN KABYLIA (ALGERIA)**

GABRIELLE MAAS

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
D.Phil in Politics at the Department of Politics and International Relations,
University of Oxford**

2014

Word count: 92,900

Abstract

This thesis is a study of attitudes to regional and national identity in Kabylia, a Berber-speaking region in northeast Algeria, and among Kabyle migrants in Paris. I illustrate how Kabyles nurture a fragile balance of nationalism and regional particularism through a primarily moral notion of local community, and extend it to an alternative vision for an Algerian nation which they believe has been debased by a corrupt state regime and Arabo-Islamic ideology since national independence. The thesis is based on two years of ethnographic fieldwork divided between two places – Paris and a large village in Kabylia – and reflects my interest in how people ‘imagine’ national community through their experience as members of smaller social groups.

Many Kabyle activists today formulate an alternative vision of Algerian national politics as a federation of several regionally based affective communities, each maintaining internal solidarity. This echoes a tendency in French colonial writings on Kabylia, discussed in the opening chapter, to conceive of the region as an island, intensively connected yet defensive of its autonomy. As citizens of the existing Algerian state, many Kabyles contest assimilation by claiming to represent Algeria’s ‘true past’, and investing contemporary governance initiatives with its values. They represent the radical difference that this implies with metaphors of the Kabyle community as a family within ‘public’ national life, and accuse the state regime of reversing this relationship by adopting a language of coercive authority appropriate only *within* the family. The transmission of Kabyle values today relies heavily on music, and especially political song, which I demonstrate – beyond its role in disseminating dissident ideas – acts as a vehicle for a type of secular revealed knowledge widely seen as the purest embodiment of Kabyle morality.

Beyond the hollow rhetoric of Western liberalism that some see in Kabyle activism, I set out to demonstrate that the particular narrative of identity that I examine, in stressing regional uniqueness at the expense of recognition from a centralized state, also reflects anomalies inherent in the concept of ‘nationalism’ itself as a compromise between the requirements of external co-operation and internal allegiance.

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	vii
<i>Glossary</i>	viii
<i>Acronyms</i>	ix
<i>List of Illustrations</i>	ix
<i>Note on Transliteration</i>	ix
<i>Political Chronology</i>	x
<i>Map</i>	xi

Introduction	1
Nation, state, culture	7
The moral nation	12
Localism and statelessness	16
Consensus and fragmentation	25
Who and where?	45
A note on the use of terms	53

PART I: IDEALS

1	Highlands and islands: Kabylia in colonial ethnography	61
	French conquest	64
	The development of colonial ideology in Algeria	70
	Custom and the <i>esprit géographique</i>	76
	Islands and fragmentation in colonial geography	83
	Unity, diversity and ‘civilizational’ myths	94
2	State, power and community	103
	Political fictions	106
	The Arabization paradox	109
	Statelessness (a): foreign power	114
	Statelessness (b): beyond the resistance ideal	125
	Reinterpretation of concepts: power and equality	129
	The ‘cultural question’	135

PART II: EXPRESSION

Interlude	Language: an ethnographic perspective	143
3	Making the past	159
	<i>A) One nation, one past: history as text in state and Kabyle discourse</i>	165
	Uses of the past (a): alternative history and party politics	177
	<i>B) Resistance: völkisch history and golden age narratives</i>	182
	Folklore and nation	184
	Uses of the past (b): the ideal of a pre-Islamic Berber identity	190
	Uses of the past (c): the ‘natural region’ and tribal identity	195

PART III: TRANSMISSION

4	Family, nation and state	209
	<i>A) Honour and integrity</i>	213
	‘Kulci kifkif’: ideals of public equality	215
	<i>B) National genealogies</i>	222
	Algeria’s feminine ideal	228
	Gerontocratic authority as an explanation of domination	235
5	‘Lettre ouverte’: truth and experience in Kabyle song	243
	<i>A) Ideals: the singer as popular representative</i>	252
	Privileged or popular knowledge?	252
	The singer as sage: <i>tamusni</i> , language and being Kabyle	254
	<i>B) Practices: boundaries, fragmentation, transmission</i>	262
	Community in different places: café and diaspora association	262
	‘What will his children get from that?’ Failed transmission	275
	Bringing outsiders into the fold: a reflexive analysis	283
	Conclusion	291
	<i>Appendix: List of Respondents</i>	299
	<i>Bibliography</i>	303

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors, Robert Gildea and Michael Willis, for their encouragement and guidance. I conducted the research for this thesis with support from the AHRC, Christ Church and the Department of Politics and International Relations in Oxford, an Entente Cordiale grant, and a Scouloudi Fellowship at the Institute of Historical Research in London. I am also grateful to Manlio Cinalli and the staff at Cevipof (Sciences-Po) for hosting me in Paris.

My thanks to George Corbett for encouraging me to start writing at just the right time; to Sébastien Bausson, Marta Bolognani, Rachael Cowie, Lucian and Halima Maas, Dana Mills, Christiana Mygdali, Maud Perrier, Róisín Quinn-Lautrefin, Thea Spiers and Hilary Stroh for discussing ideas and supporting me with their friendship; and to Justine Lacroix, Kalypso Nicolaïdis and Berny Sèbe for working with me on other things that kept me feeling useful. Hakima Houari and Susannah Wapshott both gave me a home with plenty of laughter when I needed it.

The warmth and humour of Kabyle friends in Paris and Algeria made fieldwork a joy. I would like to thank Tassadit Aït H., M'hand Ali Bacha, Lila Amrouche, Sihem and Mohamed Benamer, Nadia and Assen Graradji, Kamel Khenteur, Rabah Ticilia, Karim at L'Epoque, and the musicians who welcomed me into their groups and helped me to learn. I am extremely grateful for the love of my Kabyle host family: Samir, above all, and Fadela, Farida, Kenza, Malika, Na Ourdia, Salim, Sofiane and Wassila, who guided me with rare empathy and understanding.

I dedicate the thesis to my parents, Susan and Henry Maas, who have supported me in every way.

Glossary

<i>aerc</i>	tribe
<i>Amazigh</i> (pl. <i>Imazighen</i>)	Berber; (activist context) ‘free man’
<i>amusnaw</i>	sage-poet in Kabyle village society
<i>asl</i>	roots, authenticity, origins (Arabic)
<i>azar</i>	roots, authenticity (Tamazight)
<i>islah</i>	Islamic reform movement (1930s–50s)
<i>jemεa</i>	village assembly
<i>leqraya</i>	learned knowledge, education
<i>lherma</i>	inviolability, integrity
<i>lmuqadra</i>	‘respect’, deference to elders in family context
<i>mujahid</i> (pl. <i>mujahidin</i>)	revolutionary combatant
<i>nif</i>	honour
<i>qanun</i> (pl. <i>qawanin</i>)	village by-laws (often unwritten)
<i>shahid</i> (pl. <i>shuhada</i>)	war martyr
<i>sswab</i>	wisdom, ‘lived knowledge’
<i>taddart</i>	village
<i>tajmaεt</i>	village council
<i>Tamazight</i>	Berber language (dialects across the Maghrib and Sahel)
<i>taqbaylit</i>	Kabyle dialect of Berber; Kabyle woman; moral quality and social code of ‘Kabyleness’
<i>tegmatt</i>	lit. brotherhood (solidarity)
<i>Tifinagh</i>	Berber symbol script
<i>wilaya</i> (pl. <i>wilayat</i>)	Algerian administrative district
<i>zawiya</i> (pl. <i>zawaya</i>)	Sufi brotherhood teaching institute; maraboutic lodge
<i>zik</i>	‘before’; imagined time of Berber cultural purity

Acronyms

AUMA	Association des ‘Ulama Musulmans Algériens
FFS	Front des Forces Socialistes
FIS	Front Islamique du Salut
FLN	Front de Libération Nationale
GIA	Groupe Islamique Armé
GPK	Gouvernement Provisoire Kabyle en Exil
MAK	Mouvement pour l’Autonomie de la Kabylie
MCB	Mouvement Culturel Berbère
MTLD	Mouvement pour le Triomphe des Libertés Démocratiques
PPA	Parti du Peuple Algérien
RCD	Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie

List of Illustrations

Map of Kabylia and Algeria	xi
Fig. 1. Ajmoun, old village	50
Fig. 2. Collection of popular activist symbols	105
Fig. 3. Tifinagh script on memorial stone	147
Fig. 4. Street signs in the Fondation Lounès Matoub museum	251
Fig. 5. Matoub as popular representative: a respondent’s collage	254

Note on Transliteration

I have transcribed Kabyle terms according to Mouloud Mammeri’s standardized Tamazight system, with some variations for respondents’ uses and terms local to the fieldwork site.

Special characters used in this system are *ε* (corresponding to the Arabic ‘ayn) and *γ* (a soft ‘gh’ sound, pronounced roughly like a rolled French ‘r’). Where a word is commonly naturalized in French orthography, the transcription is given (except as part of a passage in Tamazight) without special characters for clarity – hence ‘Amazigh’, ‘Imazighen’.

Proper and place names are given in their standard French orthography (hence Lounès Matoub, Tizi Ouzou, Béjaïa). For clarity, association and party names are translated into English on first appearance, and thereafter identified by their standard French acronym. Arabic transcriptions are based on the system suggested in the *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* but without diacritics except the ‘ayn and hamza.

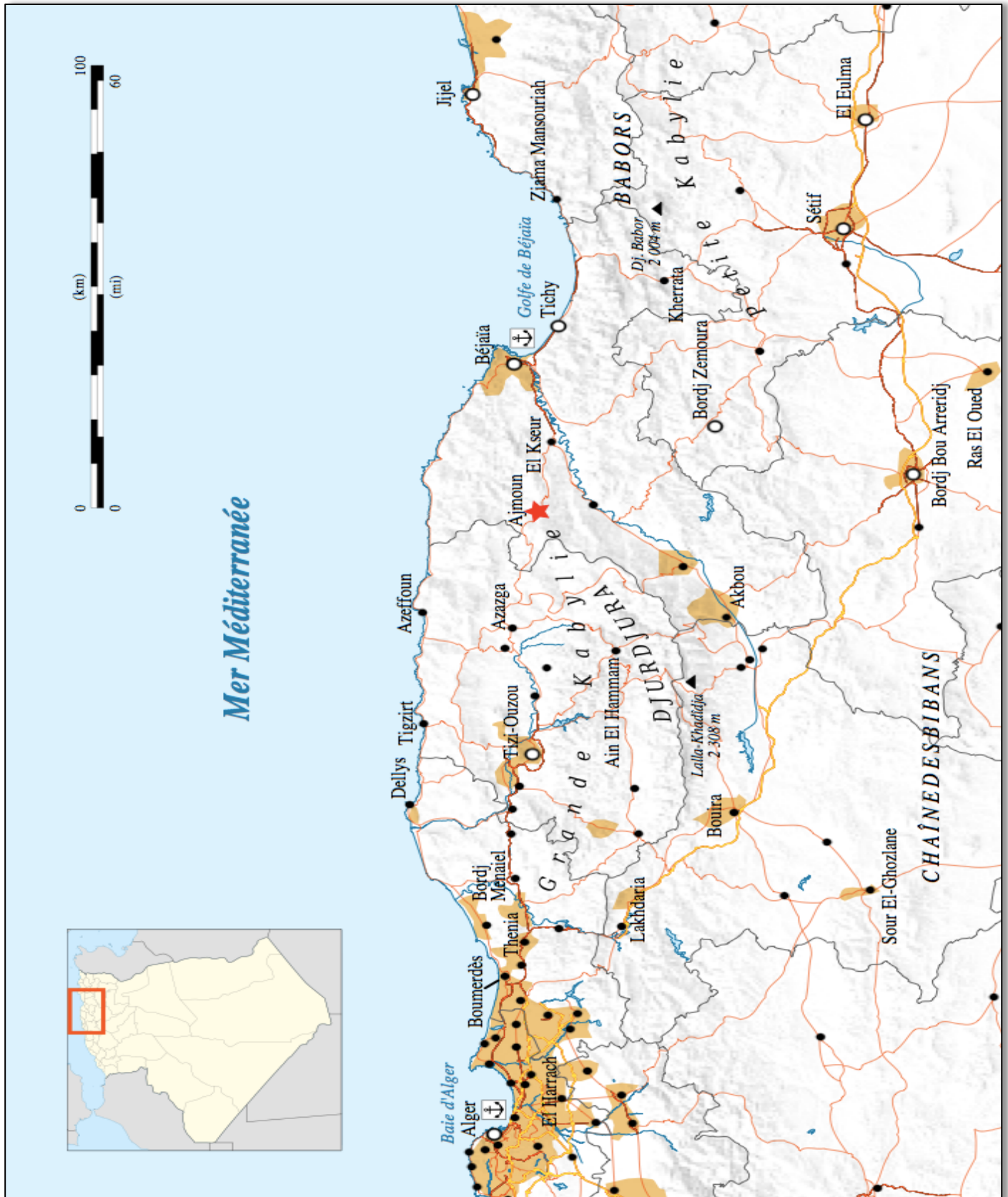
Translations of texts and interview transcripts are my own unless otherwise stated.

Political Chronology

- 1948–9** ‘Berberist Crisis’. Members of the French wing of the MTLD–PPA react against Messali Hadj’s influence on Arabism with defections and calls for an *Algérie algérienne*.
- 1954** 1 November: a wave of concerted FLN attacks opens war of independence.
- 1962** 5 July: Algerian independence declared.
- 1963–5** Hocine Aït Ahmed leaves National Assembly, founds dissident FFS party, and heads rebellion in Kabylia against the rule of President Ahmed Ben Bella.
- 1974** Army violence against demonstrators protesting at the removal of several Kabyle singers from the programme of the Larbaa n’At Iraten Cherry Festival.
- 1980** March–April: *Tafsut* or the ‘Berber Spring’. Mass riots in Kabylia follow the cancellation of a lecture to be given by the linguist and novelist Mouloud Mammeri in Tizi Ouzou. Now commemorated on 20 April, *Tafsut* has been constituted as a foundational moment of ‘modern’ Kabyle activism.
- 1988** October: large-scale riots, starting in Algiers, spread across Algerian cities.
- 1989** 23 February: new constitution formally abolishes single-party FLN rule and legalizes formation of political associations, provided they do not threaten ‘national unity [or] territorial integrity’. Creation of FIS.
- 1990–1** 12 June 1990: FIS landslide in Algeria’s first independent municipal elections.
26 December 1991: FIS victory in first round of legislative elections.
- 1992** 11–16 January: army coup. President Chadli Benjedid resigns ; second round of legislative elections cancelled. 29 June: Mohamed Boudiaf assassinated.
- 1998** 25 June: singer Lounès Matoub killed by gunfire while driving near his home village in Greater Kabylia. The murder is officially attributed to the GIA, but there is widespread suspicion that members of the military regime and the Kabyle RCD were involved. Mass rioting follows in Kabylia.
- 2001** ‘Black Spring’. Riots in Kabylia following the suspicious death of 18-year-old Massinissah Guermah inside Beni Douala gendarmerie post.
- 2010** Ferhat Mehenni, leader of MAK, declares Provisional Kabyle Government in Exile.

Map: Kabylia and Algeria

*Source: adapted with permission from original image by Creative Commons user Bourrichon.
Supplementary graphics by Jamie Huddleston.*



Introduction

*Monsieur le Président, c'est avec un cœur lourd que je m'adresse à vous ...
Je m'adresse à vous avec une langue empruntée, pour vous dire, simplement, que
l'Etat n'a jamais été la Patrie. D'après Bakounine, c'est l'abstraction métaphysique,
mystique, juridique, politique de la Patrie. Les masses populaires de tous les pays
aiment profondément leur Patrie, mais c'est un amour réel, naturel, pas une idée : un fait.
Et c'est pour cela que je me sens franchement le patriote de toutes les patries opprimées.*¹

Lounès Matoub, 'Monsieur le Président' (1984)

The Kabyle singer Lounès Matoub, assassinated in 1998 amidst suspicions of government involvement, ends a song in Taqbaylit (the Kabyle dialect of Berber) with this declamation in French to the rhythm of a funeral march. His message, he says, is simple: the Algerian state is not, and has never been, the same thing as the Algerian 'homeland'. While the homeland belongs to its 'people', who have an organic connection with it – nothing ideological but a simple fact – the state, says Matoub, is what transforms that natural connection into an artificial 'metaphysical, mystical, juridical and political' idea. Why and how Kabyles accuse the Algerian state of doing this, and how they attempt to define an alternative 'homeland', is the guiding question of this study.

Since Algerian independence in 1962, the so-called 'Berberist' identity movement in Algeria has campaigned for better recognition of Berber language and culture. Its central contention is that the Algerian *state*, as managed by a military regime first under the FLN-state and then in a nominal multi-party system after 1989, fails to correspond with the true nature of the Algerian *nation*. As indigenous Berber presence predates the seventh-century Arab invasion and the gradual Islamization of the Maghrib, activists

¹ Text reproduced in Matoub 2003: 67.

argue that the constitutional definition of Algeria as an Arabo-Islamic nation since independence falsifies national cultural reality;² and that alleged Arabist ‘capture’ of the state apparatus translates this into actual disempowerment of Berbers. Linguistic Arabization policies pursued by the post-independence regime also give rise to the accusation that the state is eradicating peripheral and ‘popular’ cultures through forced assimilation. Berberism thus portrays institutional state power as a homogenizing project, based on ‘artificial’ Arabo-Islamic identity and a non-indigenous narrative of history drawing on Mashriqi genealogy (McDougall 2006: 192).

Native Berber-speakers are estimated to account for 20–25 per cent, or 6–7 million, of Algeria’s population. They are spread across several regions: Kabylia (roughly 4 million), the Aurès (500,000–1 million), the Mزاب oasis (100,000), the Tuareg Sahara, and several smaller areas in the north of the country.³ There are also large minorities of Berber-speakers in the other states of the Maghrib and the Sahel. Tuareg groups span parts of Mali, Niger, Mauritania and Burkina Faso, as well as the south of the Maghribi states. Other Berber-speakers are now concentrated largely in mountainous areas (the Rif, Middle and parts of the High Atlas, Anti-Atlas and Sous in Morocco; Kabylia and the Aurès in Algeria; the Nafusa region in Libya) and oasis or island settlements (the Mزاب; Awjila in Libya; Djerba and a cluster of villages in southern Tunisia; the Siwa oasis in Egypt). The ‘Berber question’ has also been high on the political agenda in Morocco, and more recently in Libya; and Algerian Berberists have taken part in

² Charter of Algiers (1964), Chap. III, Art. 1: ‘Algeria is an Arabo-Muslim country. This definition, however, excludes any reference to ethnic criteria and opposes views that neglect the importance of the period before Arab penetration [in the seventh century]. The division of the Arab world into individual geographical or economic units must not efface the unifying factors created by history, Islamic culture and a common language.’ Berberist rhetoric often equates this definition with a supposed Arabist ‘denial of [Berber] existence’. In fact, recognition of Berber presence in Algeria (including before the seventh century) is implicit in the founding text cited above; if anything is ‘denied’, it is the place of the Berber element in definitions of post-independence Algeria as a cultural nation.

³ Figures from Chaker 1998: 14–15.

several transnational initiatives seeking to represent the rights of Berbers across state borders.⁴ Nominally, then, Berberism in Algeria is pan-Algerian (a collaboration between all of Algeria's Berber-speaking groups) and pan-Maghribi, bringing together groups depicted as the original inhabitants of what activists refer to as 'Tamazgha' or indigenous Berber North Africa.

In practice, however, Algerian Berberism has been in large part the province of activists from the region of Kabylia, which lies east of Algiers on the Mediterranean coastal strip (see Map on p. xi). Kabyle associations account for a large part of 'Berberist' civil society both in Algeria and among the large Algerian community in France (Dirèche-Slimani 1997); and the Algerian political parties that have vehicled broadly Berber interests, the Socialist Forces Front (FFS) and Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD), both have an overwhelmingly Kabyle electoral base (Silverstein 2003b). Other Berber-speaking groups, as well as the Algerian regime, frequently accuse Kabyles of using the Berberist platform to promote essentially regional interests (Roberts 2001).

My study deals explicitly with Kabyle activism, and does not represent other Berber-speaking groups. This gives rise to a terminological ambiguity. Many Kabyles describe themselves interchangeably as Kabyle (*aqbayli*, pl. *leqbayel*), or as Berber or *Amazigh*. This last term is often translated not just as 'Berber' but as a political ideal of the 'free man'. Kabyles often refer to themselves as *Imazighen* in activist contexts, and the

⁴ See Silverstein 2004: 213–36 and Maddy-Weitzman 2006 for good summaries of this transnational aspect. The most important pan-Berberist forum has been the Congrès Mondial Amazigh (CMA), constituted in 1995 and legally based in Paris, with representatives from Maghribi and some Sahelian states as well as diaspora Berber-speakers. The CMA has been especially active recently in support of Berber rights in Libya after cultural repression under Muammar Kadhafi, and of the Mouvement National pour la Libération de l'Azawad (MNLA) in Mali, originally a Tuareg initiative.

associated identity symbol – the letter *yaz* or *z* in the Tifinagh script⁵ – has been subsequently reinterpreted as a pair of broken handcuffs symbolizing Berber resistance to oppression.

Kabylia corresponds roughly to the current administrative *wilayat* of Tizi Ouzou, Béjaïa and Bouira, and parts of Jijel, Bordj Bou Arreridj, Sétif and Boumerdès. However, it is not an administrative region and has no defined boundaries. Many refer to a Greater and Lesser Kabylia, a distinction that evolved under French colonial rule between the high Jurjura mountains (largely now the *wilaya* of Tizi) and the Babor range in eastern Kabylia, separated by the Soummam Valley; again, there is no corresponding formal administrative boundary.⁶ Travelling eastwards from Algiers, one enters the foothills of the Jurjura range that traverses the region soon after leaving the capital. Tizi Ouzou is a two-hour drive, and Béjaïa in the east of the region four or five. Much of Kabylia shares a distinctive landscape of hill villages and a tradition of sedentary agriculture based around olive and fig production.

The first language spoken in Kabylia is Taqbaylit, a dialect of the Berber language (Tamazight).⁷ Like other Berber dialects in Algeria, Taqbaylit has extensively integrated and naturalized Arabic and French terms, and the everyday language spoken by most Kabyles incorporates frequent code-switching. Schooling is largely in Arabic

⁵ A symbol script adapted from Libyco-Berber Tuareg inscriptions, commonly used in activist imagery but not in everyday communication (see Fig. 3). See ‘Interlude’ for further discussion.

⁶ Though many Kabyles still refer to ‘la Grande et la Petite’ today and describe supposed differences of language, economy and social codes between the two, they also frequently condemn this as ‘an artificial remnant of divide and rule’ or ‘a slur on Kabyle unity’.

⁷ Please refer to the Glossary. Tamazight refers to the language group that spans the Maghrib/Sahel and encompasses widely differing dialects. Throughout, I distinguish between Taqbaylit (the Kabyle dialect used in everyday communication) and Tamazight as a proposed official complement to modern standard Arabic in the Maghribi states (thus, for example, ‘the struggle for Tamazight in schools’ or ‘the codification of Tamazight’). But the ambiguity remains inevitable in grammars and dictionaries, which cannot feasibly represent the entire dialectal range of Tamazight.

with a strong emphasis also on French, between them the two languages of Algerian bureaucracy. After a long struggle many schools in Berber-speaking regions now offer Tamazight,⁸ but despite this – and the existence of a codified standardization produced by the linguistic activist Mouloud Mammeri (1917–89)⁹ – those who write Taqbaylit for everyday purposes tend to do so phonetically rather than following the standardized transcription, and it remains predominantly though not exclusively an oral language. There are still some monolingual Taqbaylit-speakers, usually older or unschooled and therefore more often women than men; most younger Kabyles can speak French and (though they often resist doing so) Arabic with some degree of fluency.

Beyond the language and ‘cultural’ issues, various strains of the Kabyle wing of Berberism make three specific claims. The first is that the state systematically diverts resources away from Kabylia, maintains poor infrastructure in the region, and minimizes access to employment in order to sap the energy of a traditionally restive and quickly mobilized population. The second is that this is one face of a broader process that started during the war of independence: that of removing Kabyles from positions of power in the FLN leadership, installing Arabist hegemony, and thus depriving Kabyles not only of the material gains but also the symbolic legitimacy of independence. Lastly, the Kabyle cause claims to counter the authoritarianism of the contemporary Algerian regime with democratic values; its oligarchic nature with an agenda promoting popular power and horizontal governance; and its alleged use of religion to divide with a secularist ideology inspired in large part by French notions of *laïcité*, explored in greater detail later.

⁸ Tamazight was first introduced to the curriculum in 1995: see Abrous 2010.

⁹ Mammeri 1967 and 1986; the standardization was part of a grammar originally published in Tamazight and later translated into French.

This is an ethnographic study of attitudes to regional and national identity and criticisms of the Algerian state among Kabyles living in two places: a large village in the Azazga region of Kabylia, which I call Ajmoun,¹⁰ and Paris. It is not primarily about party-political or associational notions of Kabyle identity, but rather a narrative of ‘popular’ activism premised on an idealized conception of Kabyle resistance through normative autonomy which itself has a long past.¹¹ However, I set out above all to temper an exceptionalist view often held both by Kabyles and by French observers, which propounds a view of contemporary Kabylia exclusively based on a colonial ideology of Kabyle distinctiveness, and interprets contemporary anti-state resistance as a token of radical difference. Ethnography conducted with Kabyles usually struggles with the stranglehold of this view and its supremacist overtones.

To counter this, I propose a view of Kabyle attitudes that takes account of these idealized conceptions, but above all argues that they illustrate dilemmas and difficulties inherent in the very notion of nationalist ideology – which I understand as the attempt to create an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 1983) of any size that justifies why we should feel common cause with those who would otherwise be strangers.¹² For the Kabyle case, the ‘of any size’ clause is the key. The narrative I examine relies on maintaining an ambiguous definition of the ‘nation’ conceived on the one hand as a self-regulating normative unit and affective community at the regional level; and as a

¹⁰ A pseudonym, as are the names given for my respondents. See Map on p. xi for location of the village.

¹¹ I discuss the nature and definition of this ‘popular’ activism fully in the Method section, and in the meantime refer to activism or the ‘Kabyle cause’ understood as a broader identity project rather than an institutionally based movement.

¹² The concept of the imagined community rests on a contention that nationalism is not an ideology, or ‘Nationalism-with-a-big-N’ comparable to other political ‘-isms’; and that ‘the nation’ is rather a ‘cultural artefact[t] of a particular kind ... [which, once created as a result of contingent historical circumstances] became “modular”, capable of being transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness, to a great variety of social terrains, to merge and be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations’ (Anderson 1983: 4). An important corollary of this for the purposes of my study is that the emotive idea of ‘the nation’ can also be transposed into a great variety of sizes of community.

layered collective of many such communities constituting the ideal Algerian whole on the other. Though in theory this view of ‘the nation’ as a flexible unit allows Kabyles to maintain claims both to regional distinctiveness and to the legitimacy founded on the Algerian war of independence, it also creates several tensions which are in large part the subject of the chapters that follow.

Whether or not it corresponds with state boundaries, the rhetoric and mental image of the ‘nation’ thus understood remains for many the most powerful ideal of belonging. This is above all a study of that mental image: of how people think about the nation, how they locate it and find grounds for its existence when little tangible evidence is forthcoming. It is about an extreme case of this process: a group that produces an apparently extremely uniform narrative of its own existence as a community in the face of long-term dispersion, vastly different socio-economic circumstances and indeed a lack of any administrative unit corresponding with the idea of Kabylia; and persists also in imagining an Algerian nation whose actual embodiment in political power it condemns as a travesty.

Research question (1): Nation, state, culture

The birth of an Algerian nation from the anticolonial struggle still provides the most powerful legitimating ideal of unity in resistance. The vast majority of Kabyles therefore fervently assert their attachment to Algeria as a national idea, and indeed clamour for recognition as Algerians *à plein droit*, even while they criticize the Arabo-Islamic state as a false expression of *algérianité*. Kabyle activism, then, is premised on a Manichaean distinction between the ‘nation’, understood as affective community, and

the ‘state’ or the exercise of institutional power. I discuss the use of these terms above all as they are articulated in French, as is much (indeed most) Kabyle political rhetoric; I am interested less in the historical mechanics or implications of why Kabyles use these terms than how they invest them with meaning.¹³

This is not, then, a struggle for secession or independent Kabyle sovereignty. The most that has been demanded, and then more as principle than concrete political agenda, is partial devolution of government. Though both the RCD and more recently the Mouvement pour l’Autonomie de la Kabylie (MAK), led by former political singer Ferhat Mehenni, have adopted a rhetoric of ‘federalism’ and drawn comparisons with the Québécois and Catalan precedents for the partial autonomy of a minority linguistic group,¹⁴ there has been little concerted effort or popular support for an institutional solution. In two years of speaking to Kabyles, I found no one – including adherents of the MAK – who advocated a separatist solution or suggested that Kabylia should not be an integral part of Algeria. Instead, all sought in various ways to redefine the *idea* of Algeria and to formulate an alternative narrative of national unity in which Kabyles, as contributors to the struggle for Algerian independence, could play a full part.

Yet – and this is where the argument founders – even while laying claim to Algerian ‘nationalism’, the narrative of Kabyle identity I discuss here in fact rests on an implicit

¹³ See the Method section for further discussion of this focus and the ubiquitous debate on foreign categories in Algeria.

¹⁴ See Maddy-Weitzman 2006 on the comparisons, and Mehenni 2004 for advocacy of the federal possibility in Algerian context – though it must be said that the notion of federalism remains remarkably untheorized and abstract. A slightly more elaborated articulation can be found in the ‘Unitary Regionalized State’ (EUR) proposal of the RCD (RCD 2012), discussed further in Chapter 3. For analysis of Catalan federalism see Linz 1997 and Encarnacion 2004; for the Québécois case, Meadwell 1993 and Rocher 2002.

conception of the ideal Algerian *polity*¹⁵ as a layered cohabitation of several regional groupings, each understood in itself to embody the ideals of affective and normative community. In other words, the region is seen as the true repository of ‘nationhood’, conceived on criteria which as I discuss in Chapter 3 bear striking resemblances to Romantic nationalist ideas. The vision of Algerian ‘nationalism’ expressed by many Kabyles therefore not only conflicts fundamentally with state nationalist ideology on a structural point – that of pluralism versus unitarism – it also conflicts with itself.¹⁶ While Kabyle activism by and large adheres to the notion of an ‘Algerian people’ in order to lay claim to the political legitimacy of the war of independence, it invests implicit ideals of ‘cultural’ nationhood not in the Algerian people but in its subgroups.

This is consonant with the frequent Kabyle claim, introduced at the outset, that Algeria as a state and political system is particularly mismatched with the nation that it claims to represent: a state that maps onto no organic conception of culture or society, and cannot therefore claim loyalty from a population over which it has no tutelage.¹⁷ A key text of the modern Berberist movement, the proceedings of the Yakouren Seminar, for instance defines Algeria’s ‘cultural problem’ as one of diversity straitjacketed into enforced unity.¹⁸ It posits that the ‘natural’ fabric of Algerian society is eclectic in terms

¹⁵ I.e. ideas about how the alternative ‘nation’ imagined by Kabyles might in practice be constituted. Proposals for actual institutional arrangements to translate these ideas remain extremely vague; but I demonstrate in the ethnography that metaphors used to express the ideal of the ‘layered polity’ give it quite a clear conceptual, if not practical, form. The concept of the ‘polity’ is usually expressed in Francophone Kabyle rhetoric as *cité*; the origins and ambiguities of this usage are discussed in Chapter 1.

¹⁶ I draw here on Hugh Roberts’ seminal work on the internal anomalies that Kabyle Berberism propounds in order to maintain its dissident ideological position.

¹⁷ Indeed, similar misfits in many places between nation and state arguably make Westphalian terminology an aspiration rather than a reality. I discuss the Algerian ‘nation-state’ here when referring to the political discourse of the regime, or to a Kabyle aspiration to belong to such an entity, even if Kabyles argue that it does not currently exist.

¹⁸ The Seminar was held in August 1980 at the initiative of the Mouvement culturel berbère (MCB), in order to debate the future of the identity cause following the ‘Berber Spring’ of April the same year (see Chronology). The proceedings, drafted in French, start from ‘the problem of the real identity of the Algerian people’ and ‘the exclusion of the majority of the Algerian people from culture, which is instead the preserve of an elite proficient either in classical Arabic or French’. Available online at

of language, religious ritual and social custom; and that the reformist and then FLN brands of nationalism have attempted to wipe out these ‘popular cultures’. In place of diverse cultures each with a measure of internal homogeneity, in other words, the state has (according to this narrative) attempted to construct a superficially unitary yet internally chaotic cultural fabric. According to this narrative, the Algerian state is illegitimate because it has attempted to create an ‘unnatural society’, to which the recovery of regional culture provides a possible alternative.

But today, as apparent constitutional concessions to demands for Tamazight and recognition of Algeria’s ‘Berber component’ have failed to herald an improvement in Kabylia’s material situation,¹⁹ and belief in cultural activism as a means to political ends has dwindled, Kabyle rhetoric appears to be retrenching further and further into a discourse of exceptionalism for its own sake. Though I believe that it has not served the Kabyle cause well, I identify and discuss this exceptionalist habit not merely as the outcome of Kabyle specifics (repeated subjection to colonial rule, preferential French treatment of Kabylia, its alleged subjugation in the modern nation-state) but above all as a dysfunction inherent in nationalist ideology.

This is the tension between maintaining internal loyalty, which demands assertions of unique national qualities, and smoothing external relations, which often demands the opposite. For ‘nations’ understood in the Westphalian sense of the term²⁰ – that is, as

<http://soummam.unblog.fr/2009/04/17/mouvement-culturel-berbere-mcb-ii-seminaire-tenu-a-la-maison-de-la-culture-mouloud-mammeri-de-tizi-ouzou-juillet-1989-rapport-de-synthese/>.

¹⁹ The Algerian Constitution of 1996 states in its Preamble that ‘the fundamental components of [national] identity ... are Islam, *arabité* and *amazighité*’. Many Berberists remained entirely unconvinced by this apparent concession as it was closely followed with another clause describing Algeria as an ‘Arab, Mediterranean and African country’.

²⁰ The system of state sovereignty consecrated as the new basis for European political order by the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, following the Thirty Years’ War.

mapping onto the boundaries of a constituted state – this compromise is embodied in the principle of national sovereignty, tempered by normative devices – for instance international conventions and treaties – that consecrate a domain of shared core values and acceptable conduct between (and within) states. Though this normative system is for the most part non-enforceable, it serves to limit the formally absolute freedom of states to pursue individual interests.

For the ambiguous ‘nation’ proclaimed by many Kabyles, whose essence lies largely in its non-constitution at the regional level and its refusal to map onto the Algerian state, the situation is rather starker. Many activists today campaign above all on a platform of regional distinctiveness, which arguably channels popular energies into a purely oppositional ‘angry militancy’ (Roberts 2003: 301) at the expense of constructive agendas for pragmatic negotiation with state authorities. There is therefore little prospect of a common declaration of values as a basis for belonging to the Algerian polity as it stands; and in the context of a state discourse that extensively condemns regional particularism as a threat to national unity,²¹ Kabyle assertions of uniqueness are bound to create deadlock.

What, then, is the relationship of the Kabyle ‘homeland’ to an equally unstable conception of the Algerian whole, and to the world beyond? How do Kabyles sustain patriotism for their idea of Algeria alongside criticism, or outright rejection, of its current political embodiment in the state regime? And how does the Kabyle cause – though in essence regionally based and founded on aspirations to normative particularism – continue to assert claims over a symbolic Algerian unity?

²¹ The clearest constitutional manifestation of this is the prohibition, since 1989, on political parties constituted ‘on a regional base’ (Art. 9/2, Constitution of 1989) in order to guard against the perceived threat to national unity (Art. 40/2, *ibid.*)

The moral nation

Many of my respondents contend that Kabylia constitutes a ‘nation’ or ‘people’ in the following respects. Firstly its inhabitants, by and large, share a language. Some also refer to a distinct ‘ethnicity’, ‘genealogy’ or ‘race’, claims that are hard to substantiate in the context of long-term Kabyle intermixing with other Arab and Berber groups. Secondly, they argue, the region is a geographical unit structured around the Jurjura and methods of sedentary hill farming. Thirdly, Kabylia is united by the custom of autonomous village self-regulation achieved through the structures of *tajmaet* or *jemea* (the village council), the tribal structures of the *saff*²² and the *aerc* (‘tribe’), and the ability to make and enforce social values and norms (both positive and negative) through these structures. Finally and most importantly, activists argue, the autonomy thought to arise from such practices has enabled Kabylia to maintain cultural distinctiveness under successive colonizing powers – a category in which many include ‘neocolonial’ Arabo-Islamism – where other groups have lost it.

Understandings of Kabyleness as a moral code whose highest value is autonomy are encapsulated in one word: *taqbaylit*. Though the term is not in fact specific to Kabylia, many Kabyles regard *taqbaylit* as the ‘local’ value *par excellence*, both at the village and regional level. The word has three meanings. It designates the Kabyle dialect of Berber; the Kabyle woman; and a moral essence of ‘Kabyleness’. This last facet is also understood to be the basis for the normative social codes that find their strongest

²² Pl. *sfuf*: two-way division of each tribal unit into opposing ‘parties’, which ally with their counterparts in other units in case of conflict. The theory was pioneered notably by Montagne (1930), and extensively developed later, amongst others, by Gellner 1969 and Hart 1996; for a thorough recent discussion see Roberts 2002c.

expression in conceptions of village-based morality (Scheele 2009). It is in these terms – of a moral code seen as distinctively Kabyle and posited as the foundation for community order – that I discuss *taqbaylit* as the ‘localist’ foundation for broader conceptions of the nation, and therefore suggest that Kabyles in Algiers or Paris (as much as in a Kabyle village) may espouse a strongly localist vision of what it means to be Kabyle.

The precepts of *taqbaylit* in fact represent both a code of everyday individual and group interactions, and a broader ideal of community or polity. Activists translate the social morals of *taqbaylit* into a political language of Kabyle identity, resistance to Arabization and rejection of what many describe as a ‘foreign’ state power. Ideal practices of village community as solidarity and self-sufficiency are thus also used to articulate a Kabyle rejection of interfering state power; honour codes of personal and family integrity translate into an ideal of Kabyle integrity in the face of Arabization.

From the testimony of my respondents, we can summarize the core values of *taqbaylit* and their translation into abstract ideals of Kabyle identity in four categories. Firstly, the values of *nif* (honour) and *lherma* (inviolability) lay the foundation for a belief in autonomy and Kabyles as ‘free men’; *tilleli* (freedom) is one of the watchwords of the activist cause. Secondly, the precept of *tegmatt*, or ‘brotherhood’, is used to found an ideal of regional or national *tadukli*, or unity. Thirdly, many Kabyles argue that indigenous Berber presence in North Africa gives them a superior claim to represent Algerian *asl* (Ar. origins, authenticity; *azar* in Tamazight). Lastly, the social obligation of *sswab* (‘right speaking’, wisdom) in village society translations into an activist notion that Kabyles should represent the ‘truth’ (*tidett*) of Algerian history.

Each of these values is based on a moral ideal of integrity that must be defended under threat, either from outside intrusion or inner division. *Taqbaylit* as a sum of these ideals is understood as a quality that furnishes community integrity by virtue of its members acting within a social code of essential values and norms:

To deny someone's *taqbaylit* doesn't just mean he isn't Kabyle or can't speak the language. It means that he hasn't mastered the values of *how* to be Kabyle. It's not exactly the same as saying that he's not a true Kabyle; rather that he doesn't act in conformity with the values we think of as essential to Kabyleness. (Belaid)

We can thus formulate three propositions about *taqbaylit* as it maps onto the concerns of national identity. First of all, *taqbaylit* is a normative and public matter: it means to be Kabyle, not just in the sense of where one is born, but in a more active sense – asserting Kabyleness by acting within codes and values. As well as norms of individual behaviour, the values of *taqbaylit* are thus about creating social order in 'communities' of different shapes and sizes.

At each level, secondly, the norms of *taqbaylit* are linked to an ideal of community as a self-governing system exercising (in theory) self-sufficient administration of labour, distribution and justice. In ideal narratives of the Kabyle village, many of my respondents thus emphasized the importance of mutual aid mechanisms (reciprocal help for private construction or collective labour for village infrastructure), customary codes of justice, and secrecy over internal affairs as a means of 'bypassing' state policing.

The third defining feature of *taqbaylit* is that it is a 'members' code' of morals: at whatever level it applies (family/village/Kabylia), the code constrains group members only. This normative dualism means that social norms are a direct function of group

belonging. The three facets of *taqbaylit* – as 1) a normative code of belonging by acting in certain ways, which 2) works (in its ideal version) to make communities self-sufficient, and 3) at each level binds members only, creating a strong link between norms and belonging – all map clearly onto ideals of the nation as value community.

The term clarifies another important facet of my argument. Like its companion forms *leqbayel* (Kabyles plural) or *aqbayli* (masculine noun and adjective), *taqbaylit* derives from a naturalization of the Arabic *qba'il*, roughly 'tribe'. At the time of French conquest, *qba'ili* – subsequently Gallicized as 'Kabyle' – was widely used as a generic term for the inhabitants of Algeria's hinterland mountain regions. In the 1840s, Daumas and Fabar thus referred to 'several Kabilies' (1847: 2), among which one stood apart from the others: the 'Kabilie [*sic*] of the Jurjura, which some exclusively call Kabylie, and which in view of its relative importance we shall call LA GRANDE KABYLIE'. Carette's monograph (1848), researched during the Scientific Commission for the Exploration of Algeria of 1840–2, similarly identified the region as the subject of his *Etudes sur la Kabilie proprement dite*.

Though I do not (for reasons that will become clear) share the view that 'Kabyle' is a term entirely defined by French usage, its variable aspect in the early colonial period does point to an important fact: that *aqbayli* and its related derivations are originally not a geographical designation but a description of groups structured around tribal units and operating a system of tribal self-management that fell, in the Ottoman period, outside the authority of the Sultanate. This centre–periphery distinction, as I shall discuss, has never in fact been watertight, but a contradiction was nonetheless born of French use. The very word *aqbayli*, and the description of a domain marked out by *taqbaylit* or the

ethical code of ‘tribal’ identity, is a complex reference to political structures and social values. Though Kabyles today clearly understand the term also in its French adaptation as a toponym, it is largely through the value-laden historical aspect of the term that Kabyles conceive of themselves as embodying ideals of autonomy and resistance.

Research question (2): localism and statelessness

The ideal of the ‘homeland without a state’ and anti-politics

Translating *taqbaylit* into a political code of Kabyle identity therefore results in a highly moralized vision of the nation as an extension of social codes of right conduct perceived as specifically Kabyle, or (in less radical formulations) best represented in Kabylia. In activist narratives, the system of self-regulation that defines Kabyle community translates into an ideal of Kabylia as a ‘stateless homeland’ (*tamurt mebla ddewla*, sometimes also expressed in French as *nation sans l’Etat*).

The use of this phrase must be understood in context to avoid confusion. Unlike other groups often referred to as stateless nations – for instance Tamils (Tamil Eelam), Igbo (Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra), Kurds, Chechens, and more recently Tuaregs (Mouvement National pour la Libération de l’Azawad) – the Kabyle cause has made no attempt to secede from Algeria or to create a state of its own. Neither are Kabyles ‘stateless’ in the other common usage of the term to describe individuals ‘not considered as a national by any state under the operation of its law’

(often in the context of nomadic or travelling peoples, or after state succession).²³ Kabyles born in Algeria hold Algerian passports, fall under the protection (such as it is) of the Algerian welfare system and are bound by Algerian jurisdiction.

The concept of ‘statelessness’²⁴ in Kabyle usage is more familiar to sociologists and anthropologists than political scientists. It refers to the collective regulation of social affairs with minimal recourse to institutional politics, and specifically with minimal interference from the institutions of a centralized Algerian state. This is the fundamental concept of the Kabyle narrative of anti-state resistance; and it is the conception that Kabyle activists project onto an ideal image of the lost Algerian nation, as a homeland without the ‘political abstraction’ of a state. Many Kabyles explicitly reject ‘politics’ as a source of organic national belonging, instead arguing that a nation should be built on the same moral codes that govern small-scale communities. In contrast with the moralized sphere of *taqbaylit*, Kabyle activism depicts a ‘dirty’ domain of institutional state politics governed by crude material interests and the practice of arbitrary power.²⁵ Many further associate these practices with Arabist hegemony in the state apparatus, with the state’s constitutional definition as a monocultural Arabo-Islamic entity, and thence with a more diffuse rejection of Arabism as an ‘un-Algerian’ graft on national identity.

²³ UNHCR Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, Art. 1/1.

²⁴ See Eickelman 1989, Asad 2004, and Spencer 2007 for comparative discussion of this term, which – with its alternative connotations in contexts of forced migration – also highlights the popular activist notion that if Kabyles cannot rely on ‘protection’ from Algeria, the state cannot rely on them to follow its edicts.

²⁵ See Spencer 2007 for comparative discussion of this perception of politics as a dirty domain. It is interesting that this nominal divide between the social and the political has also run through colonial and postcolonial academic thinking on Kabylia: see Chapter 1 *passim*, and Roberts 2002b.

The origin of ideals

The ideal of self-government has itself been redefined in an ongoing dialogue with non-Kabyle scholarship on stateless societies, and the quest for a privileged modernity in Kabylia expressed through concepts of freedom and resistance has a long history. In the nineteenth century, French military men and ethnographers formulated a comparison between the Arab and Berber populations of Algeria, treating Kabylia as a particularly advanced example of Berber political civilization. This complex of ideas, which has come to be known as the ‘Kabyle Myth’ (following Ageron 1960), is based on arguments about how Kabyles create self-regulating communities, and the contention that this feature of Kabyle political life was evidence of greater capacity for coherence and ‘national’ allegiance to France than that shown by Arab *indigènes*.

The Kabyles were distinguished as sedentary mountain dwellers with a more stable economy, based on peasant farming, than nomadic Arab tribes. Ethnographers also cited the prevalence of private landholding in Kabylia as evidence of a ‘European-style’ modern system of exchange.²⁶ The Kabyles were marked out as more secular than their Arab counterparts; not because they counted fewer practising Muslims, but because according to the Myth, Berber tradition separated religion from temporal power and justice (Masqueray 1886). The basic customary law systems found in the villages of Kabylia were thus contrasted with forms of Qur’anic law prevalent among Arab tribes.²⁷ In political life too, early French military men and ethnographers read the horizontal structure of the Kabyle village council (*tajmaet*) as a primitive form of democracy, and

²⁶ Cf. Bourdieu 2008: 62 on the effects of the large-scale land privatizations effected by the Sénatus-Consulte decree of 1863.

²⁷ Some commentators compared Kabyle customary law with Roman law in the interests of furthering the European comparison: cf. Ageron 1960. See also Maine 1861.

the Kabylophile officer Colonel Adolphe Hanoteau attempted to codify *tajmaet* laws in concert with a project for regional administration supported by the French Ministry of War.²⁸

Self-regulation in the absence of either political institutions *stricto sensu* or a higher administrative power was also a key question in the emerging disciplines of anthropology and sociology, which amidst the formation and consolidation of nation-states in Europe explored the connections between legal norm-making and community belonging. Kabylia has therefore been mined as an ideal type of various core sociological concepts. Durkheim (1964 [1893]: 178) famously cited the region as a prototype of mechanical solidarity, comparing its segmentary political structures of alliance to the ‘repetition of like aggregates ... analogous to the rings of an earthworm’.²⁹ Kropotkin (1902) referred to Kabylia as an illustration of ‘mutual aid among the barbarians’, stressing principles of self-help and horizontally organized ‘socialist’ distribution. Kabyles, meanwhile, are fond of recalling that Marx is said to have been impressed by Kabylia’s ‘truly communist society’ during a stay there (Scheele 2007).

Both colonial-period ethnography and early sociological descriptions of Kabylia thus display a marked tendency to treat Kabylia as a proving ground for Big Theories, and Kabyle social life as a rubik cube that would yield essential meaning if only it could be

²⁸ Hanoteau and Letourneux 1872–3. The plan to use Hanoteau’s legal compendium for administration of Kabylia was abandoned with civilian rule in the colony and the increased emphasis on extending French settlement after 1871 (justified initially by mass exile from Alsace-Lorraine after the Franco-Prussian defeat). The land expropriations associated with this shift were also the principal cause of the great Kabyle uprising of 1871 (see Chapter 1).

²⁹ As has been pointed out since, Durkheim’s choice of Kabyle society to illustrate his theoretical point was in many ways anomalous, and generalizing: ‘these societies are such typical examples of mechanical solidarity that their principal physiological characteristics come from it’ (Durkheim 1964 [1893]: 178).

lined up. This suggests that what scholars have read into Kabylia, and indeed often the Maghrib more generally, depends to a large extent on their own theoretical concerns, which in turn gives rise to what is perhaps the greatest methodological challenge for any study of Kabylia today: how to deal with the relationship between ‘indigenous’ and ‘foreign’ categories.

No observer of the contemporary Kabyle identity cause or of Algerian politics can fail to acknowledge the influence of French systems of thought and classification; but neither can any in good faith claim that the distinction between foreign and indigenous categories is airtight. As Khilnani neatly summarizes the same problem of postcolonial epistemology in a different context,

India’s public life is constituted by a host of self-images fashioned out of Western reflections ... [But] the traffic has of course moved in both directions. India, the idea and place, has itself shaped the self-images of others ... And Indians have also, on occasion, tried to work out their own ‘indigenous’ ways of knowing the West. It is impossible to sever these twisted bonds of mutual knowingness and ignorance: the plunder is constant, and neither side can retreat into a luxurious cultural hermeticism. Any discussion of India is thus inescapably forced onto the treacherous fields of the politics of knowledge. These must be navigated, like any political activity, by one’s wits. There is no privileged compass, no method or idiom, that can assist. (Khilnani 1997: 197)

Returning to the case in hand, the colonial Kabyle Myth provides a particularly attractive template for a contemporary activist narrative of Kabyle progressivism expressed through liberal values of secular democracy, and is a particularly unforgiving instance of this difficulty. French media frequently persist in propagating an unnuanced image of Kabyle activism as an enlightened struggle for dignity in the face of Islamic fundamentalism and state authoritarianism, and portraying Kabyle migrants as the Westernized or cosmopolitan counterpart to stereotypes of ‘Arab’ social and political

backwardness. The narrative of support for Western ideals also runs through Kabyle activist material and popular attitudes, as most of my early interviews confirmed.

Scholarship on Kabylia has explored a number of solutions to this problem. There have been a number of extremely rich historical studies, first of all, of both Ottoman and French administrative practices and ideologies in Kabylia, their impact on indigenous society and in some cases their echoes today. Fanny Colonna's (1975) study of indigenous *instituteurs* (primary schoolteachers) in Algeria, though by no means limited to Kabylia, contains an influential analysis of the effects of privileged French educational policy in the region, while deconstructing the fiction (still commonly espoused by Kabyles today) that this was the result of 'any supposed affinity between Kabyle society and republican schooling'; instead, Colonna argues, it was Kabyle demographic circumstances, and notably overpopulation, that made extended schooling a common choice. The most systematic analysis of the elaboration of the Kabyle Myth, meanwhile, is Patricia Lorcin's (1995) work on the sources of colonial ideas about 'Arabs and Berbers' in a shifting context of colonial policy, scholarly societies and the French social sciences.

Another body of literature makes use of close-focus local studies to describe elements of Kabyle society often elsewhere reduced to their colonial stereotypes. Kamel Chachoua's (2001) tableau of rural Islam as practised and circulated in Kabyle *zawaya* (Sufi brotherhood or maraboutic lodges) from the seventeenth century up to the present day thus challenges the secularist stereotype of a superficially Islamized Kabylia, describing colonial ideology as 'a scientific and political mythology that was, and remains, the unconscious face of the refusal to acknowledge the science, ideas and

religious movements that have traversed Kabylia since the nineteenth century' (p. 301). Alain Mahé's (2006) study of Kabyle village society, meanwhile, attempts to reconcile close analysis of social and symbolic values with a larger-scale history of the strategies adopted by local political structures, and above all the *tajmaet*, to deal with varying degrees of contact with successive centralized powers.³⁰

Three valuable ethnographic studies conducted over the last decade have explored contemporary expressions of Kabyle identity in processes of circulation. Paul Silverstein (2004) coins the concept of Kabyle 'transpolitics' – both transnational political activity and the transformation of categories of race and difference through sustained contact between Algeria and France – to situate Kabyle ideology in changing French and European conceptions of citizenship. Jane Goodman's (2005) monograph, conducted in a Kabyle village and among its migrants to Paris, investigates cultural transmission through historical notions of the village, Kabyle textual and oral poetry, and the contemporary authorship and performance of song. Judith Scheele's (2009) ethnography of a village in the Soummam Valley, meanwhile, illustrates the circulation of ideas about politics and community, arguing that Kabyles have 'digested' and transformed ideas by 'insert[ing] them into village categories and deal[ing] with them according to village logics and norms' (p. 149). In different ways, each of these recent studies demonstrates how contemporary Kabyle discourse exemplifies the paradox of identity narratives as the site of essentially introspective questions – what does it mean to be Kabyle? – coupled with the intensive integration of 'foreign' ideological and cultural categories to formulate new answers.

³⁰ Hugh Roberts' forthcoming book (November 2013, I. B. Tauris) on the political structures of Kabylia before French colonization promises to be a major contribution to this field.

Kabyle conceptions of statelessness and anti-politics must also, however, be understood in the context of a broader fact about politics in the wider Islamic world that stretches far beyond Kabylia or colonial categories used to describe it. While many Kabyles present them as a reaction to the exceptional circumstances of hegemonic state oppression, the conceptions of statelessness and anti-politics – and a corresponding notion of *taqbaylit* as isolation from state corruption – in fact relate to a far broader Islamic principle: the inseparability of temporal and religious power, or more exactly the fact that the ‘values, principles and doctrines [of Islam] have an acute relevance to the organization and legitimization of Muslim society’ in a context where ‘no other system of legitimization seems to be valid’ (Joffé 1997).³¹

Perhaps the most pervasive feature of this value system is the concept of *tawhid*, or the unity of God, which also implies the ideal unity of knowledge without distinction between secular and religious, and thence the conduct of affairs according to ‘cultural assumptions which inform daily life as well as political and social institutions’ (*ibid.*). In this light, the moralized, anti-political element of the Kabyle cause cannot be explained solely as a translation of French colonial or sociological narratives of autonomy and self-management; nor can it be correctly understood as a simple question of ‘minority resistance’, or retrenching into isolationist discourse in reaction to oppression. Rather, we must analyse Kabyle discourses in the context of a broader

³¹ This is a field in itself which I cannot fully explore here. For a summary of these principles as relevant to my purposes here see Addi (1992), who states that the ‘dominant political culture in Muslim societies is still characterized by religious methods of legitimation, which is to say that it is a political culture where political space is not differentiated, and is not yet autonomous with respect to the religious sphere’. Addi goes on to explain this as the root of the rise in the 1990s of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), which he identifies as ‘not a political party [but] a mood, a culture, a popular movement’: ‘the medieval version of Islam that prevails today in the streets of Cairo, Algiers and Fez offers a total conception of life in society. This version proposes no avowedly political project and refuses to allow politics its autonomous character ... This ideological discourse, which seeks to keep Muslim societies in a prepolitical situation, expresses a millenarian utopianism that appeals to the Muslim masses, who aspire to a society that is egalitarian and just, homogeneous and united.’

relationship summarized by John Ruedy's (2005: 25) description of the conceptual premise of much recent literature on Algeria: 'while political bifurcation is a profound empirical reality, this bifurcation can be accurately perceived only within the framework of a broader social unity. That unity is in the first instance conceptual and normative, formed and conditioned by a deeply internalized Islamic world view and value system.'

Though I have chosen not to focus on Islamic principles and doctrines or their relationship to Kabyle ideology as a topic in itself for reasons discussed below, the pervasive influence of this conception of social unity is a central theme of my study. Its logical consequence is that the populist legitimacy of any 'political' project often depends to some degree on its *depoliticization*, or presentation as a moral vision for society (which at best needs to be inscribed in institutional politics for pragmatic reasons of representation). Conversely, political discord within a community of whatever size understood as ideally unified in the image of *tawhid* will in all likelihood be explained away as the result of 'tribal' or 'clan' conflict, which is largely the register in which rural Algerian politics institutionalizes and regulates social discord (see Chapter 2). It does so by operating a flexible understanding of the size of 'community', so that unity within a given segment (household, lineage, village, tribe) can always be evinced, and conflict between segments of the same size rationalized as a means of restoring a broader equilibrium.³²

This has far-reaching methodological as well as conceptual consequences. Firstly, the importance of social unity as a concept means that this is likely to be the narrative of

³² See Chapter 2 for further discussion of the segmentary concept.

choice: that Kabyles, talking about ‘Kabyleness’, are likely to tell one about the unity of Kabyles, and either minimize internal conflict or rationalize it as an outcome of the defection of some to a narrow embrace of ‘politics’ rather than a holistic conception of the social order. This creates the problems of excessive consensus and refusal to talk about discord in a political register other than that of ‘clan conflict’ (which many Kabyles incorporate into a wider modernist narrative critiquing ‘backward mentalities’).

Secondly, it means that definitions of politics are likely to be inherently circular, as that which ‘exceeds’ or lies outside the proper social order, is therefore amoral and corrupt, and therefore *a fortiori* outside the preserve of group (in this case Kabyle) identity. This, as well as a tradition ingrained by long-term colonial presence in Algeria of perceiving central power as inherently foreign or hostile, is the source of the persistent narrative of antagonism with *l’Etat* that runs through not only Kabyle or Berberist narratives but several competing identity discourses in Algeria. It also has consequences for method and definitions of the field: if many Kabyles describe themselves both as ‘activist’ and fundamentally apolitical, or opposed to any institutionally based protest, how do they define themselves instead and about whom are we talking?

Method and research question (3): consensus and fragmentation

The final research question, then, is one about the relationship between method and content in the study of identity discourses. Studies of Kabylia have grappled with one consistent methodological difficulty: that of consensus and the circularity of representations of ‘Kabyleness’ from different sources. The literature is both relatively

small and produced in large part, in French-language works at least, either by ‘engaged’ Kabyles or French writers sympathetic to the struggle for Kabyle cultural rights beyond academic involvement (notably Pierre Bourdieu). As I discuss further in Chapter 1, the colonial Kabyle Myth itself arose from limited resources represented by ‘pockets’ of previous writing on Kabylia that held disproportionate sway; and its transposition during the early twentieth century into a discourse of self-authored Kabyle liberalism and exceptionalism by a small number of indigenous *instituteurs*, notably Si Amar Ben Boulifa (1861/5–1931), who were among the first to receive a French education after the Ferry reforms.³³ Though the notion of Kabylia as an entirely oral culture is inaccurate (Goodman 2002), limited literacy has caused the interpretation and transmission of ideas from these textual sources to be generally the preserve of a small number, and meant that some ideas have been considerably simplified or stripped of nuance in the process.

This gives rise to a dilemma of method. Research based on literature alone is not an attractive option for the reasons just outlined, hence the prevalence of ethnographic studies of Kabylia and Kabyles. But these circumstances, combined with the importance of asserting social unity discussed above, present ethnography with a problem too: that of a remarkably tight narrative consensus around certain tenets of Kabyle identity, and above all around the very notion of that a Kabyle ‘community’ still exists in the face of dispersion and widely differing experience. Many Kabyles, as I found out, are indeed

³³ In addition to his extensive secularization of the education system in metropolitan France during the early 1880s, Jules Ferry, as Minister for Public Instruction, was instrumental in instituting education in Algeria. According to Lorcin (1995), he was an early proponent (influenced by the ethnographer Emile Masqueray: see Chapter 1) of a pro-Berber educational policy, which took root more successfully in Kabylia than other Berber-speaking regions (Colonna 1975). One of the keystones of this policy was to train Kabyle *indigènes* as primary-school teachers. This was to prove one of the foremost channels for the transmission of republican ideals, and enabled a new minority of literate Kabyles such as Boulifa to adapt them – in French and in writing – to the purposes of a narrative of superior Kabyle compatibility with European values.

well practised at telling their story to outsiders – and often to each other – and at first contact the Kabyle activist community feels like an ethnographer’s dream: a group of respondents with an apparently highly consensual narrative of identity, easy to locate (in Paris) through a dense network of cafés, and often not only willing to talk but positively delighted to have a ‘foreign’ (especially non-French) researcher among them. Yet after initial euphoria at such an apparently fertile field, I quickly became frustrated with a sense that I was hearing an ‘official’ – and unusually consistent – story of who Kabyles are, what values they espouse and reject, what they want from Algeria.

Now, this context creates two classic traps for research, which also lock into the problem of how to deal with exceptionalist Kabyle narratives. The first is the trap of ‘exposure ethnography’: work that merely highlights the gap between idealized narrative and contradictory practice, sets up a myth and then deconstructs it. This does little other than confirm a fact of human nature, and *a fortiori* group identity: that narratives, or what we tell ourselves about ourselves, are usually a more or less imprecise fit with practice, reflecting aspiration as much as actuality. Such work also often dismisses Kabyle ideology as mere ventriloquism of foreign ideas, and the Kabyle Myth narrative as an attractive but ultimately hollow statement of progressivism. The problems of this approach are compounded by a further one discussed in the previous section: that asking explicitly about consensus breakdown or internal differences tends to produce explanations based on allegations of ‘clannish’ behaviour, which often tell us about little more than mutual antagonisms.

The other, related trap is that of attempting to counter bloated universalism – narratives that rely on universalizing foreign categories or symbolism – with a reified

approach to the local as an automatic route to ‘the truth’. If we believe that the stock narrative of Kabyle identity is to some extent constructed for the benefit of outsiders, should we not be able to get further by listening to ‘what they say when no one is there’, or through daily actions that speak louder than words? This ‘local fallacy’, though hardly an unfamiliar problem for anthropologists, is equally problematic. If not done, as valuable recent works have been (Colonna 1995, Scheele 2009) with great attention to how ideas move between the local and beyond, such an approach can all too easily reproduce the bias found both in much colonial ethnography and in contemporary assertions of Kabyle identity (by Kabyles and others) as isolated, ‘uncontaminated’ by the outside, and unchanging.

The recent ethnographic studies of Kabylia cited above have resolved this dilemma by focusing on transnational circulation from the ‘local’ to the global. Although, for reasons I discuss in the section below, I chose not to focus on the experience of migration and diaspora for this study, it was the extreme aspect of the consensus conundrum that I found in the migrant community that guided me towards a new approach and research question: why and how, in the face of great disparity and sometimes overwhelming evidence to the contrary, do many Kabyles manage to maintain such a consensual narrative of identity, and such an insistent belief in the existence of a Kabyle ‘community’ founded on it?

I therefore decided to tell the story not so much of difference as of unlikely consensus: of a shared narrative of Kabyle identity which, though as I discuss in detail below is by no means unanimous, is nonetheless remarkable in its scope and appeal across the apparent borders of diaspora and demographic variation. This allowed me to render

faithfully the narrative that came out of interviews, which was largely founded on this consensus, whilst juxtaposing it with data gathered from participant observation, from which it will become clear that the idealized narrative travels alongside and deals with a plethora of conflicting ideas and disputes about how best to translate it into practice. What interested me above all was finding a middle way between the extreme approaches discussed above by examining, in Bennett Berger's words (1981: 14), the 'interaction or dialectic between ideas and circumstances' in self-representations: not why practice fails to match ideals, but rather the very process of building explanatory paths between them as an integral part of *any* narrative of self-representation.

I call this broad consensus the narrative of Kabyle 'vernacular nationalism', and refer to it as the 'vernacular narrative' for short, to draw a comparison between this notion of Kabyle identity and its parallel in the concept of the vernacular language and its relationship to a lingua franca. Its main features are as follows. Firstly, the narrative of Kabyle identity perennially subjugated to more powerful 'outside' entities – a succession of colonial powers, and now (many argue) the post-independence state regime – mirrors the conception of the vernacular language as a 'weaker' party in a pair, which must therefore resist in order to survive. Secondly, the vernacular narrative rests on the notion of Kabylia as an island: a space that may communicate intensively with the outside and incorporate ideas from elsewhere, but does not allow this to alter its fundamental 'essence'. Again, this is reminiscent of many vernacular languages which for practical purposes exchange heavily with a lingua franca, whilst retaining a strong conception of ideal autonomy and isolation. Lastly, the vernacular narrative of Kabyle identity presents Kabylia above all as a moral community whose values are transmitted,

like oral languages, through transmission chains and genealogies, as opposed to institutions or institutionalized learning.

This decision to focus on why people choose to agree creates a series of methodological and conceptual difficulties.

Difficulties (i): migration and 'exile'

The ethnographic sections of this study are based on two years of semi-directive interviews and participant observation with Kabyle 'communities' in two places: Ajmoun and Paris. During this time, I was based in Paris and spent two extended periods in Ajmoun, hosted by the family of a Paris respondent and making occasional short trips to Algiers where I also conducted a handful of interviews with Kabyles. Most of the participant observation material I cite comes from time spent in Paris, where my route into the Kabyle community (discussed further below) was playing violin with activist singers in cafés and at cultural association events. Here, I was in contact with a large and relatively disparate group of respondents; in Ajmoun and Algiers, meanwhile, the field was more circumscribed by my host family's networks, and most of the material I use is from interviews.³⁴

This is not only because it was in Paris, far more than in Ajmoun, that I had the freedom to move between different sites (home; café; association events and concerts) and the circumstances to conduct prolonged participant observation. It is also the result

³⁴ Most of the interviews and observation were in a variable mixture of French and Taqbaylit. See Appendix for a list and relevant information about each of the main respondents I cite in this piece.

of what became a key part of the consensus problem in itself: a counterintuitive denial, extremely widespread among respondents in Paris, that geographical location held any importance for Kabyle identity, and a conviction of being ‘just as Kabyle wherever we are’: *caelum non animus mutant qui trans mare currunt*.³⁵

The combination of inhospitable terrain and high population density has long driven seasonal and permanent emigration from Kabylia, first to cities in Algeria and the Maghrib, and later, largely since the last quarter of the nineteenth century, to France. Heavy punitive land seizures made by the colonial authorities after the crushing of the great Kabyle insurrection of 1871 drove a trickle of early labour migration abroad, and this continued in waves as France imported labour during and after the First and Second World Wars. Kabyles accounted for the majority of early recorded migrants from Algeria: an estimated 10,000 of 13,000 Algerians living in France in 1914 were Kabyle, and 120,000 out of 212,000 in 1954. Algerian migration to France overall grew massively after the war of independence, with 350,000 estimated to be resident in France in 1963 and a stable 900,000 in 1975 after the end of open labour immigration borders and French family regroupment policy the previous year.³⁶ As well as continued migration to France, which continues to be the destination of choice for many emigrants, there are now also significant numbers of Kabyles living in Belgium, Québec, and more recently (transcending the French language bias) the UK, US, Germany and elsewhere. It is impossible to find reliable statistics for the present Kabyle population in France because of the prohibition on ethnic census.

Working on Algerian migration to France, one often has a feeling of unhealthy surfeit:

³⁵ Horace, Epistle VI: ‘Those who cross the seas change the sky above them, not their soul’.

³⁶ Figures from Chaker 1998: 67.

that it is a field so over-ripe for thinking about processes of mutual exchange and circulation that the fruit has already fallen, or that these processes are so over-invested that ideas are inextricably everywhere at once and yet never to be found where one actually is (Scheele 2009). The counterpart to this is a long-term collective imagery of Kabyle migration – enshrined above all in the song texts of the *chanson de l'exil* popular in the early decades of migration and still performed today – which emphasizes a conception of migration as involuntary exile (*lyorba*) from a mother country unable to feed her offspring. This narrative of exile, which is in large part maintained even among migrants who leave Kabylia by choice rather than because of urgent economic necessity, depicts migration as part of a perennial Kabyle mobility going back to the tradition of the *εattar* or *colporteur* (itinerant peddler) long common especially among the Zwawa of the At Yenni (Morizot 1962). This mobility, however, is perceived as essentially contingent and impermanent, and indeed as entirely without effect (however long the absence) on the emigrant's 'Kabyleness' or membership of a native village.³⁷

This perception, which may at first appear improbably idealized, persists with striking force in implicit Kabyle assumptions about migration today. Intuitively described, these are that there is a constant cycle of movement and exchange, that one is likely at some time to take part in it or to be close to someone who does, and that this will fall entirely within a familiar cultural narrative of mobility understood as circumstance rather than radical change. This gives rise to a conception, sometimes latent and sometimes explicit, that where one currently lives is of less importance than the fact that this cycle itself is a part of Kabyle cultural identity (a fact which also allows migrants to maintain

³⁷ This perception persists to a limited degree in the practice of the village *tajmaεt* today, which at least in theory demands payment of fines for absence from collective labour engagements, funerals and so on even from long-term migrants. The eldest brother of my host family in Ajmoun claimed that he regularly paid these fines for the two family members resident in France.

a myth of return).³⁸

It was in this sense that many of my respondents expressed the view that location was unimportant. As I discuss in more detail later, most had left Algeria during or shortly after the civil war (though in most cases not because of direct danger or persecution), and could therefore describe the choice to move to France as circumstantially driven; or in the words of one, explaining the insular tendency of Kabyles in Paris, ‘hardly a cultural adventure’. This allowed them to maintain the long-term narrative of migration as an obligation rather than a choice to leave Kabylia, and also on occasion to justify the relative (in French terms) ‘communitarianism’ of many recent Kabyle migrants.

This is *not* to claim that migration does not in fact exert a strong influence on lives and attitudes; the changing circumstances of Kabyle diaspora, communications and trans-Mediterranean exchange are fertile areas for research, yet what I found most interesting, in the context of my investigation of nationalist thought as a form of unlikely consensus creation, was rather how respondents went about erasing rather than stressing these differences of circumstance in the interests of ideology. It would, to give one illustrative example, be deeply harmful to the narrative of democratic, secular Kabyle identity if this were thought to arise exclusively from Kabyle contact with France. For the narrative to work as a foil to the criticism of Arabo-Islamism, these qualities must be depicted rather as part of an innate cultural affinity with European or liberal ideas that transcends the recent circumstances of migration to France.

³⁸ This was the theme brilliantly explored in Abdelmalek Sayad’s description of the ‘myth of exile’, which treated the idea of pre-ordained migration as a ‘symbolic representation’ or ‘enchantment’ justifying economic necessity.

Difficulties (ii): 'activism' and defining the field

The second problem is that of defining the field. The phrase 'Kabyle activist', which I have used without explanation until now, contains two problems. Firstly, activism or *engagement* is built into the very conception of Kabyle identity as resistance – not as isolated actions but rather as an integral quality of Kabyle morality. Secondly, as discussed, this notion of activism–resistance is widely expressed as a fundamentally *apolitical* quality, or at least a rejection of institutional politics. Instead, it is understood as part of the pervasive social code of *taqbaylit* that shapes identity at every level: individual, family, village, region, nation. This, then, is not activism as often conceived by theorists of social movements – as political beliefs that get into all areas of social life – but something closer to the opposite: a conception of *de facto* commitment or *engagement*, less to 'a cause' in the institutional or thematic sense than to an all-pervasive ideal of 'Kabyleness' as resistance. How, then, are we to deal with a field in which a great number – far beyond the confines of party politics or civil society – claim to be *de facto* activists, and in which just as great a number of these elaborately refuse to talk about 'politics' at all?

This ideal of 'Kabyleness' as resistance is also uppermost in much Kabyle academic writing. Affirming the idea of anti-Arabization as 'militant existence', Chaker 1998 argues that 'being Berber today – and wanting to remain Berber – is of necessity an activist, cultural, always political and perhaps even scientific [academic] act'. The long-running institutional suppression of Berber language and cultural programmes in Algerian universities, and the ideological difficulty of 'local studies' more broadly (Colonna 2003), means that much of the work on Kabylia undertaken by Kabyle

academics – still overwhelmingly in France – is, broadly speaking, attempting not merely to produce knowledge but to (re)instate the legitimacy of ‘Berber culture’ as a discipline and field of knowledge. Here too, then, ‘activism’ is in many cases taken for granted as the *raison d’être* of Kabyle academic production.

Explicitly political Kabyle activism does exist in the shape of the two parties discussed above (the FFS and RCD), both nominally national but in large part centred on Kabyle regional interests, and the relatively recent emergence of Ferhat Mehenni’s MAK. There have also been significant organized ‘cultural’ movements led by Kabyles, of which the most significant was the Mouvement culturel berbère (MCB) which played a significant role in and after the ‘Berber Spring’ of 1980 (see Chronology). Yet even members and adherents, as well as other institutionally based activists – association leaders and university researchers – frequently propound an idealized rejection of politics as a ‘dirty’ domain, espoused only for the pragmatic sake of representation in Algeria’s national assembly and otherwise to be rejected in favour of ‘natural’ or ‘innate’ modes of community solidarity. Many more reject institutional politics altogether and vehemently refuse any involvement with political actors, even where this would be to their advantage.

This study is not about party politics, Berberist or Kabyle civil society, or indeed any type of ‘institutional’ activism. Instead, I take as my subject – and one that becomes another research question in itself – a maximal notion of ‘popular’ activism propounded by advocates of the vernacular narrative. It is in this sense that I use the term throughout this study: to designate those who identify as ‘activist’ by virtue simply of being

Kabyle, and therefore ‘committed’ to a way of being that (in idealized perceptions) embodies tenets of resistance beyond the confines of structured protest.

Popularism, of course, is far from a virgin concept in Algerian political life: the nation is officially the *République démocratique et populaire*, and like many other anticolonial struggles the Algerian declaration of independence was articulated around the notion of power restored to the *peuple* – a term whose connotations are hardly rendered by the parallel English word (which I use, however, as interchangeable shorthand throughout this study in the absence of a better alternative). The notion of the *peuple* carries several ideas at once: that which is ‘popular’ in the sense of universal, available to all, and often therefore seen as part of ‘folk’, working-class or ‘low’ culture, rather than an elite realm. *Populaire* means at once public, traditional, often local, and in this sense can safely be said to be a misnomer for a state ideology predicated on the recovery of ‘high’ (literary) Arabo-Islamic culture and the marginalization of ‘folk’ cultures. At the same time, the habit of attempting to capture the legitimacy of popular politics is hardly alien to contests for control over nationalist ideology, above all in states where popular representation is in fact dubious or non-existent.

My definition of the field relates to an ongoing debate between two strategies that have long travelled in tandem, not always harmoniously, for the representation of Kabyle interests Algeria. A ‘culturalist’ (Dirèche-Slimani 1997) or ‘cultural-pluralist’ (Roberts 2001) orientation, represented primarily by Berberist study groups based in Paris in the 1960s and 1970s, the MCB and more recently the RCD, has promoted linguistic rights for Tamazight while broadly emphasizing negotiation rather than isolationism as the preferable strategy. A ‘populist’ or ‘Amazigh-revivalist’ strand,

meanwhile, has issued more aggressive claims about Berber identity and linguistic rights, accusing cultural pluralists of succumbing to a false division of indigenous Berber Algeria (Roberts, *op. cit.*), and using a rhetoric

in the register of violence and resentment: blanket rejection of all that is Arabic, vitriolic and systematic attacks on the Algerian State and its cultural politics ... radical, under-theorized, on occasion racist [ie. anti-Arab] and extremist ... yet also innovative and audacious in certain domains. (Dirèche-Slimani 1997: 107–8, 113)

Though these trends are by no means mutually exclusive or always clearly differentiated, it is by and large this last orientation, for reasons that I discuss in detail later in the Introduction, that influences my respondents' narratives.

One key tenet espoused by both these strands of activism has been that of *laïcité*, often translated as 'secularism', but in French use associated not just with the separation of church and state but with a more thoroughgoing belief that religious faith must be a rigorously private affair, kept separate from the public institutional sphere. Kabyle activists have invoked *laïcité* to criticize the constitutional definition of Algeria as a Muslim country, and the state regime's involvement in what should (according to this criticism) be a private matter. My respondents identified state interference in daily affairs (calls to prayer broadcast on national television, punitive measures against those seen to break the Ramadan fast and so on), as well as broader political orientations, as grounds for resentment.

In fact, especially in the Amazigh-revivalist vein espoused by many of my respondents, Kabyle rhetoric frequently walks a fine line between secularism thus defined and a radical attack on Islam itself. Hugh Roberts (2001: 26–30) has extensively argued that Berberist discourse on religion in Kabyle hands in fact amounts to a 'self-

denial', given the fact that membership of the political community in traditional Kabyle village life 'is conditional upon membership of the community of believers (*umma*) and that religion is in consequence an intrinsically and fundamentally public matter' (*op. cit.*: 27). This tension was borne out in many of my respondents' narratives, which tended to oscillate between the official *laïciste* view ('I've nothing against religion, as long as it remains a question of private belief and is not imposed on others') and a more virulent rhetoric conflating Islamism with Islam, and often requiring deliberate minimalization of religious practice in the respondent's family ('my father goes to mosque, but it's a question of culture and social acceptance, not faith'; 'my sister only wears *hijab* out of respect for my father'). Even among those of my respondents who are practising Muslims (see Appendix), surprisingly, only one criticized this tendency to minimize the place of religion in order to maintain the 'official' Kabyle narrative of *laïcité*.

Difficulties (iii): symbolism and metaphor

14 November 2009: Algeria plays Egypt for a place in the final of the Coupe d'Afrique, and loses. Clashes on the Champs Élysées echo more violent ones on the streets of Cairo. Among my respondents in Paris, the reaction is mixed. More than one second-generation teenager jokes about a Kabyle father whose anti-Arabism took a turn for the worse in the following weeks. Most condemn the violence, and a nation that can support its team only for as long as it brings national glory, turning on it immediately when it loses. Even more, however, comment on the power of football to unite previously divided loyalties around a shared national ideal: 'have a football match every day and Algeria would be rid of the Kabyle problem', as one respondent wryly suggested. I, meanwhile, was bemused by the spectacle of my dissident Kabyle friends digging out all the trinkets they could find of a flag that they portray elsewhere stained with blood.

Many Kabyles and others critical of the state describe Algeria as an empty space with only symbols to its name. Legitimacy, they say, hangs by a thread from the symbolic trappings of national belonging – flags, football, war heroism – that every so often manage to unite divided loyalties. ‘What of any value is left in this place’, asks the dissident journalist Kamel Daoud in the same vein, ‘when you take out the oil and the martyrs, and put the national anthem on silent mode?’³⁹ But the Kabyle cause is also very symbol-heavy, based around a seemingly homogeneous set of visual, textual and material symbols: the Imazighen sign, Berber pottery, slogans such as *Pouvoir assassin*, portraits of Kahina, Massinissa and other ancient Berber war heroes,⁴⁰ snippets of song texts, photos of figs, olive oil or traditional butter churns, Kabyle dresses and woven fabric. This is a small but remarkably consensual set of signs, made more powerful by a large emigrant community and its appetite for images of Kabyle belonging. In both cases, many Kabyles allege, this symbolic consensus covers a fundamental failure to unite beyond it.

This is an especially vexed question because Kabylia has long been a site of debate for idealized notions of tradition and modernity. The Kabyle cause and especially its migrant base relies heavily on a timeless imagery of ‘antebellum’ Kabyle tradition, or an imagined purity before repeated colonization. This is also a marked tendency in the literature, which as we have seen has always evolved in a two-way exchange with Kabyle self-representations. Much of Bourdieu’s work on Kabylia, and the *Outline of a Theory of Practice* in particular, supported a stark notional divide between ‘then and now’, and depicted Kabylia as a land of idyllic archaism upset by the ‘uprooting’ of

³⁹ Kamel Daoud, ‘Algérie: stade oral collectif’, *Libération*. Available at <http://laseptiemewilaya.wordpress.com/2012/03/18/algerie-50-ans-dindependance>, accessed 22 March 2012.

⁴⁰ See Chapter 1 for discussion of these.

colonization (Bourdieu 1977; Goodman 2003 for critique of this approach). The testimony of many of my respondents, especially those born in France, tended to reproduce this idea of timeless essence – both in abstract narratives of Kabyle identity and descriptions of village-based social practices, including their transposition into an idealized version of solidarity in the Kabyle migrant community.

The counterpart to such approaches, again most famously in the hands of Bourdieu, is often the treatment of social life and especially spoken discourse as a symbolic representation, a structure that is ‘bursting with signification [and a] phantom devoid of meaning ... an ambivalent symbol of both everything and nothing’ (Fernea and Malarkey 1975). Anthropologists have thus repeatedly described Kabylia as a place where surface discourse can never be taken at face value, but conceals hidden meanings which must be recovered from it.⁴¹ This hermeneutic approach implies that everyday life and especially words constitute not direct meaning, but a code. The key to the code may lie in ideal enunciations – proverbs, folk tales (Lacoste-Dujardin 1970), poetry (Chaker 1989); ‘official’ enunciations – village records and customary codes or *qawanin* (Aucapitaine 1863); symbolic places – house (Bourdieu 1970), village

⁴¹ In Kabylia, the representation of this meaning that has attracted most interest is the folktale or proverb, treated by both Bourdieu (1977) and Lacoste-Dujardin (1970) as an enunciation of the cultural *non-dit* of Kabyle society, encoding the homologies of male–female, fertility–barrenness and so on, as well as hopes and fears about different forms of leadership and authority. In Bourdieu’s hands, proverbs express the repressed truths of social life: the mechanisms that must remain hidden in order to maintain a collective myth. Proverbs thus covertly acknowledge the impossibility of the myth of equality, which cannot be admitted in everyday life without destroying the ‘collective fiction’ that sustains the community. Structures of social life – most importantly family and marriage patterns, and associated values of honour and shame – have also been treated as symbolic representations, or what Fernea and Malarkey (1975) call ‘systems of signifying totalities’. Father’s-brother’s-daughter marriage (FBD), a staple of Maghribi kinship analysis, has for instance been interpreted as a symbolic representation whose importance lies not in its motivation or effect on individuals, but rather what it stands for in terms of social meaning. Schneider (1971), for instance, interprets FBD as an expression of the ideology of honour and shame which informs the distribution of power and resources. Keyser, meanwhile, reads it as a mechanism that alleviates the tension between private and collective ownership of ‘resources’ in a broader sense, including women as bearers. In this reading, patterns of controlled access to land or women – FBD being one such – serve to negotiate a path between the propensity towards individualism/hierarchy and the need (given ecological hardships) for collective solidarity. This is true within families as well as larger units such as the village; in FBD, the alliance of family interest created by the marriage serves both purposes.

(Masqueray 1886), saintly shrine (Hadibi 2002); symbolic figures – marabout (Gellner 1969), woman (Genevois 1969); or journeys – migration (Sayad 1999; Khellil 1979), pilgrimage; or forms of everyday relations, private or public – family/kinship structures, village council (Hanoteau and Letourneux 1872–3).

It is in this context – that of what Tassadit Yacine (2011) calls ‘indirect address’, or an enunciation that conceals rather than communicates meaning – that we must understand the role of symbolism in representations of Kabyle identity. In Yacine’s analysis, indirect address, which finds expression in rhetorical forms such as proverbs, riddles, and certain genres of poetry including the *izli* or metaphorical love poem, has two main functions: to allow expression of concepts that cannot be voiced directly, and to avoid offence where direct communication risks it. It is, in other words, primarily concerned with maintaining a formal social unity even where this conceals subversion or fragmentation. This is also the role of symbols, which are a visual counterpart to this type of rhetoric.

This does not mean, however (though it would certainly be an easy explanation of the gap between what is said and what meant) that either the symbolic domain of Kabyle identity or the element of the vernacular narrative based on the Kabyle Myth is merely a ‘surface discourse’. As with Bourdieu’s concept of the spoken and the unspoken, we are dealing with two types of meaning – literal and figurative – understood as entirely distinct and therefore not contradictory, even when they appear so if taken as part of the same hermeneutic system, as in Bourdieu’s proverb examples.⁴² But this understanding

⁴² Bourdieu (1977: 13) cites proverbs such as ‘The moustache of the hare is not that of the lion’ (acknowledging the inequality that cannot be admitted explicitly) as evidence that ‘while agents must not be entirely unaware of the truth of their exchanges ... they must refuse to know and above all to

does rely on cultural familiarity with the relationship between speech and meaning. As I wrote in my notes during my first visit to Ajmoun, while becoming increasingly frustrated with being told on several occasions that I could do things which were in practice repeatedly made impossible: ‘if you don’t understand it’s not literal, it’s your own cultural problem!’ My host family, keen to maintain a narrative of progressivism yet unable to put it fully into practice, preferred to tell me that I could walk in the village unaccompanied and find case by case reasons why, on particular occasions, I should not. The fact that it never did happen therefore did not prevent continued assurances of my prerogative to walk unaccompanied whenever I wished.

Again, this relationship is very difficult to pinpoint but will be recognizable to anyone who has spent time in Kabylia. Indirect address – and by extension, I argue, symbolism and symbolic narrative – only appear as surface discourses or disingenuity to those who mistakenly attempt to interpret them in the same way as literal speech. They are fully ‘meant’, in the sense that one can quite easily believe (and often has an interest in doing so) in the validity and coherence of discourse itself, even where it contradicts practice: most of us do this sort of ‘ideological work’ regularly in the stories we tell ourselves every day about our politics, values and so on.⁴³ I am quite convinced that several members of my host family fully ‘believed’, as they were saying it, in their assertions of my freedom to move as an abstract principle, and a type of discourse valuable in itself in minimizing conflict and alienation. It was in particular instances of such an abstract principle that the conflict arose. The same relationship between ‘meaning’ and ‘belief’

recognize it’ (*ibid.*: 6), instead expressing it in a form of indirect discourse that sublimates inadmissible social realities.

⁴³ A committed ecologist, for instance, may need a car to get to work; or someone politically opposed to private education may change tack if the state schools in the area are substandard. In these cases, the coherence of the abstract narrative of values often becomes more important, and more attention will be devoted to maintaining it in order to compensate for the discrepancy.

applies to the Kabyle Myth narrative, and to visual symbolism: the importance of symbolism in the Kabyle identity cause is not in fact as a domain of imagined unity, but as a form of visual rhetoric widely understood to conceal differences and fragmentation for the practical purposes of unity *when needed*.

Something similar must be said about the role of metaphor in the vernacular narrative. Much of the material in the ethnographic chapters of this study illustrates how respondents debate the values both of Kabyle community and the ideal Algerian nation through the lens of everyday social understandings, and above all understandings of why smaller groups – family and village – succeed or fail. Use of family metaphors to encourage the conception of ‘natural’ bonds between members of a polity or a religious group is a common nationalist habit; as Jane Schneider observes, the referents of family, nation and religion ‘all seem to say one thing’, the thing being an ideal of unity.⁴⁴

But the metaphors of unity and breakdown on a smaller scale that we find in Kabyle narratives are not merely an understanding of something far-off or abstract through the lens of something closer to home. They also represent another facet of the figurative speech discussed above, which is widely used in Kabyle culture to suppress discord by describing experience in terms of categories and classes of things, rather than specifics. This is a prominent feature of social discourse in Kabylia, where the use of proper names is in certain situations regarded as improper, or more precisely as part of the domain of *lherma* (what is sacred and ideally inviolable). The clearest instance of this is a taboo, still noticeable among many older Kabyles, on addressing or referring to one’s spouse by his or her given name.

⁴⁴ Cited by Delaney 1995: 184.

Now, this type of indirect speech belongs for the most part to the social domain of ‘private’ interaction: family life or other intimate situations governed by the code of ‘respect’ (as opposed to direct speech, generally understood to be the basis for ‘facing one another’ in everyday public relations between unrelated men). Using metaphors of this sort to talk about Kabyle identity therefore represents the existence of an intimate domain of Kabyle community (and the aspiration to an Algerian one) through the nature of discourse itself, and not merely as a substantive metaphor. This discursive depiction of Kabylia as a unit akin to the family, whose affairs must be regulated above all to protect *lherma*, supports the narrative of autonomy from an intrusive state; the vernacular narrative conversely criticizes the Algerian state not merely for the political failures of civil war, oil curse or corrupt rule but above all as a travesty of social norms of solidarity. Correspondingly, many Kabyles also use metaphors of social deviance to depict Algeria as a failed state, a pariah in the international system, or a theatre of primeval violence.

This applies particularly to activist song texts, perhaps the most important vehicle of popular activist ideas during the last three decades of the twentieth century amid partial state censorship and limited literacy in Taqbaylit. As a form of oral poetry, a tradition I discuss extensively in Chapter 5, song texts make especially frequent use of metaphor and figurative speech to express notions of Kabyle and Algerian identity. Though I concentrate on respondents’ discussions of these texts rather than analysing texts themselves, I use selected excerpts as chapter and section epigraphs to illustrate how important themes of vernacular identity are represented in this register. I focus on

responses to the texts of the singer Lounès Matoub (1956–98).⁴⁵ His murder during the civil war, allegedly conducted by the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) but widely suspected to have been orchestrated in part by the military regime, confirmed his widespread reputation a key emblem of Kabyle resistance and martyrdom.⁴⁶ For many among my respondents' generation, Matoub represents absolute commitment to the condemnation of state ideology and radical Islamism in the face of mortal danger, and thence a brand of pure truth available only to the dead.

Who and where?

France

Like any story of identity, the vernacular narrative is not unanimous but in large part the preserve of certain people in (less reliably) certain places. My interviewees in Paris ranged from university professors to white-collar professionals and manual labourers, from third-generation migrants to Kabyles who had arrived in France a week previously; and in Algeria from men who had lived in France and returned to women who rarely left the village, some unschooled. Much of the vernacular narrative that I present informed discourse across these apparent divides. However, the respondents with whom I conducted most of the participant observation that supports this thesis

⁴⁵ The originals for these texts are taken from Matoub 2003, a collection of Tamazight-French parallel translations put together by Yalla Seddiki in consultation with Matoub. My English renditions are based partly on the pre-existing French translations and partly on collaborative efforts with my respondents, many of whom contested the accuracy of Seddiki's translation.

⁴⁶ Responsibility for Matoub's murder remains a hugely contentious issue, and is still a totem for contemporary Kabyle political leaders attempting to delegitimize their rivals. Amidst the wave of conspiracy theories that followed Matoub's death, some Kabyles even alleged that the murder was part of a 'Kabylo-Kabyle' factionalist struggle. Not a debate to enter here, but the intensely politicized nature of Matoub's martyr status is important.

come, by and large, from a narrower socio-economic background and in many cases have a similar migration history, and it is really only of this ‘group’ that the study can claim with any reliability to be representative.

My route into the Kabyle community in Paris was as a musician, playing violin with activist singers at café music events and association galas, and most of the respondents with whom I conducted extended participant observation were musicians or café-goers. The Paris café, for reasons I discuss fully in Chapter 5, has long acted as a focal point and centre of exchange especially for recent migrants. The vast majority of my café respondents (see Appendix for detailed life stories) are between 25 and 45, and arrived in France in the mid- to late 1990s or early 2000s. Many described their decision to leave as a direct or indirect result of the Algerian civil war of the 1990s, which resulted in extensive unemployment and damage to livelihoods in Kabylia, particularly among those who worked – as had several of my respondents – in raw materials, forestry or construction, dependent on access to areas and resources over which Islamist groups gained control. The rise of radical Islamism in Algeria in the 1990s also encouraged a radicalization of the secularist strain of Berberist ideology, which some now mistranslate into explicitly anti-Islamic or anti-religious views. Here, critiques of Arabo-Islamic state ideology are fused with radical anti-Arab and sometimes anti-Muslim discourses.

A majority of my Paris respondents work in security, construction, electrics and plumbing, removals, and above all the café and restaurant industries, or run informal money exchange or import/export networks. Several are under- or unemployed. Few earn a full-time living from music, and many of the singers also own or run cafés, which

they use as a venue for musical *soirées*. Most have no higher education, having left school early and in several cases missed a year of education during the school boycott of 1994–5. Many had been involved in the large-scale riots that occurred in Kabylia in 1998 after the death of Matoub, and in the ‘Black Spring’ of 2001. By and large, then, this is a relatively low-income group, highly sensitive to arguments about economic injustice in Algeria as well as the state’s alleged ideological hegemony. Many have also lived in difficult circumstances in France. Most of my respondents in Paris, except those who had arrived as the spouse of a French citizen, had gained entry on a visitors’ (or more rarely educational) visa and then remained undocumented. Logistically this makes legal employment impossible, as well as international travel except within the Schengen zone, thus precluding return visits to Algeria. Some have married in order to gain legal residence in France; others wait for the ten-year period after entry, which entitles them to apply for a *carte de séjour*.

This context – recent migrants, in many cases relatively poor and underqualified, and espousing an aggressive notion of *engagement* or resistance to the state as inherent in the very notion of ‘Kabyleness’ – is inescapably a male-dominated field. The fact that it was in the café that I found the most fertile site for participant observation amplified this effect. In Kabyle villages as in much of North Africa, cafés are widely understood to be the preserve of a certain type of male sociability opposed to the code of ‘respect’ that obtains within families. Though taboos are generally weaker in Kabyle-owned Paris cafés than in Kabylia itself, the notion of a space for men persists – often latently, sometimes explicitly. Some Kabyle women do go to cafés in Paris; but they do so under the weight of frequent (though by no means universal) slurs on their morality; and

many, especially married women, regard the café as ‘not respectable’ or ‘not a good place’, and prefer not to go at all.

Likewise, though several female Kabyle singers have been successful, they do not usually perform in cafés; when they appear in public, it is at large venues or for gala events, for which a solid core of established Algerian session musicians provides the backing orchestra. Though I played at a few of these events, they were large affairs at which the female singer was usually shepherded in and out of rehearsals by an entourage of promoters and producers, making it difficult to interact other than in a usually hurried interview or to create more lasting connections.

It was in the more intimate and informal context of the café *soirée* – typically accompanied by two or three musicians only (violin, banjo, *derbouka* or *bendir* percussion) – that I was able to conduct what I feel is the essence of ‘participant observation’: situations in which information comes not merely from verbal narrative, but from a slow and often haltingly uncertain intuitive feel for what is important to the people one is spending time with, in daily life and interactions as much as direct verbal expressions of values. A significant part of this intuition, as I explain in more detailed ethnographic terms in Chapter 5, arises from reactions over time to one’s own presence and changing role, which again I felt able to gauge more effectively as a musician playing in a small group and in an intimate setting than as one session musician among many at large commercial events.

These reasons taken together led to a reluctant choice: that, given the importance of participation observation in my work and the results I was getting from it, it would be

more fruitful to work with the inherent male bias of the field. Though I cite from interviews conducted with women, both in the café and elsewhere, the narrative of Kabyle identity that I present is overridingly, among the group that I was working with, a male domain. This is for a conceptual as well as a circumstantial reason. The notion of activism as honourable resistance that underpins the vernacular narrative arises from a prevalent conception of social conduct between men in Kabyle village society: that of *nif*, or the code of honour (see Chapter 4). Many women who have grown up in Kabylia therefore expressed to me a view that, in the same way that it was unsuitable to be physically present in the ‘men’s space’ of the café, this type of ‘engaged’ political view was better left to men.

Interestingly, however, the dominant narrative I present is also common among another group with whom I conducted a series of early interviews: above all *female* second-generation migrants. Here, the relationship is reversed, as many women reclaim the aggressive discourse of Kabyle identity widely eschewed as a ‘men’s domain’ by first-generation female migrants and women in Kabylia. This suggests that women who are less conditioned by the rigid distinction between codes of public conduct between men and the private code of ‘respect’ prevalent in Kabyle family life are also more likely to transcend remaining taboos on women’s ‘politicization’. This is an argument beyond the scope of this study, as (for reasons explained earlier) is the explicit question of later-generation diaspora identity; I do, however, cite from several interviews with second-generation female respondents (see Appendix for biographies) in order to give a glimpse of this aspect.

Algeria

Many of the idealized narratives I cite especially in the ethnographic chapters focused on one site: the Kabyle village. Ajmoun, where I conducted fieldwork, is really more of a town; situated on the RN12 (the main thoroughfare between Tizi Ouzou and Béjaïa) between the towns of Azazga and El Kseur, its permanent residents number around 1,800 according to a 2008 census.⁴⁷ It is the *chef lieu* of the *commune* (municipality) in which it is situated, covering roughly twenty-five other villages and hamlets with a total population of 14,000, and also of the larger *daira* ('department'). Ajmoun therefore houses mayoral offices and the *daira* administration, as well as a large *lycée* (secondary school), a medical clinic, a sports ground, two mosques and a fairly wide range of shops and a twice-weekly market. This means that the village is a hub and thoroughfare for residents of the surrounding area.



Fig. 1. The old village (*taddart*) of Ajmoun, showing the mosque and remaining examples of the old stone *axxam* or Kabyle house. Photograph by author.

⁴⁷ Office National des Statistiques, Algérie, 'Wilaya de Béjaïa : répartition de la population résidente des ménages ordinaires et collectifs, selon la commune de résidence et la dispersion. Données du recensement général de la population et de l'habitat de 2008', available at <http://www.ons.dz> (accessed 7 January 2013).

Despite this expansion, many of its residents continue to emphasize a symbolic image of the ‘village-ness’ of Ajmoun as a bounded social community. Like many in Kabylia, it is made up of an old village (*taddart*), situated down an escarpment from the main road (see Fig. 1), and a sprawl along the road and growing up the hillside from it, which many residents describe as a ‘new’ village structured around a ‘colonial outpost’. The upper village houses the administrative buildings, one mosque, and most of the newer residential area; another mosque stands in the old village, along with houses (including some remaining examples, mostly now derelict, of the *axxam* or traditional Kabyle stone house) belonging to the three ‘historic families’.⁴⁸ Ferhat, the Paris respondent whose family hosted me in Ajmoun, identifies the family as one of these.

Unsurprisingly, not everyone agrees on who belongs to these historic families, or how many there are; in Ajmoun, two are more or less universally described as such while many describe the third as a ‘late arrival’ or ‘not truly historic’. Land within the confines of *taddart* belongs only to these families, whose representatives make up the *tajmaet* of Ajmoun.⁴⁹ The upper village has been extensively built up by ‘outside’ families, those that is who belong formally to the *tajmaet* of another village. Members of each historic family have also ‘migrated’ to the upper village, where they have built the modern European-style villas that are impossible in *taddart*. Ferhat’s father, now deceased, constructed such a villa in the 1970s, where those of the family who remain in Ajmoun now live. The family, however, retains a strong attachment to the old village

⁴⁸ ‘Family’ here means not the household or nuclear family but the *adrum*, variously translated as ‘patrilineage’, ‘clan’ or extended family. Traditionally, Kabyle village space was subdivided into areas regarded as the province of each *adrum* (also, though not referred to as such by any of my respondents, known as *taxerrubt* or *taerift*), which as well as inhabiting it exercised a certain normative control over what happened within its confines (Goodman 2005).

⁴⁹ Members of the ‘historic families’ commonly attempt to mark themselves out also by using an alternative Berber name for Ajmoun, which they say was a French toponymical invention.

and frequently cited the villa's proximity as proof that this had been merely a 'move of necessity' as numbers grew.

Ajmoun, again like most Kabyle villages, counts many migrants. Among those who remain, socio-economic status diverges widely. A handful of lawyers, doctors, financial services and large company employees commute to Béjaïa; some are employed in the mayoral office, *daira*, or as schoolteachers in Ajmoun. The majority of those employed work in manual trades: construction, electrics and plumbing, mechanics, raw materials processing, or retail and import/export. Many are also unemployed, derive income from the infamously Algerian occupation usually described in French as *bricoler* (doing odd jobs), or from black marketeering.

My host family is fairly representative of this diversity. Ferhat is one of twelve brothers and sisters ranging in age from 37 to 68; his mother, still alive, is a monolingual Taqbaylit-speaker; his father ran an extremely successful family wood supply business, which failed in the late 1990s when large areas of the surrounding Akfadou forest fell under the control of Islamist groups. Despite this, the family still claims to be one of the village's wealthiest, based largely on its significant land holdings both in arable land outside the village and building plots in Algiers, which have gained dramatically in value since Ferhat's father bought them in the 1980s. Of the six sisters, four live in Algiers in two in Ajmoun; the youngest is unmarried and remains in the family villa, along with one of her brothers and his wife and children. Of the other five brothers, Ferhat (the youngest) left education at fifteen to work for the family business, and in 2001 joined another already living in France; the three others all work as engineering professionals in Algiers, where the family also owns a villa in the

heavily Kabyle district of Cheraga. All of the twelve siblings, except the youngest sister, have married Kabyle partners. The children especially of those in Algiers are highly educated and include a psychotherapist and an architect (both female), and two civil engineers working in the Saharan oil base of Hassi Messaoud.

A note on the use of terms

A decision that has to be made for any ethnographic study is whether to ‘translate’ complex local terms into more recognizable concepts for the sake of clarity, or instead use respondents’ terms and allow interview excerpts and descriptions of actions speak to serve as a gradual explanation of their meaning. Though I have in some cases translated a complex concept into a near English equivalent for ease of reference (for instance, ‘self-sufficiency’, which many of my respondents expressed in Taqbaylit or French as phrases rather than a single word), I have a strong preference for the second approach. This corresponds with what Howard Becker (1998) calls ‘letting the case define the concept’: exploring terms whose content is not fixed in advance, but rather gathers meaning and texture over the course of discussions about how they are used in discourse and practice.

Several of the terms at the centre of this study – nation and nationalism, state, history, ‘popularism’, resistance, morality, custom – are therefore less ‘theorized’ than discussed as they emerged, as negotiable and contested definitions, through the narratives and actions of my respondents. In my discussions of how Kabyles use these terms, I hope to demonstrate meanings that can enrich our understanding of their more abstract significance; but the demonstration is deliberately that way around, and the method

inductive rather than deductive. Similarly, though comparisons with other ‘minority causes’ are always tempting, not least here since the Kabyle cause itself draws several in order to situate its own aims in international context, I have for the same reasons often opted to let suggestive analogies emerge from the use of concepts rather than discuss them explicitly.

A further complication arises when respondents, as in this case, frequently speak two or three languages interchangeably and cite different concepts in each. Some concepts in Kabyle activist discourse, both official and everyday, are almost always voiced in French; others, meanwhile, that refer to explicitly ‘local’ codes of morality which I discuss as a crucial element of activist conceptions (*nif*, *asl* and so on) usually in Taqbaylit or naturalized Arabic. Again here, I have avoided ‘contesting’ the significance of foreign terms in Kabyle discourse or discussing them as secondary to ‘purely local’ terms. I have explored the meaning of ‘nation’ and ‘state’, for instance, not as appropriations or comparisons, but instead through the content that my respondents gave to them through their explanations and debates with each other.

This always risks the danger of merely reproducing discourses or essentialized definitions; but recognizing the tensions inherent in ideas used by respondents should not mean suppressing them. Indeed, when dealing with ethnographic material in which respondents themselves use these categories (even if critically), we cannot ignore them in good faith. There is no reason why recognizing and exploring the analytical tensions of nationalism or ethnic essentialism, for instance, should be incompatible with looking honestly at what these ideas mean to those who use them.

This study, then, aims not just to offer a new view of the Kabyle cause and its relationship to the Algerian state, but by extension to suggest some broader conclusions about how we may best understand nationalist and dissident discourses (and those, like the Kabyle vernacular narrative, which may be described as both) in Algerian and Maghribi politics and beyond. During the time I have been writing this study, the response of various dissident and minority groups in North Africa and the Middle East to state oppression has rarely been far from public attention. As the Kabyle cause has long done, several (though by no means all) of these groups have presented their claims in terms of an inexorable spread of democracy and secularist-modernist values, citizen empowerment, and an end to religious oppression and state interference in the private domain. In their haste to support these anti-authoritarian claims, Western media have also been quick to foist familiar words and concepts on events. Yet understanding the significance of such terms in any given context, I argue – starting with the very concept of the ‘nation’ itself – depends on grasping the particular societal conceptions of authority and power, equality, justice, and cohesion in which political action is grounded. This anthropological element of understanding is perhaps especially important where, as in Muslim states, temporal power is considered inseparable from moral precepts originating in religious doctrine; I believe, however, that it is a principle that makes political analysis in many contexts more nuanced and incisive.

* * *

Part I (Ideals) starts, in Chapter 1, by examining French colonial discourses that grew up in Kabylia and Algeria between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries. I examine the evolution of three themes in French writing on Algeria – custom, island geography, and a narrative of Latin civilizational heritage – which also inform Kabyle activist rhetoric today.

Chapter 2 is an ethnographic exploration of contemporary Kabyle articulations of ‘statelessness’ and the rejection of institutional politics in Algeria. I show that these attitudes are part of a long tradition of thinking about the Maghrib as structured by binary oppositions (centre and periphery, power and resistance), and examine how my respondents explain everyday actions that appear to fall outside the ‘proper’ boundaries of ideal Kabyle resistance.

Part II (Expression) starts with a short Interlude introducing the theme of language as a quest for original authenticity in postcolonial Algeria. I discuss state linguistic policies after 1962 and give a brief history of Berberist activism in the two decades following independence, exploring different strategies in response to Arabization and the attempt to ‘reconstruct’ Tamazight as a written language.

Chapter 3 develops on this, examining the dilemma that Kabyle activists have faced in presenting an alternative Berber past for Algeria, either as written history or oral heritage, and relating this to earlier European discourses of ‘folk’ culture and national spirit. I then examine uses of the past by different Kabyle actors, from party politics to popular activist imagery and an apolitical ‘neo-tribal’ movement of the early 2000s.

Part III (Transmission) presents an analysis of family life and public social relations used as a metaphor for different articulations of relationships between Kabylia and the state. I illustrate the opposition between public and private normative codes, which respectively privilege equality and authority as precepts of social order, and illustrate how Kabyles use these codes to criticize state action and explain their own vulnerability to oppression.

Chapter 5, finally, discusses perceptions of political song as cultural transmission. I argue that the political singer is widely seen as the bearer of a type of secular revealed knowledge which is thought to embody the highest form of the connection between language, morality and cultural ‘essence’ seen in *taqbaylit*. I illustrate how my respondents evaluate the success or failure of contemporary singers in transmitting this essence, and how the performances of ‘foreign’ musicians may paradoxically be seen as its purest expression.

Part I

Ideals

Chapter 1

Highlands and islands: Kabylia in colonial ethnography

Some thirty years ago, a prominent [French] Algerian figure approached me with a leading question: 'Pray, young man, what think you of the people of this country?' 'I think', I answered, 'that you will rest easy only once you have driven those who go on horseback into the sea.' 'Wise words', he rejoined; 'the misfortune is that they are not where the sea is.'

Paul Bert, *Lettres de Kabylie* (1885): 6^e lettre

This chapter explores French colonial ideologies in Kabylia and Algeria around three themes still frequently invoked by the vernacular narrative of Kabyle identity today: custom as evidence of group or 'national' character; the notion of Kabylia as a mountain island, defensively autonomous yet culturally malleable; and a civilizational narrative depicting French Algeria as the rebirth of a Latin Mediterranean. Understandings of what a nation should be in France, and therefore in Algeria, were changing rapidly during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The sources I draw on in this chapter illustrate how these three main strands of thought weave together in French scholarship on Algeria from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries, with the emphasis shifting between them as the aims of French politics in Algeria changed.

Though the intimate relationship between power and knowledge has been demonstrated beyond doubt in the French colonization of Algeria,¹ discussing the causal influence of politics on scholarship is always a hazardous enterprise; and this is especially so in the case of a colonial conquest that was arguably often led by a 'politics of trial and error' rather than coherent policy. As Lorcin (1995: 7–8) further posits,

¹ Lorcin 1995 is the key work for understanding this relationship in the Kabyle context.

‘there was never a clear transition from one doctrine to the other ... From the outset theories of colonization proliferated; there was much debate but no hard and fast theory emerged’; and correspondingly, colonial scholarship on Algeria was always feeling its way, relying, to be sure, on a core of common theoretical and scientific paradigms, yet hardly the deliberate progression that we can too easily read into it in retrospect.

This is a particularly important point in dealing with the Kabyle Myth. Though the exhaustive repetition of stock tenets and concepts in colonial ethnographies easily gives the impression of deliberate construction, this was something different: not in the first instance an organized development of ideas, but rather an accumulation of individual works by scholars and military men, often of a similar intellectual background, observing the same military and political developments, and with access to a common body of (few, and therefore disproportionately influential) previous scholarly works on Algeria and a (burgeoning) French social scientific literature and conceptual *air du temps*. This is not to say that there were no collaborations or actual institutional links between authors: the proliferation of scholarly societies in nineteenth-century France, as extensively discussed in Lorcin 1995, shows otherwise. The Myth in colonial scholarship, however, is not a single concerted narrative but rather an instance of the French intellectual predilection for using empirical observations to ‘prove’ a previously determined concept, in this case the notion of Kabylia as a region demanding distinct colonial policy.

After an initial overview of the French conquest, and a résumé of the development of colonial ideologies in Algeria between 1830 and 1930, I situate and discuss a series of texts different in nature – ethnographic, geographic, literary – and spanning the

century between the first decades of conquest and the period between the two World Wars. The texts are selected, firstly, to demonstrate the intensive interchange between what may now be compartmentalized as different disciplines of French colonial thought; and secondly with a view to situating ideas in the broad historical context of events in France and Algeria, whilst at the same time demonstrating that their development, like that of French colonial policy in Algeria, by no means followed a continuous curve. Rather than focus on the production of ideology through official reconnaissance enterprises² and scholarly societies, a process extensively discussed in Lorcin 1995 and Scheele 2009, I therefore present the analysis in the second half thematically (custom, islands, civilizational narratives). The thematic analysis gradually expands the frame to demonstrate how colonial ideas about Kabylia were themselves embedded in much broader geopolitical and conceptual notions of empire – both past and present – and the place of Algeria in its development.

In keeping with this broad focus, I pass relatively quickly over a number of key works by officer-scholars from the early colonial period, which often form the backbone of analyses – Carette’s *Etudes sur la Kabilie proprement dite* (1848), Daumas and Fabar’s study of *La Grande Kabylie* (1847), Masqueray’s *Formation des cités chez les populations sédentaires de l’Algérie* (1886) and above all Hanoteau and Letourneux’ *La Kabylie et les coutumes kabyles* (1872–3), the most extensive and oft-cited work on the tradition of the Kabyle *tajmaet* (village council) and still a powerful, if indirect, influence on discourses of Kabyle self-regulation today. After a brief discussion of the concept of custom as elaborated in these works, I move on to a selection of lesser-

² The most important of these was the Scientific Commission for the Exploration of Algeria (1840–2), which played a key role in establishing the study of Algeria as a testing ground for theories of progress and social organization, and making information about this new theatre available to a metropolitan audience.

known texts: Colonel Niox's *Géographie militaire de l'Algérie* (1890),³ Emile-Félix Gautier's *Les Siècles obscurs du Maghreb* (1927),⁴ and two settler novelists of the early twentieth century, Louis Bertrand and Gabriel Audisio, with two contrasting 'civilizational' narratives of Maghribi history.

The common thread between the texts examined in this chapter is that of how to deal with diversity (linguistic, religious, geographical, ethnic) in a nominally unified territory. If much colonial scholarship presented Kabylia as an exception – an image that persists with astonishing force in French media representations of the region today – it did so through ideas quite unexceptional to nationalist discourses of the time, including beyond French borders. It is this more universal dimension of colonial scholarship in Algeria that I aim to highlight here.

French conquest

The conquest of Algiers in 1830 marked not the beginning but the reprise of France's quest for a southern Mediterranean shore. Coming in the wake of the loss of the Egyptian outpost to Britain in 1801 and the end of the Napoleonic empire, the French advance in Algeria was a colonial enterprise with a past.⁵ Its future as the creation of a

³ After serving in the Franco-Prussian war, Gustave-Léon Niox (1840–1921) was dispatched to conduct what he describes as 'the first systematic geography of the Algerian territory'; the result appeared in 1884.

⁴ Emile-Félix Gautier (1864–1940) conducted a pioneering exploratory mission to Madagascar in the 1890s, an experience which undoubtedly contributed to his ecological imagining of the Maghrib as a series of island environments, examined below.

⁵ The occupation of Algiers, for which the pretext was famously an incident three years earlier in which the Ottoman *dey* had struck the French consul with a fly-swatter, was initially undertaken not as a 'colonial enterprise' but a short military expedition primarily intended to revive the legitimacy of a flagging Bourbon monarchy under Charles X, who was in fact overthrown by the July Revolution less than a month after the *dey* of Algiers formally surrendered to the French. Only afterwards did a piecemeal conquest of other coastal cities and then hinterland areas ensue, one which Ageron (1979) argues was

settler colony following the transition to civilian rule in 1871, however, would require a more deliberate ideology of the Mediterranean as a single cultural space. A readily available precedent for this was that of the Roman empire,⁶ which had unified the Mediterranean basin for more than four hundred years, as the model for France's own *mission civilisatrice* around a revival of Rome's *mare nostrum* (Silverstein 2002). Imperialism in Algeria came to be metonymic for the imagined revival of a Latin North Africa, and cultural geopolitics served as the prime ideological justification for expansion.

Like many colonial enterprises, the French conquest of Algeria therefore offered new territory not only for military gain or settlement but also, and just as importantly, for ideological work. The principles behind evolving metropolitan ideas of nationalism could be explored through the study of groups seen as pre- (but potentially) national; amid the increasing individualism and bureaucratization of the industrial nation-state, indigenous forms of community seemed to offer an alternative outline of 'organic' national cohesion.

Once the initial notion of the conquest as a brief excursion gave way to the quest for lasting mastery, Algeria also presented an extreme test case for the management of diversity within a single administrative territory. Its population was a heterogeneous mix of Arabic- and Berber-speaking groups, often indistinguishable because of long-term intermixing and Arabization; of Muslims, Jews and Christians; of individuals

largely unplanned and directed by military caprice more than any coherent colonial strategy. The resistance of the *emir* Abd-el-Kader was nonetheless suppressed by 1847 in all but areas of the Tell Atlas and the Sahara. Kabylia is often described as the last region to fall, which it did in 1857. Parts of the Algerian Sahara, however, remained effectively closed to French passage until well into the later decades of the nineteenth century and, according to some, the twentieth (eg. Lydon 2005).

⁶ The Napoleonic empire had itself relied on an ideological invocation of Charlemagne's, and thence also of the Roman empire.

descended from Moorish exiles who had returned to North Africa following the Reconquista,⁷ from partnerships between Ottoman soldiers and North African women (a group known as *kouloughlis*), and of black African slaves brought to the Maghrib via trans-Saharan routes or the Barbary slave trade.⁸ Under the Ottoman *millet*, these had been divided into a number of group categories – Turks, Arabs, Berbers, Jews, Europeans – which powerfully influenced subsequent French classification systems in Algeria.

However, the prospect of indigenous unity in resistance nonetheless excited French fears, largely because of widespread perceptions of a bellicose Arab character (Lorcin 1995), and of the pervasive and violent Islamization of North Africa.⁹ The French campaign in Egypt from 1798 to 1801 had left behind it bitterness at defeat, as well as strong vestiges of anti-Arab feeling and wariness of Islam in French public opinion – and especially in the officer corps, of whom many also served in Algeria. Colonial ideologues were therefore keen to identify other groups within the newly conquered territory that could serve as allies in the suppression of indigeneous resistance, and that would be likely to prove eventually susceptible to the French national idea.

⁷ The Spanish conquest of the Moorish Iberian peninsula (al-Andalus), which eventually in 1492 overthrew the last of the Muslim emirates in Granada.

⁸ Ending the stranglehold of Barbary piracy (which operated nominally in the service of the Ottoman *deys* of Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli) over Mediterranean trade, indeed, had been another pretext for the French expedition to Algeria.

⁹ Negative French conceptions of ‘Arab character’, from colonial times to contemporary media stereotypes of a violent ‘Islam des banlieues’ allegedly propagated by Maghribi or Arab ‘communities’ (a pejorative term in French usage), have long relied on a false amalgamation of Arab identity and Islam. Correspondingly, many colonial-period treatises on Algeria automatically associate Arabization, understood as a process of linguistic and cultural change following waves of Arab invasion, with a supposedly contemporaneous process of Islamization. As many analysts of the Maghrib have shown (see especially Camps 1980; Shatzmiller 1983), these processes were in fact by no means simultaneous. The amalgam survives intact, however, in the vernacular narrative of secular Kabyle identity, which is largely premised on an assumption that the state regime is guilty of perpetuating an ongoing double ‘denial’ of Algerian national character. I deal with the inconsistencies engendered by this amalgam in Chapter 3.

A suggestive notion already existed in travel diaries from the Ottoman period of hinterland Berber-speaking tribes as fiercely independent peasants who had resisted administrative control by central authorities.¹⁰ Most importantly, the major historical source available to French authorities on the Maghrib before Ottoman control – and on which previous accounts had probably drawn – was Ibn Khaldun, whose *Kitab al-‘Ibar* coined two persistent stereotypes of the Berber: firstly as the prototypical resistant to Roman, Visigoth and Arab invasion, and secondly the state-builder of the Almoravid and Almohad empires (Fromherz 2010). This double image was extremely attractive to the French colonial quest for a group unassimilated by Arabization and Islamization, yet with the potential to align with a new national loyalty.

A recurring geographical image of the Maghrib as a lowland sea scattered with mountain ‘islands’ inhabited by indigenous Berber-speaking groups, driven back by Arab incursions into the lowlands, reinforced this image of Berber resistance and autonomous political construction. This simplified distinction between Arab plains and Berber mountains¹¹ derived originally from Ibn Khaldun’s model of the cyclical power shifts between urban and nomadic dynasties and Ottoman patterns of geographical classification, especially the distinction between the *bilad al-makhzen* (‘land of government’, where the Sultan’s authority was relatively secure) and the *bilad al-siba* (lit. ‘land of lawlessness’, or areas where the Sultanate failed to extract taxes and tithes)

¹⁰ See for instance Peyssonnel 1987 [1724–5]: 213: ‘They [the mountain-dwellers in the hinterlands of Algiers] are, most of them, thieves, or rather, wild beasts living in these mountains. Neither the Turk, nor anybody else, has been able to subdue them; they live miserably as they please.’

¹¹ Cf. Leveau 1977 and Abdelfettah Lalmi 2004 on the untenability of this binary division.

and as distinct zones of administration and military control (cf. Barkey 1996).¹² It also took root in European discourses of hinterlands, and particularly mountain wilderness, as places of resistant tradition and pure ‘national spirit’ available for recovery by Romantic nationalist ideology (Kaufmann and Zimmer 1998).

Following the conquest, the region that came to be known as Kabylia¹³ attracted sustained ethnographic attention as a mountain island paradigm. The area was not brought under French military control until 1857,¹⁴ and the idea took root that greater understanding of its inhabitants, as opposed to sheer force, would facilitate its administration. There were more immediate reasons as well: it was on the coastal strip and more easily accessible than any other major Berber-speaking region; it stretched between Algiers and the key Mediterranean port city of Bejaïa; and this proximity, combined with overpopulation and underproduction on infertile mountain territory, meant that many of its inhabitants migrated seasonally or permanently to the cities or worked as *colporteurs* (itinerant peddlers) on trade routes further afield in the Maghrib.¹⁵ If Kabylia could on the one hand be portrayed as an ideal type of the geographical island, its inhabitants could also be said to be necessarily adept at pragmatic cohabitation and incorporating influences from elsewhere.

In their desire to depict Berbers, and now particularly Kabyles, as the representatives

¹² See Hart 2001: 16 on the likely circularity of these terms, given that the ‘idea of a *bilad-al-siba* was in itself, at least in part, a construct of the central government’.

¹³ The term *Kabylie*, derived from the Arabic *qba’il* (tribe) or those not recognizing central government, was originally applied by French colonial authorities to several of Algeria’s mountain groups (see Introduction). Beyond designating geographical origin, it therefore refers to a form of tribal identity understood to be premised on the rejection of outside authority.

¹⁴ See Carrey 1858 for a contemporary account of the conquest.

¹⁵ See Morizot 1962. Again, it is arguable that this was a colonial invention of tradition, perpetuated by contemporary narratives of Kabyle identity. Abdelmalek Sayad (1994) contended that Kabyle migration and the prevalence of Kabyles in *colportage* were not historical ‘facts’ but born of the upheavals of colonialism.

of a historical ‘nation’ that appeared otherwise lacking in Algeria, many ethnographers used a near-universal tool of the nationalist trade: geographical determinism, or the theory that landscape defines a group’s ‘way of life’, which in turn defines moral values and normative systems. This environmental theory had been stated by Enlightenment political theorists, most famously by Montesquieu in *L’Esprit des lois* (1748): ‘Different needs in different climes have shaped different ways of life; and these different ways of life have shaped different traditions of law.’ In the *Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), Rousseau depicted central Switzerland as the home of liberty-loving peasants engendered by the very nature of the Alpine landscape they inhabited, which gave rise to the *Landsgemeinde* (popular assemblies) portrayed by him as the embodiment of republican democracy (Kaufmann and Zimmer 1998).

Throughout these debates, the word ‘national’ itself remained mobile, as we shall see in examples of its use in colonial treatises below. French colonial scholarship was for the most part the province of urban, educated men, and descriptions of indigenous communities tended to idealize their cohesion as representing everything that was endangered by the individualism and depersonalization of modern city life. Indigenous forms of cohesion must therefore be made to appear natural, arising from unconscious ‘essence’ rather than calculation. In Algeria, ‘national’ could in this definition apply to the village by way of its autonomous normative code and solidarity mechanisms; to a regional group such as the Kabyles, through assumed genealogical or linguistic unity; or to a broadly defined category of ‘the Berbers’ in Algeria and the wider Maghrib, on the grounds of a supposedly shared way of life as mountain defenders. The concept of ‘nationhood’, then, moved both vertically between different shapes and sizes of community, and horizontally between different definitions of cohesion; and above all, it

came to denote not a particular geographical unit but rather an abstract quality of cohesion, made material and measurable by scientific study in everyday practices.

The development of colonial ideology in Algeria: a historical overview

In the forty years following the French arrival in Algeria, the chief goal of scientific study was to gather information that would facilitate military conquest and control. There were two main directions of investigation. On the one hand officers of the engineering corps, responsible for reconnaissance, collected information about Algeria's topography, resources and geology. In order to implement effective rule in the colony, on the other hand, the French authorities needed to know its inhabitants. From the outset, human sciences therefore went hand in hand with geographical reconnaissance as ways of making Algeria comprehensible. These two facets came together in the person of the *Bureau arabe* commandant, a post occupied by perhaps the most famous of Kabylia's ethnographers, Adolphe Hanoteau (1814–97).

The *Bureaux arabes* were instituted in 1844 as military–administrative outposts; their aim was to establish mediating links with indigenous leaders, thought essential especially for the administration of tribal areas. Many officers posted to head the *Bureaux* were graduates of the Ecole Polytechnique, and were driven by the social idealism of Saint-Simonian doctrine. As Lorcin (1995: 110–11) explains, the ideas of Saint-Simon (1760–1825) were used to found an idea of colonization in Algeria as part of the creation of a 'new society', built on a rigorous social order determined by ability

and work.¹⁶ This, among other things, would require indigenous labour, which according to this line of thinking would come above all from groups judged to have a predisposition to industry and social cohesion.

The writings produced by many officer-scholars therefore had a clear social project behind them, and above all a desire to identify underlying social structures among different groups in Algeria, the better to mould them to the ideals of the new society. Their contact with the indigenous population was impregnated both with a belief in identifying hierarchies of ability between groups as the key to social organization, and with ‘a desire to find the least abrasive method to keep the indigenous population pacified’ (Lorcin 1995: 80). *Bureaux* policy identified this as the sedentarization of Algeria’s nomadic populations, a mission declared superfluous in Kabylia where pacification was thought instead to require respect for local political and legal structures rather than the imposition of French legal dictates.¹⁷

The use of geographical categories to draw a social map of Algerian society originated in a belief that subjugation would have to be differently conducted in the plains and mountains because their inhabitants moved, fought and made their livelihoods differently. The doctrine of conquest by sword and plough elaborated by General Bugeaud,¹⁸ indeed, was founded on the belief that while nomadic Arabs would be impervious to civilizational talk or attempts at co-operation, and must be subdued by

¹⁶ See Abi-Mershed 2010 for a thoroughgoing exploration of Saint-Simonism in Algeria.

¹⁷ Cf. Tocqueville 1988 [1837]: 80, who argued that Abd-el-Kader had a vested interest in sustaining nomadic tribes: ‘He knows very well that the nomadic life of tribes is his surest defence against us. His subjects will become ours the day the fasten themselves to the soil.’ In Kabylia, in contrast, Tocqueville identified a land-based materialism which, he argued, meant that ‘the country of the Kabyles is closed, but the soul of the Kabyles is open to us’ (*op. cit.*: 46) as long as indigenous jurisdictional systems were respected.

¹⁸ Governor-General of Algeria from 1841–7, Bugeaud had initially been reluctant to undertake the military conquest of Kabylia; none of the expeditions to the region during his tenure succeeded in suppressing Kabyle resistance.

force rather than ‘tamed’ by rhetoric, the sedentary mountain-dwellers of Kabylia must be treated differently: land expropriations would be significantly harder here, and as the most densely populated region of Algeria Kabylia also represented a prime labour source for the colonial enterprise. The Kabyles would therefore, Bugeaud (1948 [1837]: 110–11) argued, be better won by sustained undermining of their economic and commercial interests and empirical demonstrations of the superiority of French productivity on the land.

From the outset, then, a crucial premise of scholarship in Algeria was that the small-scale ethnographic study of indigenous community would meaningfully translate into a large-scale political vision of the territory, and in particular into a map of how Algeria’s various ‘populations’ were likely to relate, if at all, to the enterprise of modern French nation-building, both ideologically and economically. Many of the early ethnographies from this period therefore have a dual focus: on Kabyle *mœurs* (custom, morals, beliefs) and on commerce, craft and industry (see for instance Carette 1848, vol. II). As well as the prototypical binaries with a direct bearing on control of the Algerian interior – nomad–sedentary and pastoralist–agriculturalist – smaller-scale social structures acted as an important gauge of indigenous potential for assimilation.

Family life, for instance, could furnish comparisons with changing European and Christian criteria of morality (monogamy versus polygamy; division of labour between men and women, or across generations in a single household; control of money and inheritance rights; responsibilities for childcare and transmission of values); observation of rituals and magic could be measured against ideals of rational science; and modes of tribal organization and alliance were interpreted as indications of different groups’

capacity to move beyond the ‘irrationality’ of enslavement to the collective. Daumas and Fabar’s work *La Grande Kabylie* (1847), for example, divides a chapter entitled ‘Tableau de la société kabyle’ into two sections, respectively labelled ‘Mœurs’ and ‘Institutions’. While the first deals with religious belief, superstition, social mores, family structure and labour, the second enumerates the ‘institutions’ – the *sfuf* (see Introduction, n. 21), representation at *tajmaet*, marabouts and the accordance of *anaya* (protection, safe passage), and *zawaya*.

It was only under the leadership of Marshal Randon, who arrived as Governor-General in 1851, that long-held French notions of Kabylia as an exception would start to be translated into a policy of distinct legal administration. After the eventual suppression of At Iraten Kabyle resistance in 1857, Randon declared an ‘official policy of non-interference in traditional social organisation’ (Parkes 2010: 48). The linchpin of this policy was Randon’s decision, supported by the French Ministry of War, to preserve the *qanun* (village code of by-laws) as a source of distinctive jurisdiction in Kabylia. In practice, this also accorded the decision of the *jemea* (village assembly) priority, in areas of Kabylia that had already been under French administration before 1857 (Lorcin 1995: 83), over that of the French-appointed *qadi* or Muslim judge.

In the later nineteenth century the ground shifted. With the transition to civilian rule in Algeria in 1871 the number of European settlers rose sharply, swelled by arrivals from the territory annexed by Germany after the Franco–Prussian war.¹⁹ 1871 was a turning point for another reason that contributed to the relocation of Alsaciens to Kabylia. In

¹⁹ According to Ageron (1979: 119–20), the number of permanent European settlers in Algeria grew from 164,000 in 1855 (predominantly on the plains around Algiers) to 423,000 (made up of 220,000 French and 203,000 other Europeans) in 1886.

February the then *bachagha* (governor) of Medjana, Sheikh el-Moqrani, headed an insurrection driven by the Rahmaniyya Sufi brotherhood. Though the causes of the rebellion are contested, it was in large part a response to the prolonged famine and hardship of the 1860s following the land expropriations that arose from the Sénatus-Consulte law of 1863 and the rise of wheat prices.²⁰

The uprising heralded a new hardening of settler attitudes to the indigenous population, and raised fears of further unrest. This was also the time when French policy in Algeria was starting to shift from assimilation, aiming for complete integration of the colony and its inhabitants into metropolitan legal and political structures (and attendant cultural homogeneity), to association, instead premised on legal pluralism and indigenous co-operation in the colonial enterprise (Betts 2005). Later studies of Algerian history and geography after 1871 were therefore influenced by the need to justify settlement, and to legitimate a vision of permanent French presence in Algeria: civilian rule was at the time not only young but also perceived to be under constant threat from rebellion and, to a lesser extent, metropolitan contestation.

In metropolitan France the collapse of the Second Empire, the shock of defeat and the bloodletting of the Commune had ushered in a new phase of pessimism and soul-searching for the causes of France's downfall. As the 1848 revolution had sparked social theories of decline through 'impurity' such as de Gobineau's *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (1853), so 1870 heralded the *fin-de-siècle* concern with national decadence and the need for spiritual renewal. The intellectual debate on race had been ongoing since mid-century, and was given new impetus by the impact of social

²⁰ The direct cause of the rebellion was in all likelihood the civil authorities' decision in 1871 to renege on commitments, made by the former military government to tribal leaders, to replenish grain supplies.

Darwinism (less influential in France than Britain, but still present): the transposition of biological principles of natural selection into theories of social and political progress through group supremacy. In the aftermath of defeat in France, race moved from pragmatic category of colonial classification (a role that already gave ample room for prejudice) into an explanation for the decline or making of nations, as we shall see in the examples given below. It took on particular importance as a legitimating discourse amidst rapid settlement in Algeria in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and the resulting need to forge a new nation of disparate European settlers.

By the time of the centenary of the conquest of Algiers in 1930, incipient Algerian nationalism had started to harden ideological attitudes to indigenous calls for nationhood both among settlers and in the metropole. Algeria's first explicitly 'revolutionary' organization, The Etoile Nord-Africaine, came into being in 1926, based in France and led by Messali Hadj (1898–1974); and calls for an Algerian cultural revival started around the same time to issue from the proponents of *islah* (Islamic reformism), formalized as the Association of Algerian Muslim 'Ulama (AUMA) in 1931 under the leadership of Sheikh Abdulhamid Ben Badis (discussed further in Chapter 3). Amidst these developments, French political attitudes shifted back towards a burden of proof that Algeria would never be capable of realizing the tenets of national modernity, including statehood and progressive history, independently of France (Carlier 1991).

International geopolitics too had clearly returned to the forefront of French concerns for Algeria in the first decades of the twentieth century. Competition for African space had mounted in the late nineteenth century, with the Fashoda incident of 1898 keenly

felt as a sign of waning French influence.²¹ The period between the two World Wars, meanwhile, revived debates on racial supremacy, and demonstrated how it could be used (Nazi *völkisch* ideology, or Mussolini's use of the Roman precedent) to legitimate military aggression. This led to new polemics in France over racialism in Algeria, and how to position the colony in geopolitical/civilizational narratives. This is the other facet of a context in which the debate over the cultural genealogy of French Algeria and the Mediterranean evolved in the hands of prominent literary figures such as Louis Bertrand and Gabriel Audisio.

Against this historical backdrop, let us now step back and begin the thematic exploration of ideologies through texts.

a. Custom and the esprit géographique

In order to understand the past of the Maghrib, we must keep foremost in our mind the nature of the landscape. (Gautier 1952 [1927]: 9)

A feature of Maghribi society that many early colonial scholars seized on in Kabylia was a supposed predilection for custom as the basis for norm-making in the absence of formal legal institutions. The term featured in the titles of two of the most influential early ethnographies of Kabylia: Daumas' *Mœurs et coutumes de l'Algérie: Kabylie, Tell, Sahara* (1864) and the three volumes of Hanoteau and Letourneux' *La Kabylie et les coutumes kabyles* (1872–3), already mentioned. Though custom was in large part

²¹ The clash in which a French attempt to gain control of the Nile was thwarted by British action. Seen as a symbolic defeat for French influence in Africa, Fashoda gave its name to the eponymous 'syndrome' of Franco-British/American rivalry in French foreign policy.

constructed as a legal concept (Scheele 2008), the notion is in fact far broader. In early military ethnographies, custom is above all a highly idealized representation of social or political systems not constructed by decision or reasoned consensus, but rather emanating subconsciously from an unchanging group ‘spirit’:

This state of affairs [self-government through village legal codes] is not, as may easily be guessed, the result of erudite calculation, of which semi-barbarous tribes are incapable; it is the natural consequence of the spirit of association and solidarity which instinctively moves these populations. Kabyle society in its entirety is constituted on the principles that emanate from this spirit. (Hanoteau and Letourneux 1893 [1872–3], II: 1–2)

Though elements of it could be recorded for posterity in the form of rules, codes and deeds, as Hanoteau and Letourneux set out to show, the sources of customary practice were (they thought) above all the Romantic nationalist criteria of national spirit (see Chapter 3 for full discussion) that could in turn naturalize the existence of a continuous ‘polity’ (*cit  *), or normative unit: a necessary explanation, given that ethnographers were attempting to argue for the progressive political habits of a group they also considered ‘semi-barbarous’.

In this respect, the references to custom in Hanoteau and Letourneux’ work place its origins surprisingly close to those of oral poetry and song, which Hanoteau had referred to in his earlier collection *Po  sies populaires de la Kabylie du Jurjura* (1867) as ‘works of the spirit’. His assumption was that poetry revealed what Kabyles felt when ‘sheltered from our curiosity ... [they] depict themselves na  vely and unselfconsciously’ (cited in Goodman 2002: 89). The subsequent description of custom as the basis for self-government in Hanoteau and Letourneux emphasizes this aspect:

We can hardly fail to feel astonishment on seeing so many divisions [of the Berber ‘race’], for the most part unknown to each other, in many cases with no relations possible, obeying some

form of innate impulse towards the same form of government, the same customs and usages, and this in a vast diversity of climates, landscapes and ways of life. Are human races, like species in the animal kingdom, subject to mysterious laws, and is the political form destined to take root in each therefore the consequence and outcome of individual instinct?

This passion for equality and independence which drives Berber society is too strong and universal to be of recent origin.

It must have constituted since time immemorial the distinctive character and guiding thread of the race. (Hanoteau and Letourneux 1893 [1872–3], II: 3)

Custom, then, also provided the missing piece in the puzzle that none could quite resolve: what constituted the supposedly irreducible difference between Arab and Berber? Some argued that ‘language was the true keystone of nationality’ (Daumas and Fabar 1847: 6; the authors support their observation with an invocation of Johann Gottfried Herder, the most prominent theorist of language as national identity: see Chapter 3). Others, however, contended that language was not enough: Berbers in different parts of Algeria had already been sufficiently Arabized to make it a dubious criterion for inalienable group character:

Deductions from linguistic comparison are not enough to clarify the ethnic origin of peoples. Whole nations have been known to change language and religion. The Bulgars, who speak a Slavic language and have adopted Slavic religion, are of Tartar origin.

In whole provinces of France deeply imprinted with Latin civilization and language, the population may be of Celtic or Germanic extraction, but is unheeding of the fact itself, and unconcerned by it. (Niox 1890 [1884]: 276)

Race was little more certain. Many ethnographers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries still talked of ‘two races’ in Algeria for the purposes of classification,²² whilst however usually acknowledging that long-drawn-out cohabitation, intermixing and genealogical claims made for prestige purposes meant that the distinction was often far from clear.

²² See for instance Daumas and Fabar 1847; Carette 1848; Masqueray 1886.

In the land–ethnicity–language (in colonial terms, ‘territory–race–speech’) triad thought to underlie nations, one remained. If neither language nor ethnicity could be accepted as what made Arabs Arab and Berbers Berber, the mountains–plains divide provided the missing link to explain Arab and Berber as watertight genealogical groups:

For the purposes of practical conclusions, the quest for a purely ethnic [difference] seems futile ... The different origins of the two populations would be immaterial if they had the same customs, were united by the same laws, concerned with the same interests and moved by the same passions.

But in Algeria, the indigenous population does not share the same customs. One group is sedentary and cultivates the land; the other is nomadic and lives from what its herds produce. Their interests are opposed; history since the origins of the world tells us of the struggles and antagonisms between the herdsman and the land labourer. It is in this diversity of [ways of] life [NB. quasi-zoological terminology: *diversité de vie*] that we must seek out the characteristics of the two main divisions of indigenous society in Algeria. (Niox 1890 [1884]: 272)²³

This theory of a diversity of landscapes producing diverse ways of life, then, served to explain the difference of ‘customs ... laws ... interests ... and passions’ between Arab and Berber. Coupled with numerous idioms and topological names that appeared to support an indigenous worldview based on the connection between land and custom, this understanding defined group belonging according to way of life and everyday practice. Membership of a group in turn meant that different moral and normative codes would apply. Locating people geographically was important; but mapping their customs and norm-making habits was thought indispensable.

²³ As this passage suggests, colonial authorities had another reason for taking everyday action as the determinant of group belonging in Algeria, one which I do not explore here: the relationship between labour and human movement. A key feature of urban life in Algeria in the Ottoman period and the nineteenth century was the concentration of regional groups in certain occupations. Various regional population groups known collectively as the *berrani* (literally ‘outsiders’) who migrated to Algiers or other urban centres for work were each strongly associated with certain lines of work, and were for a time regulated by specific commercial and legal codes. This close association between regions, occupations and ‘ethnic’ identity was reinforced by the cluster patterns produced by migration, first in Algiers and subsequently in Paris and beyond. Even today, the remarkable concentration of Kabyles in certain occupations in the Paris migrant community – above all café- and hotel-ownership, security, construction and removals – bears witness to the importance of word-of-mouth networks in perpetuating these clusters.

These ideas of social custom, and especially its normative dimension, as the definition of community were invested above all in one site: the Kabyle village, and its practice of customary norm-making through the agency of the village assembly. This aspect is perhaps the greatest source both of commonplaces about Kabylia and (above all in the work of Hanoteau and Letourneux) sophisticated analysis of Kabyle social structures. The commonplaces lie largely in aspirational comparisons: of Kabyle attachment to the land with the village ties of the Auvergnat in France (Carette 1848: 397); of Kabyle village self-government with the Greek city-republic (Masqueray 1886);²⁴ and the most tenacious of them all, the image of Kabylia as ‘politically speaking ... a sort of savage Switzerland’ (Daumas 1864: 232), referring to the perception of a layered system of ‘miniature republics’.

‘National’, as used by many colonial ethnographers in Algeria, was then a term not of geographical scope but of normative competency and rationalism: a community’s existence through law-giving and definition of membership as adherence to normative codes. A unit – be it the village, the *aerc*, or Kabylia – that ensured its regulation by common reference to a (relatively) stable body of norms and transmitted them intergenerationally had clear potential for ‘national character’ in colonial eyes. Custom and practice, which seemed to represent rational continuity, thus came to be the gauges of this potential – and particularly of the cohesion of community (on whatever scale) as a moral and normative project.

²⁴ Masqueray’s doctoral thesis on sedentary village ‘republics’ in Algeria explored in a new context the question elaborated in Fustel de Coulanges’ *Cité antique* (1864): that of the relationship between individual will and collective institutions. Masqueray’s argument was that the *cité*, or political community in Berber villages, was a ‘concert of free wills ... in the smallest of which the savage may, in passing moments, forget his blood ties’ (*ibid.*: 24–5).

The model of the Kabyle village as a ‘republic’ addressed another facet of the assimilation paradox: was ‘Oriental psychology’ too individualist to feel national or too group-based to abandon local (family or tribal) loyalties? The answer, again, was both. Historical discontinuity was explained by the ‘curse of individualism [which] is a cause of eternal instability, an element that our *Bureaux arabes* are now struggling to harness and turn to advantage’ (Gautier 1952 [1927]: 84). But if individualism supposedly condemned the Arab *indigène* to a selfish pursuit of sensuality and indolence, the ‘primitive’ bonds of kinship – widely perceived as especially pernicious in the context of loyalties to Muslim social institutions (Lorcin 1995: 53–64) – were just as much of a barrier to his usefulness as a colonial subject. Individualism was a moral problem, but collectivism was a political one. Once again, then, the Maghribi must be shown to be both individual enough to coax out of collectivism when necessary, and corporate-minded enough to be coaxed into national sentiment. In this respect the Kabyles, ‘having known the pleasures of owning property ... yet communicated little with the outside world ... and never learned the language of the Koran’ (Masqueray 1886: 15), appeared to bridge the gap.

The notion of custom, I argue, thus allowed colonial ideology to reconcile two related but competing traditions in nineteenth-century nationalist thought: theories of the nation as a legal community and the Romantic nationalism of ethnogenesis and landscape. On the one hand, custom rests on an essentially legalist belief that normative existence (the Kabyle mechanisms of law-giving widely studied in colonial ethnography, or the bureaucratization of Napoleonic France) is what constitutes a nation, and fidelity to norms what constitutes nationals. One is British, French, Kabyle, in other words, by *acting* in accordance with Kabyle or French values and norms. This corresponds with a

legitimation of the nation as a community of shared values, practices and choices (what Renan famously articulated as a ‘plébiscite de tous les jours’ in his celebrated lecture ‘Qu’est-ce qu’une nation’).²⁵

On the other hand, the idea that a national essence (or Renan’s ‘spiritual principle’) can be found either in land-determined custom (the basis for the ethnographic distinction between Arabs and Berbers) or in long-term cultural genealogies such as the appeal to Rome (the basis for the geopolitical distinction) depends on a more Romantic strain of nationalism: the prior belief that national character arises organically from land and shared ‘civilizational’ origin. Legitimation here takes the form not of a voluntary union but rather naturalization by a supposed innate quality. According to this vision, one is or one is not; nationality is a question not of doing but of being.

In many ways, these two forms of the quest for a uniting substrate or national ‘spirit’ contradict each other; yet in order to sustain the argument that Kabylia was a chief example of how the Romantic nationalist criteria of landscape and ‘character’ could in themselves give rise to the legalist character of a polity, French ideology needed to use both theories.

If custom and its inscription in landscape was in the first instance an ideology that projected French and European criteria of nationhood onto the colony, the corresponding construction of Algeria as a binary division between mountains and plains was embedded in far broader nineteenth-century discourses of imperial control.

In the following section, I therefore broaden the focus to geographical discussions of

²⁵ Ernest Renan (1882), ‘Qu’est-ce qu’une nation, conférence faite en Sorbonne, le 11 mars 1882’, available online at <http://www.bmlisieux.com/archives/nation01.htm>.

Algeria at the close of the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth, when justification of permanent French presence and the sociological fascination with bounded communities became pressing concerns.

b. Islands and fragmentation in colonial geography

Metropolitan imagination of the colonies in the French nineteenth century meant simultaneous fascination and fear of the expansion of the boundaries of knowledge. The Great Exhibitions of 1867, 1878, and above all 1889 and 1900 presented the findings of colonial botany and human science as objects of exoticist fantasy and a hitherto unknown biological diversity.

Portrayals of the desert as a land of extremes were particularly important in this construction of an imagined domain of unbounded possibility, and the Sahara occupied a prominent place both in nineteenth-century exoticism and in the hard politics of imperial ‘penetration’. The region was seen as crucial to French interests in Africa, and starting with the conquest of Biskra in 1844 a discourse of *pénétration pacifique* in political rhetoric conflicted with an often brutally violent military strategy (Brower 2011). In the 1870s the project of a Trans-Saharan railway linking Algiers to Timbuktu was conceived, but in 1881 the second reconnaissance expedition for the project met an abrupt end with the Tuareg massacre of Colonel Flatters and the expeditionary team.²⁶

Yet the notion of the Sahara as a *trait d’union* or ‘hyphen’ between French zones of

²⁶ This presented a serious challenge to another group myth constructed by French military rhetoric during the nineteenth century, which shared much with the Kabyle Myth in its depiction of an autonomous and only superficially assimilated people: that of the Tuareg as a ‘noble savage’ working in sympathy with French interests. See Lydon 2009.

control in North and West Africa persisted, and indeed grew further following the Berlin Conference of 1884–5 and the increased European competition for African space. Emile-Félix Gautier, the geographer whose *Siècles obscurs* we shall see below depicting an Algeria made up of contiguous fragmented islands, was also a staunch advocate of the project when a new proposal for its implementation appeared in 1923.

This facet of colonial imagination found expression in popular Orientalist literature, art and music. With the advent of the steamboat, artists were able to visit the colonies with new ease. Félicien David's symphonic ode *Le Désert* (1844), composed following a journey to Egypt and the Holy Land that David had undertaken alongside Saint-Simonist comrades, inspired a wealth of further musical Orientalism, notably in mid-nineteenth-century French opera; the tableaux of Delacroix, Fromentin and Guillaumet inspired the exoticist poems of Baudelaire and Rimbaud, depicting swarming crowds, colours and smells, and a world of sensual and sexual luxuriance.²⁷

Fin-de-siècle imagery of the colonies expressed a fascination with the possibility of escape from urban *ennui* through travel and immersion in nature. It was a fascination that betrayed a clearly Romantic aesthetic of the sublime and transcendence of the self, yet at the same time recognized that this land of nostalgic escape could exist only in contrast with metropolitan greyness and *spleen*. This exoticism was further nourished by accounts of Orientalists beyond the armchair, figures who went to the desert to transcend their social identity – including, most radically, gender in the case of Isabelle Eberhardt (Kershaw 2003).

²⁷ See for instance Baudelaire, 'L'Homme et la mer' and 'L'Invitation au voyage' (*Les Fleurs du mal*, 1857); Rimbaud, 'Parade', 'Métropolitain', 'Promontoire' (*Illuminations*, c. 1886).

While Orientalist views were attractive to art and imagination, the early growth of the disciplines of sociology and above all anthropology demanded not unboundedness but clearly defined units that could be studied as self-contained social systems seen as shielded from the effects of surrounding fluctuations (Bertrand 2006).²⁸ In this respect, in Algeria, life in the mountains seemed an antidote to the desert plains. Here, as we shall see in the excerpts below, the story could be told as one of contained retraction, with Berber-speaking groups progressively driven back into shrinking mountain enclaves, representing both geographical and (supposed) social isolation, by Arab incursions. At a time when islands were crucial to the success of maritime colonialism, the extension of the concept to France's major colonial landmass in North and then West Africa was a natural way of imagining this geography (cf. Martin 1990 and Frémeaux 2002).²⁹

Colonel Niox, the geographer dispatched to Algeria to draw up a comprehensive study of the territory in the 1880s, thus explained Algeria's diversity of social and political systems as a direct result of its diffuse geological structure, ergo waterway patterns, ergo defence and civilizational centres (or, rather, their lack), and its resulting structure as a series of land islands:

²⁸ The institutional origins of sociology and anthropology are a subject beyond the scope of this study. See Eickelman 1989: 56–67 for a clear exposition of the development of early anthropology as the study of so-called 'face-to-face' communities, assumed to operate as microcosms of principles of social equilibrium, and its application to North African and Middle Eastern agricultural and 'noble pastoralist' societies. Criticism of this tendency, and especially of the glorification of 'the village' as an automatic locus of purity, is a staple of postmodern anthropology. In relation to the Maghrib, several anthropologists (Geertz et al. 1979; Eickelman 1989) have been particularly critical of the discipline's earlier reification of smaller units (family, kinship-tribe, village). The Geertz-Geertz-Rosen volume (1979) was instrumental in establishing the view that societal 'segments', often posited as objective realities in French colonial ethnographies of Maghribi and especially Berber societies, are in fact fluid 'conceptual categories' used by actors to organize networks (eg. Kraus 1998; Crawford 2008). The authors demonstrated this process in relation to the city-country divide, as well as localized notions of *iḥs* (sublineage – the equivalent of the Kabyle *akherrub*), *qba'il* ('tribe'), and most of all the concept of the *bilad* (region/locality).

²⁹ This theme is more fully explored in Frémeaux and Maas, forthcoming 2015.

Algeria has no geographical centre. There is no dominant mountain range and consequently no single point of origin for the country's water sources. The native people did not find those natural citadels whence they might have organized resistance, which therefore took shape around several different points, in small backwaters each unconnected with the next: Kabylia and the Dahra, the Aurès and the Ouarsenis. (Niox 1890 [1884]: 13)

The image of Algeria as an archipelago, fragmented yet homogeneous within each island, also allowed for continued depiction of Berber groups as both 'preserved' and the victims of forced conversion, accounting for whatever assimilation they had *not* managed to resist. The compartmentalized geography of Algeria further explained why previous colonial powers had each failed to tame its diversity, while the superior technology and communications brought by the French would allow them to found 'an artificial centre in this land that lacks a natural centre, and thus to seat their power more effectively':

It is this natural fragmentation of the country that explains the more or less identical fate of the peoples who have, since the beginnings of history, lived on this land, conquered it, and lost it.

Algeria is, so to speak, made up of segments sitting alongside each other. These segments are in some ways analogous – by which I mean parallel – to each other, but they are not alike; and as geographical units they are fundamentally dissimilar in landscape, agricultural production, and native customs.

History tells us that the geographical particularity of the provinces naturally engenders a particularity of interests and tendencies, and that this is one important cause of the weakness that has always characterized North Africa. (Niox 1890 [1884]: 14–15)

Islands were a useful concept for colonial imagination and for the emerging discipline of sociology in another important way. Beyond their resource wealth and strategic value, they fascinated because they offered instances of relatively self-contained evolution and biodiversity. They were a laboratory for a theory widely discussed by colonial scientists: the notion that the fragile ecosystem of island life was reflected in a similar evolution of human social forms (Saaïdia and Zerbini 2009). In zoological

terms, the unique forms of life created by a limited gene pool and limited contact also mean that external diseases – against which the native population has little defence – are likely to have destructive effects. In comparable human terms, ethnographers suggested, islands breed unique social forms preserved by restricted cross-fertilization and contact with others; however, the arrival of outside forces will quickly destroy these fragile traditions. Islands were, in this vision, places both of tradition and change, insulation and vulnerability.

Following this conception, Gautier argues that in the Berber hinterlands of the Maghrib – as on geographical islands – the difficulty of introducing new ideas and powers is offset by the disproportionate importance they take on when they succeed in penetrating:

Preserved in a watertight vacuum for centuries, flora, fauna and civilizational forms become more or less what zoologists call *residual*; they survive beyond their normal term, since isolation exempts them from the process of natural selection. But when the isolating glass cracks, the tidal wave of outside life crashes in and everything collapses with the natural fragility of residual things. (Gautier 1952 [1927]: 11)

Algeria's mountain 'islands', of which Kabylia was the most studied, thus came to serve for many colonial scholars as a prototype of the paradox of immutable 'essence' coupled with experience of mobility, intersecting trade routes (both maritime and on land) and contact with colonial rule. Here, colonial ideology brought the evolutionary aspect of the island theory discussed above into parallel motion with an entrenched historical view of mountain tribes, already propagated by earlier travellers, as the home of North Africa's archetypal 'free men', with 'neither chiefs, nor nations, nor governors. Everybody is master and free to his will' (Peyssonnel 1987 [1724–5]: 213). This was a useful combination for a political project fascinated with the aesthetic exoticism of

‘tradition’ but concerned to ensure that it was susceptible to colonial influence, and especially the gradual transformation of Algeria by settlement.

Historical ‘islands’: cycles and compression

The model of Arab–Berber conflict in colonial ethnography and its translation into the plains–mountains geographical divide, pervasive as it is, cannot be fully explained as a result of the need to create group hierarchies in the indigenous population or to validate the success of military conquest. Equally important, especially as the centenary of the conquest of Algiers approached in 1930, was the need for a coherent Maghribi history to support the place of Algeria as a province of the metropole, and thus an integral part of the French nation.

Since the conquest, French historians had attempted to compensate for the scarcity of documentary sources by relying heavily on two concentrated pockets of literature: classical texts and Ibn Khaldun. As the centenary approached, the school of *Annales* history was gathering momentum as a quest for the underlying long-term structures of demography and ecology that framed political *histoire événementielle*. This was particularly so in the study of the Mediterranean as a ‘culture area’, where Fernand Braudel’s seminal research (ongoing as of the early 1920s) shaped a notion of the sea’s coast as a continuation of its network of islands, places both secluded and intermittently connected to each other by the movement of people, goods and ideas:

[the Mediterranean coastal mountains are] the stronghold of liberties, democracies and ‘peasant’ republics where the life of the lowlands and the cities penetrates only very partially ... and is absorbed drop by drop ... But the Mediterranean mountains are also places of thoroughfare; their tracks and roads, however steep, winding or derelict they may be, are nonetheless trodden;

they act as an extension of the plain and its power into the high country. (Braudel 1990 [1949]: 39–46)

In this context, colonial constructions of the Maghribi past as a recurring cycle of invasion and resistance could account not only for its island geography but also for an apparently fragmented history. This offered a circular justification for the lack of concrete history for the intervening periods: writing history was impossible because history, in the sense of meaningful progressive events, had not happened.

Central to this vision is the belief that there had at some stage (in suitably limited form) been a Maghribi (or Berber) quasi-national cohesion which had been subsequently crushed. Several scholars spoke in this vein of the construction of Berber dynastic kingdoms across the Maghrib in the Middle Ages, describing a golden age of political creation (albeit in short-lived bursts) in the era of the Fatimid, Almohad and Almoravid kingdoms,³⁰ followed by a gradual loss of ‘national’ character as the defeated Berbers were forced to retreat to their mountain strongholds by advancing Arab domination:

Defeated groups took refuge in the [mountain] islands in order to preserve their ethnic character and language; but in adopting the conqueror’s religion, they lost some of their individuality as a people and their national cohesion. (Niox 1890 [1884]: 13)

This huge and deeply resented defeat [the Muslim expulsion from Spain in 1492] sealed the fate of the great Berber kingdoms, that is of the autonomous Maghrib, we might even say of national hopes. After this, foreigners arrived and fed off the corpse like parasites. (Gautier 1952 [1927]: 82)

³⁰ See Abdelfettah Lalmi 2004 for full discussion of this aspect of colonial-period literature, extensively used to argue for prior Berber experience of political construction and attachment to a ‘kingdom’. A useful summary of the development of the ‘Berber kingdoms’ themselves between the eighth and sixteenth centuries can be found in Ruedy 2005: 12–15.

The next phase, then, was to argue that the collapse of this supposed one-time cohesion had irrevocably ended Maghribi 'history' as such, which had then (during the 'Dark Ages') descended into a pattern of cyclical recurrence of tribal conflict. The crucial importance of this argument about the Maghribi past was to furnish a reverse image of the nature of European modernity as the construction of nation-states. This became especially important around the time of the centenary of the conquest in 1930, which coinciding with the beginnings of Algerian nationalism brought with it a new wave of French triumphalism born of anxiety. Thus in the scholarly project for a 'History of French colonization and global expansion'³¹ planned to coincide with the centenary,

Tribal struggles constitute the true history of North Africa, but [the material we have to record them is too sparse] ... Dynasties succeeded each other like the waves of the sea or the dunes of the Sahara, without any progress emerging from this chaos. Groupings never came together into a true State; at certain times, a superficial and fleeting form of organization was imposed on them from outside, but each time central power failed they lapsed back into their customary anarchy. (Bernard/Hanotiaux and Martineau 1930: 23)

And for Gautier, writing in the same period, the pattern of historical islands and recurring cycles explains the Maghrib's failure to evolve along a constructive continuum:

[Between different periods of colonization] everything changes radically, language, religion, political and social concepts. It is a history cut up by axe blows that seem to destroy everything, and fragmented into seemingly watertight compartments. In our European countries there is progressive evolution, following a continuous curve; in the Maghrib, a series of abrupt mutations. (Gautier 1952 [1927]: 10)

³¹ Published as *Histoire de la colonisation française et de l'expansion de la France dans le monde* (6 vols) between 1929 and 1934, under the curatorship of Gabriel Hanotiaux and Alfred Martineau.

Gautier's conclusion from the evolutionary metaphor is that the Maghrib, like its indigenous inhabitants, has none of the uniqueness or direction required (again, in a vision of nationhood influenced by Romantic thought) for construction as a nation-state:

This inalienable Berber country, which has existed for 3,000 years, has never been a people ... and what is even more astonishing, it has never felt the need to be one. To us Europeans, this seems unbelievable. It comes about also because this race [the Berbers] displays an irreducible vitality yet no positive *individuality*.

Here is the problem that runs through every page of Maghribi history. In our European histories, the central idea is always the same: the progressive stages of construction of the State and nation. In the Maghrib, on the other hand, the central idea is this: in what succession of particular fiascos we can find the cumulative cause of the total fiasco. (Gautier 1952 [1927]: 25–7)

Here, then, was the historiographical importance of the cyclical theory of Arab–Berber conflict: as an image for the alleged stasis of the Maghrib in the centuries preceding French colonization, and the difficulty of constructing a canonical history for it independently of a restricted literature of overused works. The stereotype of the Arab as a destructive force working against the interests of the constructive Berber supported the ideological construction of a fertile pre-Islamic past, a golden age in which the Maghrib had supposedly been a centre of agricultural and cultural productivity as in Roman times, then (according to this narrative) laid waste by invasion. The evident brilliance of early Arab civilization presented a difficulty for this narrative, and it was written out with another theory of decline:

What did they [the Arabs of the seventh-century invasion and the subsequent centuries] have in common with the wandering tribes of our times? [The nomadic Arabs of today] are the mirror image of pastoral societies in biblical times; they have since time immemorial been frozen in a form of existence suited to the deserts they roam; they are incapable of altering their environment, and have never planted a tree or chiselled rock. (Niox 1890 [1884]: 34)

In this compressed history, the migration of the Banu Hilal to the Maghrib starting in the eleventh century was singled out as the key moment when this ‘second wave’ of destruction arrived from the Mashriq. This was an image once again attributable to Ibn Khaldun, which persisted with astonishing resilience in colonial ideology and survives, adapted but to all intents and purposes intact, in Kabyle critiques of ‘foreign’ Arab power and the impact of Wahhabi Islam today.³² The image of the Banu Hilal as the destruction of productive North Africa dominated colonial accounts that sought to demonstrate how the supposedly inalienable Latin–Berber identity of North Africa had been so extensively transformed by invasion, and could yet be recovered through the ‘restoration’ of civilizational and agricultural productivity. French narratives of the ‘Hilali disaster’ clung to Ibn Khaldun’s depiction of the invaders as a swarm of locusts, a first ‘epidemic’ before the black plague of the fourteenth century. Though Ibn Khaldun was not, contrary to common belief, a theorist of absolute Arab–Berber difference, he described the Hilali migration in these binary terms:

The Berbers, the original population of the Maghrib, have been replaced by an influx of Arabs [that began in] the fifth [eleventh] century. The Arabs outnumbered and overpowered the Berbers, stripped them of most of their lands, and [also] obtained a share of those that remained in their possession. This was the situation until, in the middle of the eighth [fourteenth] century, civilization both in the East and the West was visited by a destructive plague which devastated nations and caused populations to vanish. (*Muqaddimah*, I, 64–5)³³

Several ethnographers in the colonial period took the Khaldunian story more or less word for word, laying the desertification of the Maghrib at the hands of the Banu Hilal and using the catastrophe to explain the decline of North Africa from its productivity in

³² Many authors attribute the arrival of the nomadic Banu Hilal and Sulaym tribes from the Hijaz (via Egypt) to a Fatimid revenge on the Berber Zirid dynasty for abandoning Shi‘ism. Others have more recently argued against this stock narrative; Michael Brett (1972) posits that ‘the story of the horde sent from Egypt is a fiction, and ... the concept of ruin must be severely qualified’, and suggests that the Hilali catastrophe can instead be explained as a ‘long process of acculturation’ moving west from the Nile valley and arising from the use of the Banu Hilal as mercenaries.

³³ As cited by Fromherz 2010: 142.

Roman times. Only the mountain ‘islands’, according to this narrative, were spared; Masqueray thus described the Hilali migration in the following terms:

They [the Hilali Arabs] penetrated everywhere except the high mountain gorges, drove their herds of sheep and camels onto all the devastated plains, blocked commerce, ruined industry, and eventually made of most of North Africa the barren land of emptiness that we [the French] discovered this century with something approaching horror. (Masqueray 1886: 28)

The biblical resonances of the invading Arabs as a plague of locusts laying waste as they move across North Africa dovetail with the mirror image, which runs through nineteenth-century rhetoric of Saharan penetration, of French arrivals as an apocalyptic wave of (re)conquest by Christianity.³⁴ The nomadic Arab is portrayed as the antithesis: destructive yet spiritually corrupt and incapable of constructive labour, geographically mobile yet historically inert. Thus Niox in 1884 perpetuates the biblical parallels:

The fatalistic Semite who calls himself an Arab is incapable of creation or foresight. He has never been anything but a force of destruction. His kingdom is not of this world. In fact, he imagines and desires nothing beyond the traditional life of pastoral rearing.

When his tribes conquered Africa, they attacked like devouring locusts; they destroyed the fields, and put their herds to graze on the forests; when one region was stripped bare, they simply broke up camp and carried the devastation further on. (Niox 1890 [1884]: 34–5)

These descriptions of the North African past were an integral part of a broad thrust of post-revolutionary French thought in the nineteenth century which conceptualized the process of state- and nation-building as first of all a process in which materialism would triumph over nature, rational principle over contingencies, or to put it in the terms of Jules Michelet (1833), ‘history erasing geography’.³⁵

³⁴ This rhetoric fed on the contribution of Catholic missionaries to the colonial enterprise and most importantly Cardinal Lavigerie, who had founded the missionary society of the Pères Blancs in 1868 and was a vocal advocate of programmes to restore fertility to the Sahara.

³⁵ Cited in Claval 1994: 44: ‘Society, freedom have mastered nature, history has rubbed out geography. In this marvelous transformation, spirit has won over matter, the general over the particular, and idea over contingencies.’

The geography of the Maghrib has made far more progress than its history. Facts that are incoherent in themselves will, I think, become logically related when we place them in their geographical context. (Gautier 1952 [1927]: 10, 61)

It was in these terms that the geographers I have cited in this section described the Maghrib as broadly a reverse image of the dominance of ‘history’, a blank canvas on which a new form of mastery needed to be imposed after the desertification and deforestation argued in French narratives to have followed the end of the Roman era. The desertification myth, indeed, was the key element of what Davis (2011: 2) calls a ‘Western environmental imaginary [that] spawned an environmental narrative of presumed degradation, constructed by the French to engender dramatic economic, social, political and environmental changes in North Africa that successfully promoted their colonial project during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries’.³⁶ I return to this theme in the exploration of civilizational narratives of Maghribi history that follows, focusing on the use of the Roman legacy as a precedent.

c. Unity, diversity and ‘civilizational’ myths

One way of defining diversity for India is to say what the Irishman is said to have said about trousers. When asked whether trousers were singular or plural, he said, ‘Singular at the top and plural at the bottom.’ (attrib. A. K. Ramaniyan)

Questions about how to deal with diversity in the vast territory of Algeria – and how to achieve political unity beyond this diversity – have long been linked back to past models of colonization. Throughout the colonial period, in writings from different

³⁶ See also Davis 2007 for a summary of the ecological theories that challenge this dominant narrative of destruction of the environment by nomadism.

disciplines and political contexts, we find one constant tension: between a desire to define Algeria (or the Maghrib more broadly) as a single unit or ‘essence’ and a converse fascination with its hybridity. Two competing myths of the ‘Mediterranean Maghrib’ – first that of Latin Africa and subsequently references to Greece and Carthage as models for a seafaring, hybrid frontier society – illustrate these two approaches.

The most vehemently argued myth of French Algeria as a reconstruction of the past was that of the Latin Mediterranean, promoted by the ideologue and novelist Louis Bertrand (1866–1941). The moving force behind this so-called ‘Algerianist’ school was ideological justification for settler culture, which Bertrand and his followers claimed to find in North Africa’s Roman past. This stimulated the (‘re’-)construction of a notion of *France à deux rives* as successor to the Roman model of Mediterranean imperialism. Territorially, Rome provided a precedent for an empire built on two ‘banks’ of the Mediterranean: a vision of Algeria as France’s *rive gauche*, in which the Mediterranean separated France’s northern and southern territories ‘like the Seine running through Paris’.³⁷ This vision conceived of the Mediterranean not as a rupture between two civilizational blocs but rather as a network of routes connecting frontier societies, different from each other yet held together by common threads of geographical and ‘cultural’ identity.

This Roman narrative also had the merit of explaining the lack of historical information on the medieval Maghrib available to colonial authorities. By depicting the

³⁷ Cited in House 2006. The model of metropolitan outposts (the *départements* of Algeria), colonies and protectorates clustered around the Mediterranean took on more real shape in the 1920s (the period when Bertrand was compiling his four-volume autobiography) with the break-up of the Ottoman Empire and the French Mandate in Syria and the Lebanon.

Arab invasion as an annexation of the Mediterranean Maghrib to the east and Islam, and the French enterprise as its natural return, French ideologues were also able to depict ‘history’ – understood as a coherent, documented narrative of evolution and productivity – as the exclusive province of Western powers, and the ‘interlude’ of Mashriqi influence and Ottoman domination as a parenthesis in the Maghrib’s historical identity. This served further to reinforce a view of North Africa as a liminal zone or a frontier between blocs:

In the seventh century, antique civilization, already dealt a death blow by the indigenous and Vandal attacks, expired under the Arab invasion. North Africa separated from the Latin world and entered the world of Islam: ‘This land,’ wrote Stéphane Gsell, ‘so long disputed by the Orient and the Occident, marked successively with the distinctive imprint of each, and where the two had fused to produce Latin Christianity, belonged [as of the seventh century] exclusively to the East; Mediterranean unity ceased to exist.’ (Bernard/Hanotaux and Martineau 1930: 22–3)

Rome was also in this vein the model for colonization as a *mission civilisatrice* of supposedly barren territory. For French authorities in North Africa, this included ‘civilizing’ patterns of movement in order to arrive at an agricultural society that would fulfil the material demands of surplus production as well as political or ideological prestige. The precedent of the Maghrib as Rome’s ‘bread basket’ or centre of wheat production complemented the perceived threat to bureaucratic authority represented by nomadism as an argument for sedentary agriculture.

As well as the inescapable references to Ibn Khaldun for the sedentary–nomad opposition, colonial ideologues found plentiful sources in the writings of both Greek and Roman historians including Herodotus, Polybius, Sallust, Livy, Pliny and Tacitus (see Ghambou 2010 for extended discussion of these texts). The vision of Rome as the one power that had succeeded in ‘taming’ the nomadic lifestyle and converting it to

sedentary, productive habits – a success then (says this narrative) reversed with the destruction brought by the Arab invasion – provided one further precedent for France as an imperial power arriving to ‘restore’ what North Africa had lost:

French agriculturalists, on the other hand, [in contrast with supposed Arab destruction] bring with them the patience characteristic of their race, love of the land, the determination to labour, and the same energy as the *durus arator* of antiquity. (Niox 1890 [1884]: 34–5)

In the Latin Mediterranean argument, French presence in North Africa as economic or material expediency – through agricultural productivity and space for settler culture – was thus inseparable from more diffuse ideological notions of a cultural prestige drawn from antiquity. Latin Africa as a cultural and civilizational concept also served the ‘hard’ geopolitics of French imperial policy amidst the European race for Africa – a race not only to carve out land but also to formulate definitive ideological justifications for the colonial enterprise.

Geopolitically, therefore, the Roman comparison was just as useful. Two defining international events of the last third of the nineteenth century – the Franco-Prussian war and the ‘scramble for Africa’ – renewed long-standing French tensions northwards with Britain and eastwards with Germany. The quest for Latinity and Mediterranean identity was therefore not merely a matter of domestic nation-building but an attempt to situate France in counterpoise to two imperial rivals. Both of these events, in addition, had direct bearing on French policy in Algeria; the massive displacement that followed German annexation of Alsace-Lorraine was the stimulus for shifts in settlement policy that had radical consequences for the management of the *indigénat*. The sometimes fanatical tone of the appeal to Rome in the later nineteenth century is born in part of this need: not only to justify settler presence, but also to heal the political wounds of the loss

that made North African space newly essential for French survival, driving aggressive land seizures and dispossession of landholding *indigènes*.

Historically, Rome had one simple advantage as a justification for European settlement: it was pre-Islamic, and thus legitimated permanent French colonization in North Africa not only by civilizational affinity but by supposed first presence. As late as 1921, Louis Bertrand was speaking this language:

In returning to Africa, we merely recovered a lost province of Latinity ... Inheritors of Rome, we invoke rights prior to Islam. In the face of the usurping Arab and even the Native [Berber] enslaved and converted by him, we represent the descendants ... of the true masters of the soil. (Bertrand 1921)

The conflict that developed between Bertrand's understanding of the nation as a mystical unity of race and cultural genealogy and another view of the Mediterranean as a 'melting pot' unified by common plebiscite also infuses contemporary narratives of Kabyle cultural identity, as we shall see in the next chapter. Bertrand's version of Latinity, heavily influenced by the 'integral nationalism' of Charles Maurras and the royalist conservatism of Maurice Barrès, relied on a form of ethnic nationalism shaped by Romantic notions of a unified *Volk*, whose mystical essence (Bertrand believed) made it inherently exclusive. In a marriage of Khaldunian power cycle models and environmental determinism with French decadence theories popular in the later nineteenth century (see section on islands and exoticism above), Bertrand took racial purity as the criterion for a nation's influence or decline as a political force:

I am not far from believing, with Gobineau, that race is a spiritual and even a metaphysical entity, and that this original and irreducible character makes it resistant to any mixing. When it degenerates, authority and with it power pass into other hands. (Bertrand 1936: 218)

Counterposed to this vision of Latinity as an exclusive racial–‘spiritual’–cultural thread justifying the colonial enterprise in North Africa, another school of thought grew up in the 1930s around the novelist Gabriel Audisio and a group of followers known as the Ecole d’Alger. This retained the idea of the Mediterranean as a unifying principle; but in Audisio’s vision, Greece replaced Rome, a model of maritime connections replaced that of continuous territorial expansion, and – crucially – a notion of the Maghrib as racial and historical melting pot replaced the ethnic nationalism of the Latin Mediterranean. Miscegenation in the Mediterranean, including the Maghrib, now appeared as richness rather than inconvenient truth:

I do see a ‘Mediterranean’ race, but it is the perfect example of the impure race, made up of all origins and all possible mixes: exactly the opposite of those ethnic groups who claim to be founded on likeness, believe themselves to be unique, and derive from this a justification for imposing their beliefs universally. (Audisio 1936: 118)

The crucial element of Audisio’s Mediterranean narrative was the notion of the *creuset*, or melting pot, exemplified by North Africa. This Mediterranean was intended to be universal; rather than defining it through a particular colonial model, Audisio built his own brand of mysticism on the notion of a ‘homeland without nationalism’, an abstract principle of fraternal Mediterranean unity that need not descend into the exclusionary discourse of political patriotism. In the 1930s, ethnic nationalism was further tarred by association with National Socialism and the colonial exploits of Italian fascism in Abyssinia. Amidst the mounting threat posed by far right politics in France, and the resistance that culminated in the Popular Front of 1936, the countermyth elaborated by Audisio and the Ecole d’Alger was an attempt to save the notion of Mediterranean unity – and thus the connection between France and North Africa – from the increasingly contentious connotations of ethnic nationalism that Bertrand and his followers continued to promote.

These two narratives – one premised on a heavily ethnic nationalism of *grande France* as the Latin Mediterranean, the other on a web of disparate yet overlapping identities created by routes of historical exchange – strongly echo the assimilation–association debate in nineteenth-century colonial policy. Could Algeria be ‘part’ of France while remaining radically different from the metropole – in legal and political terms, as well as the more striking differences – or did unity necessarily demand convergence?

* * *

The answers to this question discussed here each articulate a long-running conceptualization of the Maghrib itself as a vulnerable frontier zone between two civilizational blocs (Europe and Africa, Mediterranean and Sahara, east and west), in which security and economic activity are intensively concentrated in centres, or outlying ‘islands’ with clear boundaries – cities, mountains, oases. This is a paradigm that has been fruitfully revised in Julia Clancy-Smith’s recent (2011) study of the Mediterranean as an *espace mouvement* (originally Braudel’s phrase), now based not just on *longue durée* ‘grand rhythms’ but on life histories, ‘fleeting facts, ostensibly trivial events, petty detail, the mundane, and experienced’ (p. 9). In this work, the Maghribi city island is no longer a residual fragment of historical stasis but rather a ‘borderland society’ defined above all by constant movement past its imagined boundaries in both directions.

The contemporary Kabyle vernacular narrative of identity makes extensive use of a similar conception of Kabylia as a frontier zone between the Maghrib and France. Yet this popular narrative is ultimately founded on the conception of a border society that compensates for movement with a measure of conservatism thought necessary to preserve an ‘essence’ of Kabyleness understood to be constituted by the moral code of *taqbaylit*, and seen in turn as a guarantee of distinct Kabyle ‘existence’. As I have demonstrated in this chapter, these notions of exceptional essence and existence as resistance certainly arise in part from colonial narratives of Kabylia as the prototypical ‘island of the Maghrib’. But it is misguided to assume that French ideas on Kabylia somehow ‘created’ the notion of autonomous community or that of normative self-regulation as a bulwark against incursion: as Abdelfettah Lalmi (2004: 512) reminds us, ‘to come into being, a myth must draw its starting point from reality’.

Contemporary Kabyle realities, as I discuss in the next chapter, suggest that these same themes are still paramount in entrenched understandings of the nature of regional unity against central power, now in the context of the modern nation-state. Rather than tracing the paths along which colonial ideas and the Kabyle Myth have travelled to influence contemporary Kabyle rhetoric (cf. Lorcin 1995: 218–26, 232–7 and Scheele 2009: 26–30), a question to which I return briefly in Part II, I set out to offer a fresh ethnographic perspective on Kabyle conceptions of ‘statelessness’ and power today. I illustrate how my respondents conceive of Kabylia as a transitional zone pioneering Algeria’s adherence to liberal values, and how their formulation of nationalist alternatives interprets watchwords of political discourse through the lens of Kabyle social understandings.

Chapter 2

State, power and community

<i>Wigi yettfen imukan</i>	Those who hold power
<i>Deg-ek ney deg-i ur clean</i>	Scorn the likes of you and me.
<i>Ma teccetkad ddewla d nitni</i>	Beware! They are the State.
<i>Ggulley anda tityaren izerman</i>	Where snakes writhe
<i>Ar lewzir ma imuqel sseltan</i>	The sultan sees his vizir
<i>Ar t-tamuyli b-buccen s ulli</i>	As a wolf looks on sheep.
<i>Ur seεεun ara imhaddan</i>	If left to themselves
<i>Iyyal gar-asen ara mkerreεn</i>	The asses will kill each other:
<i>Asm 'ara ifak walim di lkuri.</i>	Afterwards, behold the stable.

Lounès Matoub, 'An-nerrez wala ad-neknu' (1981)

I now examine how the contemporary vernacular narrative describes Kabylia's situation in relation to a centralized state which it perceives as hostile and assimilative. As I suggested at the end of the last chapter, the narrative extensively echoes historical discourses of Kabylia as an island and frontier zone to formulate a contemporary story of Kabylia as a 'stateless society', resting on ideals of resistance to central authority. This creates a number of tensions, which I examine in ethnographic focus in this chapter. From the narratives and practice of my respondents, I then draw observations about how we can reinterpret Kabyle understandings of abstract political concepts – power, democracy and equality – without relying on reductive colonial paradigms of Kabylia as a cultural exception. The tensions I explore can be summarized as follows.

First, the vernacular narrative is largely based on a transposition of *taqbaylit* (lit. 'tribal': see Chapter 1) values of autonomy and resistance into a political project of regional resistance to a centralized state. In other words, it rests on an assumption already familiar from the previous chapter: that customary values or 'way of life',

initially shaped by geography, in turn determine political characteristics and thence a supposed group ‘cultural’ identity. In the contemporary context, this often leads to a false conflation of ideologies or ‘cultural visions’ for Algeria – Arabo-Islamic, Berberist and so on – with everyday assumptions about the social conduct of the groups assumed to espouse them (‘Arabs and Berbers’).

Second, the notion of statelessness therefore exists in some conflict with reality: the translation of resistance into a totem of regional politics ‘against’ the state belies the constant presence of state institutions in daily life, the frequent benefits of contact with state personnel, and indeed the part of Kabyles in administering state functions. In order to reconcile the abstract critique of the state with this reality, tenants of the vernacular narrative draw a further distinction: between fellow Kabyles who maintain group loyalties even while working in state institutions, using their position to help their own ‘group’; and those, widely described as *Kabyles de service*, who are seen rather to ‘abandon’ their Kabyle identity, instead subscribing to Arabo-Islamic ideological hegemony in order to further their individual interests.

I open the chapter with an introduction to the radical criticism of ‘politics’, understood as a centralized activity founded not on moral conduct but the pursuit of material interests, which I argue works as a foil for idealized conceptions of Kabyle social unity. I then move on to ethnographic examples of how my respondents conflated the political project of Arabization with everyday social critiques of ‘Arab’ and Arabized Algerians. The focus then broadens to discuss anthropological theories of statelessness and centre–periphery divides in the Maghrib, laying the ground for further ethnographic data in the later part of the chapter that demonstrates how respondents dealt with conflicts between

these idealized paradigms and practice. I close the chapter with a suggested answer to a question that has long exercised political anthropologists: what use, as Jonathan Spencer (2007: 101) asks of regionalist or separatist movements that seem fixated with the idea of the very state they reject, is the state-idea to Kabyles? ‘Under what circumstances might people bring forth an image of the state as unitary agent, marked by certain traits, or the focus of particular desires?’ (Spencer 2007: 101) This brings the discussion back to the persistent conceptualization of Algeria, by Kabyles and others, as a failed political attempt to reconcile units or groups defined as conflicting ‘cultural’ entities.

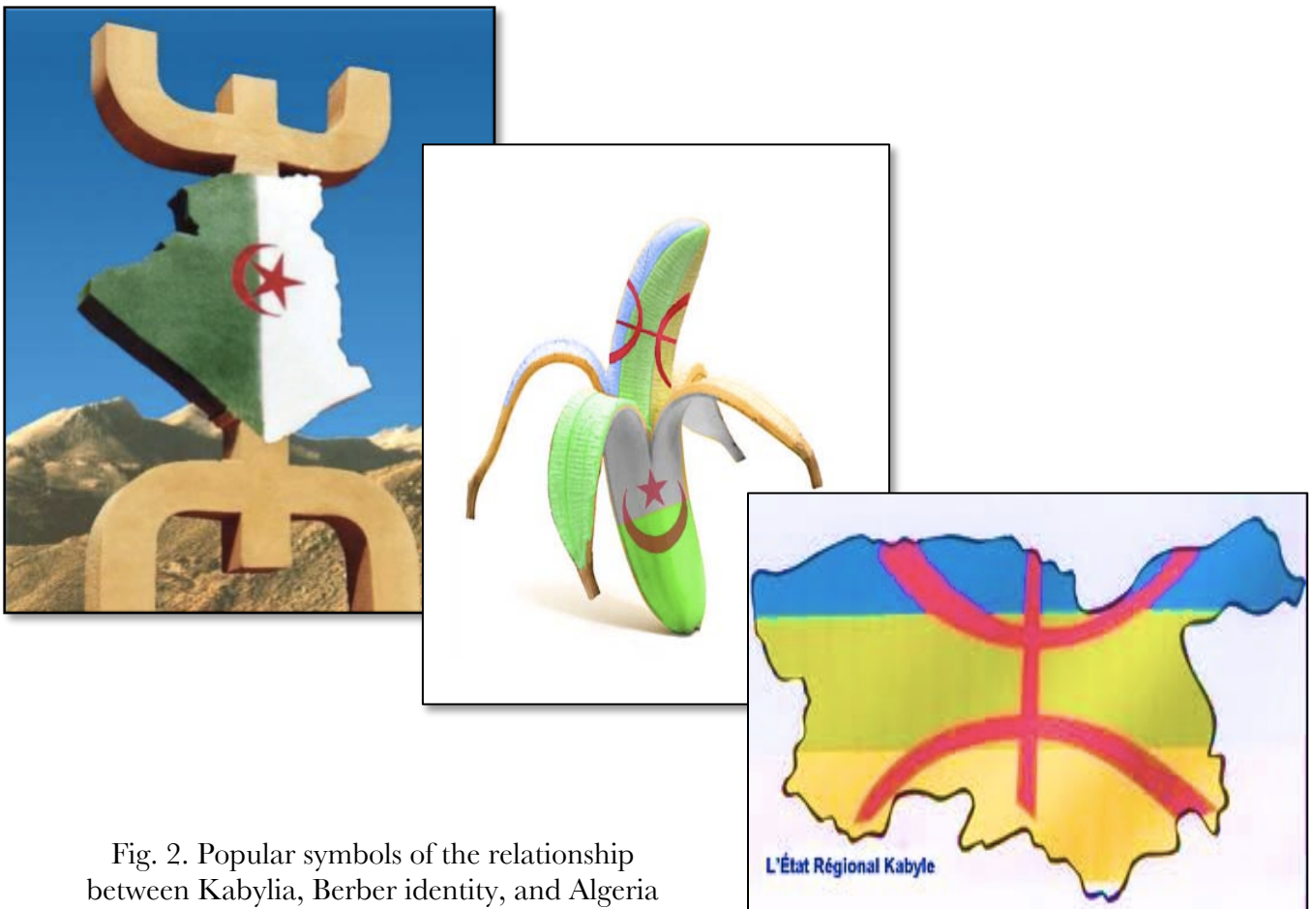


Fig. 2. Popular symbols of the relationship between Kabylia, Berber identity, and Algeria

- i. Large Imazighen sign runs through backbone of a smaller Algeria (Berbère TV)
- ii. Tough skin peels back to reveal Berber ‘flesh’ (Association Franco-Berbère d’Epinay-s-Seine)
- iii. An image of the ‘Kabyle Regional State’ circulated by MAK supporters in 2010

Source: association gala posters and electronic newsletters, 2009–11. Files extracted and reproduced with permission.

Political fictions

Politics is just a lot of stories [*c'est comme autant de romans*]. There's no point going into it because each person will tell you about it in his own way, you'll get as many different stories as people you interview. It's all Chinese whispers [*du téléphone arabe*], as if Joe Bloggs said the sky was black but I thought it was more like grey, but we'd never understand each other: there's no point pushing your view and your opposite number will just get angry rather than explaining his opinion reasonably. Above all, he'll *never* admit that he was wrong – honour takes the upper hand. (Kacem)

The vernacular narrative accuses the Algerian state of gross distributional inequity, which it considers inseparable from the hegemony of Arabo-Islamic ideology and the 'capture' of state power by an Arabist elite after independence. Many Kabyles claim that endemic corruption in the military elite, the use of oil rent to shore up immunity, neglect of public infrastructure, and above all the recent experience of civil war in the 1990s and the government's widely suspected complicity in Islamist atrocities during this time deprive the Algerian state of any claim to legitimacy. Not only, in this view, does the failure to provide economic and military security travesty the first moral requirement of a legitimate authority – to establish and maintain social order and justice; the vernacular narrative of Kabyle identity further depicts the state as an actively hostile force that 'devours its own'.

The alternative conception of legitimacy that it proposes relies on a thoroughgoing condemnation of institutional 'politics' itself, irrespective of ideology, as a 'dirty' domain governed by the amorality of power and material gain. It contrasts this with an idealized portrayal of *taqbaylit* as an autonomous realm of social equality and solidarity, and suggests that political power would be legitimate only if it embodied these tenets of moral community. Kabyles also head political parties and initiatives, and many work in the civil service, state agencies and security, government and indeed the military

regime;¹ but the vernacular narrative draws a radical distinction between those who use this ‘power’ in support of Kabyle interests *within* state institutions and those perceived as successfully co-opted to a state project of aggressive assimilation.

The anti-political focus of the vernacular narrative, in other words, translates not merely a distrust of outside institutional authority, but above all a moral critique of what has been successfully assimilated to the centre, challenging the ideal of monolithic Kabyle resistance. This explains why direct questions about politics, as I found throughout my fieldwork, are likely to be met either with a flat refusal or change of subject, or a canon of stock responses. Even respondents actively involved in Kabyle party politics insisted on the emptiness of the political, as did several activist singers who I knew had supported party political events. Yazid, now in France, had been a journalist in Algeria before emigrating, and is a former RCD activist. Here, he commented on the launch of the GPK (Provisional Kabyle Government) by Ferhat Mehenni in June 2010:

Where there are political debates, you won’t find me mixed up in it ... my power is that I refuse to get caught up in these stupid pointless sagas. It’s all a load of rubbish, Ferhat who wants to guarantee his rich old age just as Aït Ahmed and Sadi [the FFS and RCD leaders] already have ... don’t look at all of this autonomy business with rose-tinted spectacles, Ferhat has had his lion’s share [ie. sweeteners from the regime] just like the rest, after his time in prison. They’ve all got huge real estate assets in France, but it’s well hidden.

At the beginning I was with the RCD, I was very active, but then ... They still call me to do foreign correspondent reports for Algerian television, it pays and you get tickets to big sports events and all the perks, but I say no, I’d rather not work for those people. The choice to come to France was a choice to say no to that dirty business and think about my personal life instead ... People don’t understand politics and the media: they see Zidane with [President] Bouteflika and assume it means what they want it to, that he loves his country. They just take it all at face

¹ A prominent example during the time I was doing fieldwork was Ahmed Ouyahia, Algerian Prime Minister from 2008–12 (following two earlier terms over the past twenty years). Though he has spent most of his life and career in Algiers, Ouyahia was born in the Tizi Ouzou region. In office, he attracted widespread condemnation in Kabylia for his apparent attempts to downplay government involvement in civilian ‘disappearances’ during the civil war, and is frequently described as a *Kabyle de service*.

value. Of course, Zidane couldn't give a toss either about his village in Kabylia or about Algeria. It's just about money. (Yazid)

The attack on party politics thus extends into critiques of the political tradition of co-optation. The perception of politics as a 'dirty' practice of oppressive statecraft therefore also involves a reflexive critique of local political models, to which many attribute the endemic factionalism of regional affairs:

Kacem: There are too many parties.² In Tizi Ouzou alone there are so many you don't know where to turn, all telling their own version of events.

Hocine: You don't have much of a taste for truth, then.

Kacem: It's not that, it's that we're sheep and we follow the wolves, as they say. The problem is someone's always coming along saying follow me, and pick up your friend and tell him to pick up his too; but they're all wrong.

Hocine: Then why do you follow, if you know they're wrong?! You know there's no political project, it's just interests at stake ... You're morons in that case!

Kacem: Exactly! [general laughter]

Since factionalism and interests clearly exist too in the Kabyle sphere, an alternative must be defined in purely moral terms. It is this that gives rise to the idealized conception of Kabyle morality as by definition what remains outside the 'dirty' domain of the political, and the mapping of *taqbaylit* onto an alternative vision of national politics. The assertion of this domain apart in turn involves a statement of radical difference not unfamiliar from colonial ethnography (cf. Chapter 1): the idea that Kabylia represents an especially 'rational', materialist conception of morality. The vernacular narrative further embeds this argument in historical discourses of Algeria as an irreconcilable binary division between 'Arabs and Berbers', positing a Berber 'struggle for existence' under the weight of perennial processes of assimilation. In order

² The respondent was referring here not to 'parties' as constitutional entities but to another widespread notion: that of the political faction as what some authors refer to as a 'clan', but could more accurately be described as a concept close to the *sfuf*, or opposing factions within a single *aerc* which would align with their counterparts in neighbouring tribes in case of conflict. See Silverstein 2003b.

to understand the rejection of politics more accurately, let us now look at this facet of the narrative.

The Arabization paradox

'If we're Arabs, what's the use of Arabizing us? If not, why should we be Arabized?'
attrib. Kateb Yacine

The Kabyle assertion of radical difference, and above all its conceptualization as an Arab–Berber divide, presents an immediate difficulty. As colonial ethnographers treated ‘the Berber’ as at once inalienably different and easily assimilable to the practical purposes of co-operation with colonial power, so the contemporary vernacular narrative of Kabyle identity rests on an ambiguity. The premise of the struggle against Arabization is that Arab hegemony is in the process of destroying Berber culture, often described in Francophone activist material as *en voie de disparition* (a phrase that otherwise designates an endangered species). The identity cause emphasizes Kabyle assimilability and existential insecurity; but it also claims a historical identity as the indigenous group that has best withstood not just Arabization but a series of colonial experiences before it.

Ironically, this paradox also finds its way into Kabyle perceptions of Arab difference. Kabyles often lament the ability of Arab power to create confusion, to blend *arabité* into the general décor and thereby make its influence more pervasive and harder to resist. Thus:

What is the goal of Algerian history? When there's a colonizing power, the goal is to drive it out. But when there's none? ... Drive out the Arabs too, some say. Perhaps, but the Arab has been more cunning, blending into the background so effectively that he is indistinguishable from the natives ... The generic Arab is hidden in mentalities, books; he still colonizes but it is impossible to locate him in order to drive him out. (Daoud 2012)

Yet the other side of the problem is a different criticism of *arabité*, this time for being fundamentally unable or unwilling to adapt to what is around it. This perception of radical difference deliberately maintained appears in a description of France's 'Arab problem' propounded by many Kabyles in Paris. 'People complain that Arabs don't integrate in France', one respondent wryly observed, 'and I say that given fourteen centuries they still haven't integrated in North Africa!' (Hakim) This critique of *arabité* as wilful difference and assimilationism, as we have seen, also forms the backbone of Kabyle attacks on the state. This branding of Arab power as inherently aggressive and incapable of cohabiting, then, is conflated with everyday perceptions of 'Arab Algerians' as the antithesis of proclaimed Kabyle values of social liberalism:

Rachida: Imagine there are nine Kabyles sitting at a table, and an Arab passes by and says *salam alaykoun*; the Kabyles will all answer, *alaykoun salam*, either out of politeness or because we're sheep, I'm not sure. Now imagine it's the other way around. Would the Arabs then respond with *Azul*?³ No chance!

Hakim: Once I was at the market [in Paris] and another stallholder came over and said *salam alaykoun*. I answered *Azul*, and he said what, brother, you won't return my *salam*? I said that's not my language, all I can do is respond in my own language. He said, 'ah, but *salam* is the language of God, it should be universal'. That's what they all do, bring it back to religion.

Rachida: That's the problem: we Kabyles don't want to force anyone to live like us, we just want to be able to speak our language and keep our culture. But the Arabs can only accept us if we agree to live like them.

The critique of an assimilationist state also politicizes the more everyday aspect of relations with so-called 'Arabized Berbers' – a category that many Kabyles apply to most Algerians, asserting that most who now identify as Arab were, at some point,

³ This is a Taqbaylit greeting word, in fact not widely used in Kabylia but promoted by the secularist wing of the cause as an alternative to Arabic-language and Islamic formulas.

Berber-speakers.⁴ On a smaller scale too, many of my respondents used this phrase to describe people who, through migration either to the Algerian cities or abroad, had ‘forgotten their roots’. Indeed, the vernacular narrative posits that ‘Arabized Berbers’ are the worst culprits of the ‘denial of identity’, supporting Arabization all the more fervently because they themselves ‘do not know who they are’. Aside from legitimating the real Berber identity of Algeria, this narrative also serves to distinguish a space of *taqbaylit* from those who have defected from it. Here, a musician described why he disliked a particular café in Paris. This café, run by a couple he identified as ‘Algiers Kabyles’, hosted variety concerts including Kabyle song but centred on *raï* and Arabophone singers:

There’s a bad atmosphere in that place because they don’t know their own moral boundaries, so if someone challenges them all they can do is get aggressive. That’s why there are so many fights there. It’s like the music, all aggression and noise because it’s not natural, it doesn’t come from inside them.

Those people are basically Berber but they don’t even know their culture; they’ve rejected it and adopted another [ie. Arabic or urban culture] that isn’t theirs. They think they’re superior because they speak Arabic and they’ve migrated to the city. You’re Dutch [*sic*] but you know your own culture already, so it’s fine to go and explore another. But those people in the bar, they don’t even know who they are, so they have no right to criticize the Kabyles. (Mourad)

Explaining Algeria as a binary divide between Arabs and Berbers, then, relies not just on abstract or political definitions, but also on creating everyday categories of loyalty and belonging. The narrative of ‘cultural uprooting’ in the example above, which many of my respondents replicated when talking about Algiers Kabyles or (less often) migrants to Paris who had fallen in with an ‘Arab’ social circle, maintains that Arabized Berbers have ‘given in’ to Arabization, and abandoned their true identity. They have, according to these criticisms, reneged on *taqbaylit* – which, as we saw above, is

⁴ Chaker 1998: 16 supports this view, arguing that ‘the essence of the population of the Maghrib is Berber: the vast majority of current Arabophones are merely more or less recent “Arabized Berbers”’.

supposed precisely to be inalienable and guard against surrender to assimilation. This association of Arabization with moral decadence stretches all the way from everyday critiques of people seen as Arabized Berbers – like the café owners in the example above – to an overarching critique of the ‘artificial state’ and *Kabyles de service*.

Also open to interpretation are the so-called ‘uprooted Kabyles’: those who have no traceable origins in the region but are assumed to be ‘basically Kabyle’ because of their affiliations or sympathies. A respondent explained the origins of a well-known violinist, who collaborated with several dissident singers, like this:

If you like he’s an uprooted Kabyle [*un Kabyle déraciné*]. (GM: From Algiers?) No, from Constantine. He couldn’t speak a word of Kabyle, but when he arrived in France he kept finding Kabyles everywhere, in the bars and restaurants and so on. So that’s when he rediscovered his origins ... He already had Taqbaylit in his blood but he just couldn’t reproduce it, not until he arrived in France. (Nouara)

I received several similar answers early on in fieldwork, in response to questions about Kabyle origin. I only realized what a subjective question I was asking, indeed, once I understood the double meaning of the designation *aqbayli* (f. *taqbaylit*): on the one hand a description of moral values (this is the sense in which ‘Kabyle’ can be used as a sliding measure, and some are said to be ‘more Kabyle’ than others); and on the other a label for regional origin.

This means that answers about the ‘Kabyleness’ of friends and associates tend to be as much an explanation of existing social relations as a factual statement. As I explain fully later in this chapter, interactions with political and state actors are often justified with reference to a model of group solidarity within state institutions, and therefore accomplished in the register of social norms of family and mutual aid. Understanding

the workings of this system – with whom reciprocal obligations apply, and what they are – then becomes a way of forging routes through what several respondents described to me as ‘life in the jungle’, either of Algerian or French bureaucracy and institutional hostility. It is therefore broadly beneficial, for these justificatory purposes, to expand rather than collapse the boundaries of who is a co-regionalist. When Kabyles point out, as they often do, that Algiers is ‘eighty per cent Kabyle’, this is not merely parochialism; this belief legitimates collaborative relations (often necessary to Kabyle commerce as well as negotiation of institutional bureaucracy) on the premise that the *algérois*, even if they do not recognize it, *are* in many cases originally Kabyle.

Commercial relationships and choices are also a crucial way of perpetuating a belief in the existence of a Kabyle ‘community’ in the diaspora context. In the Paris community, many make a concerted effort to support Kabyle-owned businesses, and indeed to stress Kabyle connections, even when these appear vague, as an explanation for their choices. This is true above all of services – building work, plumbing, car hire, currency exchange, and on occasion (especially when an undocumented migrant is detained) also legal assistance.

This insistence on maintaining a system of labour exchange between Kabyles serves two purposes. Firstly, it encourages frequent contact and ‘crossing of paths’, which ensures not only economic flows but also exchange of information within the community. Secondly, it perpetuates, in the diaspora context, a symbolic ideal of Kabyle village community as an autonomous, closed system. This ideal rests on the notion that by maintaining a division of labour in which specialized functions are covered and exchanged among members, and in pooling manual or unskilled labour to

accomplish tasks that require manpower (the form of collective labour known as *tiwizi* in Taqbaylit), the village can operate as a self-sufficient unit and avoid the need for outside intervention. In the context of the Kabyle diaspora in Paris, many of my respondents translated this into the notion of a system in which exchange of services in the migrant community would ‘get around’ the need to pass through institutional or standard commercial channels:

I don’t understand why anyone searches on the internet to find an accountant, say, or a plasterer. Granted, there may not be many accountants or lawyers among us [referring to the respondent’s immediate circle, mostly underqualified first-generation migrant Kabyles], but there’s always a link: when I need an administrative letter or a CV written, I’d ask you, for example. All this makes us able to manage by ourselves, without help from anyone.

I’ll give you another example: people who send things by post to Algeria. It costs the earth, but also it’s so easy to go to the airport, find someone who’s going close by, and into the bargain you’ll have got to know someone, and they or someone they know will then go and see your family in person. Isn’t that better for everyone? (Ferhat)

Statelessness (a): foreign power

The abstract ideal of Kabyle autonomy, then, is transposed into a social language of the diaspora community as a closed system of exchange, in which complementary skills both perpetuate community and above all preserve the idea of separation from a failed welfare state:

If I’m in need, I won’t wait for the state to come and give me a flat. It’s the same for roads and electricity. We’ve always done this so we’re not in debt to anyone except members of the same village. For instance, if you build [a house] outside the village, it’s your responsibility to go and get the telegraph pole and install it. We have never depended on the state. If you go to Arab villages it’s not the same, there it’s the state that does everything. (Salas)

This is the foundation for the ideal of ‘statelessness’ articulated by many of my respondents, and in Kabyle activist discourse more broadly, in which critiques of outside power are inseparable from purist definitions of a closed internal system. But what is it about the ideal of statelessness, except for the preservation of this ideal itself, that is so positive and useful to Kabyles? Why do many insist on the continued importance of this idea as a marker of Kabyle morality even when the constraining power of the state in everyday life suggests overwhelming evidence to the contrary (Herzfeld 1997)? In order to answer this question we need to look first at wider discourses of foreign and indigenous culture in Algeria.

Kabyle claims to statelessness are far from unique. As scholars – and colonialists and travel writers – have long observed (Campbell 1964; Thesiger 2008 [1964]; Abou-Zeid 1965; Shryock 1997), many historically tribal societies in North Africa and elsewhere define themselves by autonomy and resistance to state authority. For much of the twentieth century, anthropology of the Maghrib and elsewhere was concerned with the question of how local societies self-regulate without either political institutions *stricto sensu* or a higher administrative power (Evans-Pritchard 1940). Analysis of the social structures and mechanisms that create ‘order without authority’ was especially important in the development of segmentary theory, which went on to dominate the study of Berber tribal structures in Morocco (Gellner 1969; Hammoudi 1980; Hart 1996). Very briefly defined, segmentarity as expressed by Gellner – perhaps its most celebrated and now most criticized exponent – holds that social units (of whatever size) constitute themselves as units of that size in response to external threats from a parallel unit of the same size, and that

Similarity is not merely lateral but also vertical: it is not simply that groups resemble their neighbors at the same level of size, but it is also the case that groups resemble, organisationally, the sub-groups of which they are composed, and the larger group of which they are members. (Gellner 1987: 31)

Talk about what is not the state – whether from anthropologists, colonial writers, or Kabyles – is, then, often talk about the creation of order without bureaucracy (Eickelman 1989), and about internal regulatory structures: how society is divided up, and how it contrives to achieve unity over those divisions when required. I discuss the content of these codes, especially notions of honour and family hierarchy, as structuring principles of the Kabyle order in Chapter 4; but it is important to observe at this point that descriptions of ‘tribal’ identity in various parts of North Africa, the Middle East and beyond support the notion of rejection of the ‘outside’ as above all a moral conceptualization of internal social order. Caton’s (1990) examination of the tribal ethical code of *gabyilah* (from the same etymological root as *taqbaylit*); the description of autonomy among the Bedouin Awlad ‘Ali in Egypt given by Abu-Lughod (1985); or Shryock’s (1997) analysis of oral tradition as the root of claims to indigeneity among the Balga Bedouin in Jordan; all of these foreground the importance not merely of ‘actual’ social structures but of symbolic modes by which society places normative pressure on its members in order to maintain an ideal separation from bureaucratic authority. It is in this light that we must understand the highly normative definition of *taqbaylit*, as a moral code as well as a geographical designation, and the role of morality in creating group boundaries.

In this context, emphasizing the foreignness of the state becomes crucial to maintaining Kabyle understandings of *taqbaylit* as a distinct domain of moral autonomy. Kabyles explain state oppression through a political critique of Arabo-

Islamic ideology as a basis for Algerian government, but they also emphasize that it arrived from elsewhere and is historically a ‘foreign’ power. However salient these points may be, they mask another aspect of the critique of state ideology. Kabyle hostility to the Arabo-Islamic state is situational – based on specific grievances and instances of repression – but its foundations are historical. The current critique draws some of its key features from a historical tradition of perceiving central power as well as articulating the contemporary specifics of the relationship to Arabo-Islamic government.

At this stage, we need to outline some of the more general ways in which Kabyles construct this opposition of a community defined by its internal regulatory structures, opposed to an external or foreign power. Kabyle activist narratives of the state are characterized by a relentless brand of dualism which echoes a long tradition of scholarship both on Kabylia and other Berber and tribal societies in North Africa. It is easy to read this stark division everywhere in Kabylia, especially when respondents reproduce it; but before attempting to suggest an alternative or write it out of my analysis, I outline below some of the received ideas that run through scholarship on Kabylia and the wider Maghrib and (as a cause or consequence) through Kabyles’ own narratives of ‘society and state’.

Dualism and purism

‘The society of the Algerian countryside, throughout most of Algeria’s history’, Roberts (2002: 14) writes, ‘has for the most part been a society of self-governing tribes and villages, in which the vast majority of the population has enjoyed political

enfranchisement through representation in the village or tribal assembly, the *jema'a*'. Many analysts of the Maghrib have contrasted this tradition of rural self-regulation with a definition of central power as foreign, oppositional and disregarding of either representation or distributional equity (Gellner and Waterbury 1977; Leveau 1977; Crawford 2008). This, in extremely condensed form, is the prototypical division between the *bilad al-makhzen* and *bilad al-siba*, the opposition between 'governed' and 'lawless' (ie. not fully responding to the authority of the Sultanate) areas, discussed in the Introduction as an enduring conceptual pattern of Maghribi politics: a contrast between hinterlands where the institutional-bureaucratic state is absent and urban centres where it is authoritarian and omnipresent.

As Abdelfettah Lalmi (2004) observes, this dualist distinction is by no means always consonant with reality; yet it is extremely pervasive in Algerian understandings of political structure. The mental divide between city and country continues to define Kabyle perceptions of state power, and of the 'historical' nature of Kabyle resistance. Many use this distinction to explain Kabylia's distinctive landscape of hill villages:

You have to remember, everything here [in Kabyle villages] is about security. By that, I mean not just defence but also preserving our freedom. We always built on hills, not just to defend ourselves from attacks from the plains but because that's who Kabyles are, we're mountain people and take care of our own affairs. When I think of the cities and the lowlands I think of power and commerce: Kabyles have always gone 'downwards' to buy and sell, to serve in the army, to find work or see to something administrative. Here [in Ajmoun], we administer justice between ourselves and pool labour and resources to keep things running. (Tahar)

Here, city-country and plains-mountains are mental shorthand for two separate codes of regulation. The 'village code' identified with Kabylia, for this respondent and many others, means a system of communality and 'privately' regulated affairs within a bounded group. Scholars similarly point to the identification of cities with the Sultanate

and colonial power, and thence with the means of military violence, in the Ottoman and French periods (Joffé 1993). Conversely, they argue, the history of centralized power in Algeria across different colonial powers is one of attempting to extend control over the uncontrollable. In this vein, for instance, Karen Barkey (1996) points out that coercion and violence in what is now Algeria have over time been justified by the need to control various types of ‘bandit’ in the Ottoman Maghrib (notably the Corsair pirates of the so-called Barbary Coast). Conversely, she argues, the *bilad al-siba* has conceived of power as something inherently repressive and authoritarian, there to constrain rather than support.

Building on this tendency to construct the Maghrib as a space of oppositions, an ideal type of the power–resistance divide ‘flopped down on the ground’ (Hart 1973: 31) in the city–country divide, several analysts of postcolonial Algeria have pointed to the perception of central power from the periphery – even when wielded by Algerians – as ‘foreign’ and artificial. This was also a concern that dogged the statesmen of newly independent Algeria, aware that they had inherited an apparatus of power traditionally mistrusted by the rural population. President Houari Boumediène thus complained about the ‘archaic idea of the beylicat in the popular mind; stealing from the state seems to have become the rule, as though the State were a foreign state’ (*Revue Africaine*, 28 September–4 October 1977). The perception of the state as foreign, then, seems to arise to some extent out of the idea of the coercive *makhzen*. Similarly, Kabyles often refer to the historical precepts of the *bilad al-siba* – refusing taxation and tithes, avoiding military conscription, self-exemption from the legislation of central power and so on – in explaining their belief that preserving the secrecy of local knowledge is a weapon of defence against contemporary state intervention.

The understanding of power as unrooted, artificial, based not on *asl* (origins/authenticity) but *berra* (the quality of ‘outsideness’),⁵ also explains the striving of various ideological projects in Algeria to recover some form of original authenticity in the quest for legitimacy.⁶ The negotiation of authenticity to legitimate ideological projects and power in Algeria has been brilliantly addressed elsewhere (Merad 1967; Colonna 1975; Grandguillaume 1983; McDougall 2006a). In this light, the purism of *taqbaylit*, its concern with community and boundaries, now appear not just as an isolated contingency of Kabyle geography or history – the light in which many Kabyles explain these things – but as part of a broader tradition of understanding legitimacy in Algeria as a function of ideological homogeneity rather than plurality. In this perspective, Kabyle assertions of statelessness and anti-politics appear – as well as a real critique of contemporary state forms of power – as a means of maintaining *taqbaylit* as an alternative, bounded domain; one half of the dualist opposition many Kabyles draw between *taqbaylit* and the state regime, or *le Pouvoir* as many call it.

Scholars, from colonial ethnographers to the present day, have also been seduced by the apparent embodiment of this opposition in the geography of Kabyle villages and their spatial separation of the normative domain of *taqbaylit* from the bureaucratic domain of ‘the state’. Several, including the one where I did fieldwork, consist of an old village or *taddart*, and a new village which sometimes formed around a colonial outpost

⁵ See Morizot 1962 on the converse use of the term *berranis* in the Ottoman city to designate urban dwellers of rural origin.

⁶ Cf. Chapter 1 on this facet of the French attempt to ‘recover’ a Mediterranean heritage in North Africa. The Reformist (*islāh*) movement that led the way towards Algerian nationalism in the early twentieth century, to pick another prominent example, was also founded on a purist quest for a lost *génie national* (Merad 1967). This time it was a lost Arabo-Islamic authenticity that was sought through the promotion of scripturalist Islam, textual exegesis founded on study of classical Arabic, and a puritanical moral nationalism (McDougall 2006a). This enterprise will be more extensively dealt with in Chapter 3.

or when the bounded territory of *taddart* became too small for its residents' building needs. In Ajmoun, the administrative buildings of the state – *mairie*, schools, *daïra* – are 'upstairs', in the new village, while *taddart* lower down the hill remains the preserve of the 'historic families' and the old village mosque. Respondents of around my age are vaguely aware that the 'original' village, where their parents were born in several cases, was in fact even lower down than the present *taddart*; they therefore described the village as having crept upwards as it grew and modernized.⁷

Many in the village identified the divide between the two villages as normative as much as geographical. In *taddart*, they said, only the village council (*tajmaet*) held sway, whereas in the 'commune village' state administration prevailed. Amin, the second eldest brother of my host family and the senior male member of the village household (the eldest has always lived in Algiers) is the treasurer of *tajmaet*. He continues to attend *jemea*,⁸ or council meetings, although the family now lives in the upper village – a fact of no consequence for the historic families' continued membership. He gave me an idealized account of the difference between the two villages and what they each represent:

In *taddart* [the old village] only *tajmaet* has authority, everything is taken care of by the village notables, *imyaren* – repairs, punishments and so on. Upstairs in the new village it's different, there it's the mayor who decides. *Tajmaet* has no authority there, and there's no *tajmaet* for the new village. It's a *commune*, that means it's for everyone, it's a state-owned territory [in contrast to *taddart* where all land is owned by the historic families only]; outsiders can buy land so people are always coming and going; *tajmaet* makes no sense in that context.

In *taddart* they sometimes ask the mayor for help or do one-off joint projects, but it's their choice: the mayor doesn't have any authority. In *taddart* all problems have to be dealt with

⁷ Cf. Goodman 2005 and Scheele 2009 on the significance of the 'moving village' in perceptions of legitimacy and authority.

⁸ The convergence between the three meanings of *jemea* – 'mosque', 'village council meeting' and 'Friday' is no accident.

inside, without breathing a word of it outside. Everything that comes from *le Pouvoir* – *gendarmes*, the army and so on – we don't need that to sort out our problems.

Tajmaet also sees to it that those who can't work, the old and the sick, are provided for. Every villager puts what he can towards a fund for this. That's why Marx took Kabyle society as an example of socialism. True democracy was in the villages in Kabylia. (Amin)

Interestingly, all of the precepts Amin articulated here – an opposition of two normative and geographical spheres, a difference between state and private ownership, the customary authority that governs *taddart* as a source of solidarity and secrecy – cropped up again when I visited the mayor's office in the upper village of Ajmoun, but this time as an articulation of the relationship not between the village and outside it, but between Kabyles and the state. This encounter was in many ways representative of how the State as an idea finds its way into perceptions of the everyday state as reality, as 'the workings of a translocal institution that is made visible in localized practices' (Gupta 1995).

During my visit the mayor, Dahmane, showed me a commemorative portrait given to him by his counterpart in another village to mark his solidarity in commemorating the suicide of a teenager. The caption on it read: 'All that the Minister for Solidarity has in riches, Kabylia has it in *nif* (honour).'⁹ This caption reflected the popular conception of moral values of honour and internal solidarity as an alternative to constructive state action. It also aptly illustrated – as I explore fully in Chapter 4 – how social values of everyday individual and family relations have been transposed into discourses of regional Kabyle solidarity as self-governance. The gift also demonstrated the continued

⁹ The 'Ministry of Social Action and National Solidarity' is, at time of writing, an uncertain sort of affair in itself. Various named on its website (<http://www.massn.gov.dz/>, accessed 25 February 2012) as the above and the 'Ministry of Employment and Solidarity', none of the rubrics on its website – 'internal organization, missions, activities, statistics' – function; the only page that does is that which explains how to make donations to the obscure 'Fonds spécial de la Solidarité Nationale', reserved for donations from individuals or institutions abroad. The page announces that 'you are the ? th visitor to the site', and neither English nor Arabic give any result when clicked on for translations of the content.

weight of history in affirming political legitimacy. Dahmane pointed out that the portrait was a gift from 'le village du Colonel Amirouche', the legendary revolutionary *maquisard* (resistance fighter) who became the commander of Wilaya III (the National Liberation Army administrative area that broadly corresponded with Kabylia) before his death in combat in 1959. Evoking Amirouche gave political and historical weight to the gift, and asserted its legitimacy as a token of shared *nif*.

Dahmane appeared eager to direct my attention towards this particular gift as a representation of Kabyle values. Next to it on his desk stood a larger display piece, an ornamental rifle encased in glass and mounted on a background of calligraphed Arabic characters, which he told me had been gifted, by whom he did not say, as a 'reward for service', along with a stuffed game bird. On the wall there was a portrait of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika with a motivational message, and an Algerian flag hanging from a tall stand in front of which he made a point of adopting a tongue-in-cheek pose with Ferhat (who had accompanied me on this visit).

What was most striking here was the mixing of registers that the vernacular narrative usually attempts to construct as radically opposed. Mayors, though officially state employees, also frequently claim that they are hindered by centralized restrictions on their independent capacity to initiate local measures, the task for which they are supposedly elected at the head of the Assemblée Populaire Communale (APC). Many Kabyles, however, also accuse them of exploiting this argument to justify their actual disregard for the local population, and they are therefore an especially common target of denunciation for 'betrayal' of their co-regionalists.

Dahmane, who was ousted a year later in the APC elections of November 2012, had been the object of many such accusations from Ajmounis, and was intensely unpopular at the time we met for his perceived failure to tackle infrastructural breakdown and the increasing problem of kidnappings in the *commune*'s conscription.¹⁰ He appeared to be at pains to present his role above all as a 'popular' figure acting in solidarity with the community, for the joint benefit of a researcher and a member of one of Ajmoun's largest 'historic families' known as a fierce critic of the regime and returning for the first time after eleven years in France. Urging us to stay in the office while he conducted a long discussion about a village scout project with the two teenagers from Ajmoun, he subsequently (also in our presence) phoned Ferhat's niece to offer help with a house purchase in the village. Correspondingly, he systematically downplayed or even mocked the importance of 'state' symbols, and emphasized the distinctively Kabyle aspect of the ambiguous ones, describing the rifle display as a 'symbol of our old tradition of hunting and resistance' and brushing aside a question about the significance of the embossed Arabic characters behind it.¹¹ Dahmane's presentation of Kabyle identity was in many ways representative of the ambiguities inherent in daily encounters with 'the state' at the local level, and demonstrated above all how they can be negotiated in order to preserve the conceptual imprint of a stark division between the domains of statecraft and 'popular' interest.

¹⁰ After a relative lull following the wide-ranging amnesty on Islamist insurgents instituted by the Bouteflika government in 1999, kidnappings have more recently again become increasingly frequent in Kabylia. However, despite automatic associations with Islamist activity, it is unclear to what extent (if any) Islamist groups are in fact involved. Most of the kidnappings have been of wealthy entrepreneurs or professionals, and are widely described as the work of a new 'commercial mafia'. See 'La Kabylie en état de choc', *El Watan*, 22 May 2011, article available online at http://www.algeria-watch.org/fr/article/pol/kabylie/kidnappings_choc.htm.

¹¹ Many Ajmounis, explaining why they mistrusted Dahmane, emphasized his connections to the military and his alleged role in transmitting weaponry to army commanders during the civil war. This is a possible reason for his reticence about discussing the rifle display with me other than as a symbol of the local hunting tradition.

Statelessness (b): beyond the resistance ideal

In any geographical area which lacks fundamental natural frontiers, the human beings in adjacent areas of the map are likely to have relations with each other ... no matter what their cultural attributes may be ... But ... if social structures are expressed in cultural symbols, how can the structural relations between groups of different culture be expressed at all? My answer to this is that the maintenance and insistence upon cultural difference can itself become a ritual action expressive of social relations. (Leach 1954: 17)

We have seen that Kabyles describe many facets of their experience in binary terms – the opposition between old and new villages, customary and state normative codes, intra-Kabyle self-regulation and state-institutional structures – and that oppositions between essence and artificiality are in each case built into these pairs. But in the section that follows, I problematize this model by starting to explore how these mental divisions reflect tensions and insecurities about the nature of intra-Kabyle unity, or *tegmatt* (brotherhood) as it is often dubbed.

Just as many Kabyles contrast two models of the nation – a reality dominated by an assimilationist state apparatus and an ideal structured around cohabiting solidarity communities – they also articulate two conceptions of *tegmatt*. On the one hand, the ideal of unity expressed by *taqbaylit* is described as a concept of public equality, the nuances of which I explore further in Chapter 4. In its ideal version, this is guaranteed by the political structure of *tajmaet*, pooling of labour, and a theoretically equal prerogative of all adult males to respond to threats against their integrity or *lherma* (Bourdieu 1979). But on the other hand, Kabyles express a critique of the breakdown of *tegmatt* under human impulses of power-hungriness and the resulting failure to honour *taqbaylit* as solidarity ideal.

In this light, the simple model of Kabyle resistance to state domination – or ‘power’ as merely what is ‘foreign’, not Kabyle – starts to break down. Many Kabyles in fact articulate their critique of power as a projection of fears about the breakdown of specifically Kabyle forms of community (or at least values that Kabyles *perceive* as specific to their moral code). Similarly, criticisms of the state and its politics as empty and artificial reflect vehement expressions of ‘anti-politics’ directed against the Kabyle party system, and against individuals seen to have given in to material or power interests and abandoned the mutual obligations of *taqbaylit*.

This critique of the state, based on a reflexive analysis of why ideal notions of Kabyle community fail, also opens up possibilities for new interpretations of the relationship between what some scholars have identified as ‘the social and the political’ (Gupta 1995; Mitchell 1991). A large body of literature about forms of covert resistance to domination, spanning political science, sociology and anthropology, has popularized the idea of a maximal interpretation in which ‘the political’ is all-pervasive, and as much in seemingly mundane or everyday actions as in institutions (Hall and Jefferson 1976; Comaroff 1985; Scott 1998; Guha 1989; Spivak 2002; Gellner 2003). Spencer (2007: 17) summarizes this view as the ‘unboundedness [of the political], its capacity to spill out of the safe institutional boundaries in which it is supposedly contained by modern states’. Much of the resistance literature, developing on a Foucauldian identification of the state with pervasive modes of discipline, surveillance and regulation, has thus portrayed the state as something that gets into everything – even into supposedly non-political domains – and covertly determines the course of social interaction.

What I suggest here is different. Rather than ‘the state’s reforming energies ... overflow[ing] its boundaries and percolat[ing] through other relations’, my experience of Kabyle perceptions of ‘the state’ seemed to support the opposite view: *social* energies which ‘percolate through other relations’, including what we would usually define as political encounters. We may read political meaning into actions and encounters that respondents would not define as such; but conversely, listening to what Kabyles actually say when they talk either about Kabyle or national aspirations (including denials and refusals to talk) reveals an expectation that in order to be at all valid, the creation of any valid ‘political’ order can be achieved only as a seamless continuation of social and moral norms.

The failures of politics – both regional and national – are thus explained as deviance from social and moral codes of behaviour between members of a particular group. Similarly, actions that appear to belong to what we might usually identify as the political domain – encounters with state officials, for instance, or attempts to access public resources – are, as we shall see below, usually conducted and described in the language of family respect, group solidarity and mutual aid. What repeatedly emerged was a critique of politics on the grounds that it ‘exceeded’ (to coin a French usage) or spilled out of its proper boundaries, which should be the constraining moral boundaries invoked to regulate social interaction. Respondents often complained that politicians in Algeria were ‘in excess of’ proper behaviour, or felt themselves unconstrained (thanks to power and money) by the obligations of mutual aid that should, in the alternative Kabyle vision, apply within solidarity groups.

When I applied for my first Algerian entry visa from Paris, Ferhat (whose family had invited me) appealed, directly and indirectly, to several Algerian officials and their associates to smooth the process. First, he contacted Dahmane, a close acquaintance before his move to France, to speed up endorsement the family's invitation letter by the *mairie*. Next, he went to the café in northeast Paris where his nephew worked. The owner, Majid, is a successful Kabyle entrepreneur with an extensive network of business and political contacts in Algiers, Kabylia and the Paris migrant community. Because of the 'respect' between his nephew and Majid, he felt able to apply for access to Majid's connections at the Algerian consulate in Paris. Majid called ahead to alert a contact at the consulate, who proved unresponsive.

Ferhat then recalled that he had spoken to the consulate contact in the café, and recognized him as a *Kabyle de service* 'who thinks he can be powerful by refusing something'. Majid similarly claimed that he should have known better than to ask. Instead, he called another entrepreneur in Algiers from a powerful business family with strong connections to the military, Mr B, who authorized me to go directly to the Vice Consul in Paris citing his name. I was told not to mention Majid at all; when I arrived at reception and cited Mr B's name, the Vice Consul emerged, took me to his office and processed my visa application himself, looking admittedly puzzled at how I had got there and asking 'which of the B brothers sent you'. I had to bluff an answer, but this was irrelevant by now – as was the fact that I would almost certainly have been granted the visa without any of these machinations. The process of forming networks of trust and reciprocal help, and identifying those who could and could not be relied on to honour them, appeared in itself to be a large part of the goal. Applying for help to co-regionalists in positions of relative bureaucratic power is one important way in which

my respondents in Paris continue to believe in the existence of a Kabyle community founded on solidarity, and draw its boundaries to exclude those seen to fall short of this ideal.

In the example above, Ferhat used a chain of increasingly powerful contacts: a family connection, a commercial connection within the migrant community, a link of reciprocal interest between two entrepreneurs in Paris and Algiers, and finally the connection between one of these entrepreneurs and regime elites. But at none of these stages did he interpret what he was doing as in any way dealing with ‘power’ or ‘politics’: he said that he was merely ‘activating’ personal links, who would in turn do the same. Interactions like this are consistently explained in the register of personal connections and favours rather than acknowledged as a political act. When relatives asked how I had got the visa so quickly, he responded simply: *yella tamusni* (‘there’s a contact’).

Re-interpretation of concepts: power and equality

While questions about ‘the state’ or Arabization in the abstract tend to elicit answers about existential fears of Berber annihilation, then, questions about ‘power’ in person draw out embedded social understandings of community and mutual aid, and in particular an understanding that regional solidarity groups are the logical political basis for ‘nations’ understood as affective or value communities. This use of a language of social order and breakdown to avoid acknowledging involvement in ‘politics’ also reveal new meanings behind several of the stock ideological concepts articulated by the

vernacular narrative, and sometimes interpreted (especially when they are expressed in French) as mere appropriations of Western political discourse.

An example is the Manichaean branding of the Algerian regime as *le Pouvoir*, a term frequently used, often alongside references to anarchist ideas, to designate that which is coercive, hegemonic, and supposedly external. But in fact – qualifying the stock notion of the ‘foreign state’ discussed until now – on closer examination, the use of *le Pouvoir* articulates a pervasive critique not of an *external* state but rather of an indigenous Algerian state that (much like the *Kabyles de service* as portrayed by the vernacular narrative) loses its claim to authority by betraying its own. Discussions of the ‘foreign state’ tradition usually posit that the long-running association of centralization with outside rule and military and administrative hegemony makes contemporary Kabyle resistance essentially a protest against the notion of ‘power’ itself. But denying the existence of power structures and their exploitation for personal gain within Kabyle society would be an extreme exercise in negationism. Most of my respondents recognized power as a natural feature of any hierarchical society or structure, and condemned the state not for reflecting this but rather for turning its power against ‘members of the family’:

This is what we call power. Look at Sarkozy’s son, he’ll get a job anywhere because his name is known. You saw for yourself, when you went [to the Algerian Consulate] for the visa, the woman in front of you had children with Algerian passports but she couldn’t get what she needed – and because you knew people and you’re foreign you got a visa the same day. It’s unfair, but that’s the reality of power. It’s not only the state. It’s everywhere – in gangs, for instance, one person has power over another, like fish eating each other, it’s the law of the jungle.

But between brothers, in families, that’s not how it works. You don’t use arbitrary power to your own advantage over your own family. What’s really unacceptable about the Algerian state is that uses power to exclude members of the family, fellow Algerians. (Ilyès)

Here, we are far beyond the use of *le Pouvoir* as a political calling card for the Kabyle cause – as it is used in the common slogans *Pouvoir mafieux* or *Pouvoir assassin* – or the simple equation of power with foreignness. This respondent, like many others, interpreted the use of connections, seen as a normal and desirable facet of group solidarity, as a form of power; he did not condemn its use to further the interests of one's own group or to obtain what one needs by applying to a group member in a position of 'power', but only to exclude *fellow* group members – as with the Kabyle consulate employee's neglect in the example above, or on a larger scale, state exclusion of 'Algerians'. The point here is not the ethical rightness or wrongness of power, but its use either in support of or against one's solidarity group.

This theme emerges above all in frequent Kabyle criticism of co-regionalists who 'yield to the temptations of power' as so-called *Kabyles de service*. My respondents used the term to condemn those seen as 'serving' the state in order to better their own interests, and thereby breaking the imperative of *taqbaylit*. As we saw in the Introduction, the vernacular narrative rests on an assumption that in order to 'continue to exist' in the face of constant threat, Kabyles must maintain a degree of cultural isolation and above all a moral domain (the code of *taqbaylit*) in which purely Kabyle normative codes apply between members only. An idealized notion thus emerges that Kabyles are natural dissidents, and can therefore be treacherous to their co-regionalists in a way that other Algerians cannot by deviating from this ideal:

There is no such thing as a *Tlemcenian de service*, or a Shawi or Arab, for the simple reason that these people are not opposed to the politics of Power. *Kabyles de service* exist because the

Kabyle people opposes Power and its institutions, and someone born in the region who takes part in Power is only put there to butter up the Kabyles, which doesn't work.¹²

These exceptionalist claims of Kabyle dissidence, which are a common source of resentment among other groups critical of the state, rest on an apparently stark division between power and resistance. However, if we look more closely, we find that the rejection of 'politics' by no means in fact fits into the rigid binary divisions drawn between centre and periphery, power and resistance, or indeed Arab and Berber. The criticism of *Kabyles de service* reveals that the main substance of anti-political discourse is not a criticism of 'foreign' government, which is expected to abuse power, but rather a claim that Berber indigeneity in Algeria increases the obligation to retain cohesion through group loyalty.¹³

GM: Why do you think Kabyles are more critical of fellow Kabyles who are in power than others?

Mourad: Look, we're not going to criticize Arabs who abuse power – what does it matter? But a Kabyle who rises to power and then forgets his roots and his brothers ... that's different. Of course we're going to criticize that. I think we feel it more keenly because we're really *from* here, we were here long before the Arabs ... for instance, you wouldn't care if politicians start running amok in France because it's not your country, but if they did the same in Britain that would really hurt.

This excerpt reveals a key point about how the vernacular narrative conceptualizes the relationship between the conduct of national politics, group interests, and distributional justice. Among my respondents there was a broad consensus that a well-functioning Algerian polity should work not on the premise of individual or 'citizen' equality between members of a homogeneous Algerian populace (despite a concurrent rhetoric

¹² Forum: 'Kabyles de Service', <http://www.kabyle.com/forum/salon-discussions-generales-4637-kabyles-de-service.html>, accessed 7 March 2012.

¹³ The use of 'Berber' and 'Kabyle' in these descriptions often leads to confusion, as the claim is necessarily to Berber indigeneity but many Kabyles use this as an explicit argument about the exceptional nature of obligations to *Kabyle* solidarity. This will be a familiar ambiguity by now; I have attempted to be faithful to common uses.

of citizen empowerment, which I discuss in Chapter 3), but rather as a cohabitation of regionally based groups, each maintaining internal practices of solidarity and preferential treatment of members *within* a formally unified state apparatus. This conceptual vision, though it is rarely translated into proposals for an institutional solution, emerged repeatedly in discussions about the relationship between group interests and national distribution:

GM [continued from interview excerpt above]: Is it always the case that a Kabyle who rises to power forgets his origins?

Mourad: Nearly always. We expect a Kabyle in power to represent the interests of the Kabyles, not the regime. Look at Obama, the people from his home state wouldn't have been happy when he got to power: they expected him to direct more benefits towards them than any other state. The same goes for the blacks. When they saw that he wasn't going to distinguish, it was like a slap in the face. Or imagine I got a job at the town hall, and [various members of the respondent's family and close entourage] would be shocked if I gave social housing out left right and centre but forgot about them, or didn't make sure they were high up on the list.

Conversely, Kabyles seen to maintain their radical difference even while working 'with power', continuing to honour community obligations, reflect the ideal of an imagined Algerian polity that attempts not to impose unnatural homogeneity on natural difference, but rather accepts regional communities as its constituent parts, each representing an idealized moral cohesion. This is the basis for the criticism of state assimilationism as a travesty of the Algerian nation, and starts to give us a more accurate idea of how Kabyles understand terms often used in the vernacular narrative as part of a rhetoric of Western modernity (democracy, equality, justice) which are, like the translation anywhere of abstract concepts into practical meaning, interpreted in the light of 'local' assumptions about the nature of social bonds and belonging.

This, in large part, is how the vernacular narrative reconciles the abstract condemnation of the Algerian State (with a capital S) with the everyday interchanges

with the (lower-case) state that are not only necessary in order to accomplish administrative tasks, but indeed seen as highly desirable in the context of often arbitrary, impenetrable and inefficient bureaucracy and prevailing state contempt for individual rights. In this context, simple administrative tasks are often disproportionately difficult unless the individual concerned has a so-called *tamusni* (lit. ‘knowledge’, ‘wisdom’, in this context ‘a contact’: a suggestive double meaning) in the administration,¹⁴ or status guaranteed by professional position. Several of my respondents argued that respect for connections and status is a positive system that creates order, even when they are disadvantaged by it, and compared it favourably with the ‘blind’ approach to equality perceived as characteristic of European bureaucracy:

I know the Algerian Consulate [in Paris] may seem like a jungle, but I think it’s better than French institutions. The other day I had to go to the CPAM [the public health insurance bureau], and you know what the French civil servants are like, they were treating everyone with the same disrespect. When a lawyer or a doctor comes to the counter, he should be on a level with the civil servants, yet they speak to him just in the same way they speak to any old person. That’s humiliating: they can see those people are their own kind, yet they still talk down to them. To me that’s a state that doesn’t know how to respect its citizens. (Ameziane)

The primary criticism of *Kabyles de service*, then, is not merely that they are drawn into the administration of ‘power’, but rather that they betray the imperative of maintaining group particularism within the state apparatus – much as employees of the civil service, the respondents above claimed, should privilege members of their own family or solidarity group – instead stepping into line with the opposite idea of the state: as hegemonic, assimilative, and unitary. Similarly, the criticism of *le Pouvoir* as an abstract idea is not that it is ‘corrupt’ in the sense of favouring the ‘wrong’ group, but rather that it is unrooted in any natural form of social morality and cannot therefore

¹⁴ This type of contact is usually referred to in French, also interestingly, as an *accroche* (lit. ‘hook’, fig. foothold).

fulfil the expectation that distributional ‘politics’ should be managed above all as a question of equity *within* groups rather than between them.

The ‘cultural question’

It is easy to interpret this focus on group loyalties as simply an endemic feature of a society that has ‘internalized corruption’ or that has not made the full transition to bureaucratic modernity and therefore relies on ‘tribal’ or lineage-based models of loyalty (cf. Shryock 1997: 5 for a criticism of this position). But to close this chapter, I would like to point out two broader elements of understanding that help to nuance this easy consignment of Kabyle particularism, and its practical negotiations of the ambiguities inherent in its conceptualization of statehood and statelessness, to the political dustbin.

The first is an essentially anthropological problem of the use of categories, and returns to one of my questions early on in this chapter: how can we make sense of an idea as diffuse as that of ‘the state’ to shape local ideals of community? The Kabyle vernacular narrative of resistance to power relies on a reified definition of the state that has been widely criticized as a category of analysis. Jonathan Spencer (2007: 102) points out that one of the weaknesses of classic ‘resistance anthropology’ – its assumption that we can divide things up neatly between state and society, or domination and resistance – stems from

a misplaced confidence that, a priori, we ‘know’ what the state ‘is’ and what it ‘does’. But it [the assumption of a clear binary divide] also fails to account for the moral investment that many people make in the idea of being owners, or at least members, of a state of their own.

This observation tallies with a broader trend in recent political anthropology, that of recognizing that the state is always (and anywhere) an idea as well as a complex of institutions, and in either case cannot be conceived as a single entity: ‘there is obviously no Archimedean point from which to visualize “the state”, only numerous situated knowledges’ (Gupta 1995: 392). I have shown over the course of the chapter how historical understandings of the state tradition in Algerian and Maghribi context merge with contemporary criticisms and everyday encounters to demonstrate how Kabyles constitute the current state as an abstract idea against which to define alternative forms of community.

The abstraction of the state-idea does not mean, however, that it is without real consequence. The Kabyle conceptualization of the state that I have discussed has one unfortunate outcome. This is that it entrenches further an imagined divide between collaboration and resistance which cannot, as we have seen, admit the compromises that would arguably be required for a strategy of political negotiation with governmental authorities for economic improvement – or, indeed, even the daily interactions with (non-Kabyle) state personnel on which many, of necessity, rely to procure employment, housing, and so on. As a result, this stark collaboration versus resistance rhetoric draws Kabyle activists further down what appears, in the context of the regime’s insistence on unitary national identity, to be a blind alley of purely oppositional rhetoric to the state regime.

The second point is one about underlying assumptions behind wider discourses of the relationship between Algerian society and polity. Narratives from various quarters, both in Algeria and France, have described this relationship as a mismatch between unitary

state ideology and a society divided along ‘cultural’ faultlines, and correspondingly explained Algeria’s national failure as the result of a so-called ‘identity issue’ or ‘cultural problem’.

This concept, exhaustively exploited by both Algerian and foreign (particularly French) scholars and commentators to explain national conflicts, can be summarized as follows. Its main element is an assumption that group loyalties, variously imagined to divide along ethnolinguistic (Arab–Berber), geographical (mountains–plains, rural–urban, agriculturalist–pastoralist) or ideological (Nasserist, Ba‘athist, Salafist etc) lines, continue to be the basic unit of analysis in Algerian society. Another assumption follows from this: that these ‘cultural’ groupings naturally reflect different societal interests, imagined to be relatively homogeneous within each and antagonistic with others. The names given to these groups then become more than mere descriptive labels, designating by association a supposed radical difference in social values and ways of life. In this vision, such groups are the basic units between which conflicts must emerge, and the problem of balancing the naturally divergent interests of cultural groups is the outstanding ‘disorder’ that Algerian nationalism has failed to resolve.

Various strains of Kabyle activism, and particularly that promoted by the RCD, espouse this vision and fixate on the Kabyle ‘identity issue’ as the battleground of negotiation with the state. By this, in keeping with the definition above, they mean not merely linguistic rights and recognition of Berber (or Kabyle) culture as a component of Algerian nationalist legitimacy. The identity issue also refers to the more abstract dimension of Kabyle narratives that we have seen in this chapter: claims to legitimacy based on a particular social vision of what the Algerian polity should look like. The

main accusation that Kabyles make of the state and rival groups is that these transform ‘natural’ group culture into artificial ideology for the purposes of domination: back to Matoub’s assertion that nationalism should be ‘not an idea but a fact’. According to the vernacular narrative, the scourge of Algerian state action is thus an attempt to ‘divert’ cultural essence to the purposes of a political ideology that attempts to ‘mystify’ arbitrary power. In the foundational text of the Yakouren Seminar of 1980 (see Introduction):

The term ‘Arabo-Islamic’ does not refer to Arabness as a cultural fact, equivalent to the Berberness of our people. Neither does it reference the Muslim aspect of the country as such, which – when not denatured by obscure or sectarian practices ... – remains a glue organically incorporated in popular practice. We define the Arabo-Islamic amalgam here as an ideological vehicle, rendered mystical by political usage, and from which the common people [*les masses populaires*] are suffering more and more in their daily lives.¹⁵

It is clear from this example that the vernacular narrative does not in any way contest the first premise that cultural groups are the building blocks of Algerian society. As here, it frequently invokes terms of *arabité* and *berbérité*, as well as other generalized labels – Algerian, African, European – that appear to take the ‘cultural fact’ of essentialized group identities as a given. What the vernacular narrative criticizes is clearly not the essentialism of group cultures, an observation it fully supports; rather, it attacks the alleged transformation of this supposedly organic quality into constructed political identities.

What makes life difficult for Kabyle activist discourse is that this transformation has also been an important feature of Berberist ideology. The Kabyle cause has been at pains to minimize its explicitly political element, for the reasons I have discussed, and

¹⁵ Proceedings of the Yakouren Seminar, available online at <http://soummam.unblog.fr/2009/04/17/mouvement-culturel-berbere-mcb-ii-seminaire-tenu-a-la-maison-de-la-culture-mouloud-mammeri-de-tizi-ouzou-juillet-1989-rapport-de-synthese/>.

to replace it with discourses of ‘cultural’ activism; but this belies the fact, as Roberts (2001: 7) emphasizes, that ‘the cultural sphere and the political sphere have not been truly distinct, let alone separate, in Algeria since the French conquest in 1830’. Activist rhetoric therefore involves an uncomfortable form of doublethink about group identities, which must be portrayed as apolitical and innate for the purposes of popular appeal, yet necessarily also ‘ideological’ for the purposes of national debate.

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how Kabyles define themselves in opposition to a state, which however remains unclearly defined. As we have seen, Kabyle attempts to construct the state as a foreign agent of arbitrary power, and Kabylia as the home of resistance to it, give way to a more nuanced picture when we consider daily practices, the realities of living in a bureaucratic society, and indeed the difficulties inherent in portraying Kabylia itself as a domain of unity and *tegmatt*.

This difficulty in defining an objective difference between Kabyles and others, or indeed between any of Algeria’s so-called ‘cultural’ groupings, encourages recourse instead to epistemological distinctions – between languages, means of expression, and ways of producing national history – to mark out a distinctively Kabyle identity. This creates new tensions, which are the subject of Part II.

Part II

Expression

Interlude

Language: an ethnographic perspective

<i>Teεreq ccada i yiles-iw</i>	My tongue cannot bear witness
<i>Ad-iniγ yenger-d rrwah</i>	I see the end of the road
<i>Tegga-yi teqbaylit-iw</i>	My <i>taqbaylit</i> has deserted me –
<i>Ma d nek i tt-yeggan la ssmah</i>	But if I have deserted it, no pardon.

Lounès Matoub, ‘Semeht-iyi’ (1997)

Language has been central in Algerian attempts to assert an independent national personality. At Algerian independence, there was no single written language with which most or even a majority of the population were conversant. Algeria is made up of groups speaking a wide range of Arabic and Berber dialects, and the birth of a unitary nation-state called for a common written form to succeed (or complement) French. Classical Arabic was and remains largely the preserve of those educated in *madrasas* (Qur’anic schools); there was not yet in 1962 a widely mastered form of standardized modern Arabic; and local dialects, either Arabic or Berber, were considered unsuitable vehicles of nationalism because they represented a form of ‘popular’ oral culture out of step with the modernizing project of the centralized state. Algeria’s present linguistic situation can be described as one of diglossia (or in this case often triglossia, in Arabic, Berber and French), defined as

a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) super-imposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either in an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation. (Ferguson 1959: 336)

In Algeria, the main ‘super-imposed variety’ since independence has been Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), the adapted written form used in most contemporary journalism, state administration and education. But as Grandguillaume (1983: 36, 41) points out, it was the potency of classical Arabic as a symbol of authenticity and textual authority that offered the strongest historical validation of the national idea, rather than the bureaucratic necessity that prompted the introduction of MSA:

The essential reason for Arabization was the desire for conformity with a national personality, return to a cultural identity, preservation of an authenticity ... Arabic ... was first and foremost to do with Islam, past history, an identity located in the past, purity of origins ... In short, it referred back to things that needed to be constantly rediscovered, in each era, in their original purity.

In Algeria, as this passage suggests, language is a strong symbol of cultural ‘existence’, original wholeness, and above all historical continuity. But in practical terms, the impetus for standardization also came from outside Algeria. Nation-states must constantly balance two often conflicting requirements: internal unity and external validation. At independence, this validation depended chiefly on Algeria’s place in a transnational community of Arab nationalist states and (to varying degrees) pan-Arabist ideological commitment.¹ Linguistic alignment and the consecration of Islam as national religion were the two pillars of this enterprise, as they had been of reformist programmes for Algerian cultural revival. Language policy in Algeria has thus married a register of modernity through emulation of Western statecraft, including single-language literacy, with a desire for national and transnational ‘cultural authenticity’.

¹ It is important to remember that Algerian independence more or less coincided with the revival of Nasserist Arab nationalism after the collapse of the United Arab Republic in 1961. See Khalidi 1993 for discussion of this aspect, which I cannot explore in this brief overview.

In a sense, then, classical Arabic and MSA respectively represent the two domains of national identity famously distinguished by Partha Chatterjee as the dual foundation of anticolonial projects (1986: 6):

Anticolonial nationalism creates its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before its political battle with the imperial power. It does this by dividing the world of social institutions and practices into two domains – the material and the spiritual. The material is the domain of the ‘outside’, of the economy and of statecraft, of science and technology, a domain where the West had proved its superiority and the East had succumbed. In this domain, then, Western superiority had to be acknowledged and its accomplishments carefully studied and replicated. The spiritual, on the other hand, is an ‘inner’ domain bearing the ‘essential’ marks of cultural identity. The greater one’s success in imitating Western skills in the material domain, therefore, the greater the need to preserve the distinctiveness of one’s spiritual culture. This formula is, I think, a fundamental feature of anticolonial nationalism in Asia and Africa.

In Algeria, the attempt to introduce MSA to state bureaucracy was a clumsy enterprise. At independence, many civil servants had no knowledge of this form, and had to be either hastily taught or replaced.² Education presented a greater challenge still, and the dearth of teachers proficient in the new official language led to mass recruitment of schoolteachers from elsewhere in the Arabic-speaking world, with around 1,000 Egyptian teachers arriving in 1964 to cover an extensively Arabized curriculum in primary education (Grandguillaume 2004). As their spoken Arabic was also radically different from Algerian Arabic dialects, most of these had no oral language in common with their pupils. As well as the written MSA taught in Algerian schools, the dialectal Arabic spoken by many of its teachers was therefore ‘foreign’ to Arabic- and Berber-speakers alike. In 1969, a group of native Algerian teachers demanded a shift in Arabization policy towards the Algerian dialect of Arabic (rather than MSA), which they argued would make for greater efficiency and standardization.³

² A Presidential Decree issued in 1968 by President Houari Boumediène stipulated that ‘within three years, civil servants must learn sufficient [Modern Standard] Arabic to work in this language.’

³ ‘Il faut enseigner l’arabe vivant’, *Jeune Afrique*, 418, 5–13 January 1969; letter from a group of Algerian teachers to the weekly review *Jeune Afrique*, demanding the use of dialectal Arabic in schools.

However, the Conference of Arab States on Arabization, held in the Libyan capital Tripoli between 25 January and 2 February 1975, recommended the suppression of dialects in official usage and ‘mass culture’ (Ennaji 1991); and Arabization in Algeria intensified shortly thereafter, with a prohibition on the use of ‘foreign languages’ targeting public signage and the register of accepted given names, as well as schooling,⁴ before a relative lull under the tenure of the intellectual Mostefa Lacheraf as Minister for National Education (Colonna 2003).

The search for Tamazight

Early background

Linguistic claims also played a key role in early Kabyle activism. Shortly after Algerian independence, in response to increasingly fervent Arabization policies first under the presidency of Ahmed Ben Bella (1962–5) and then Boumediène (1965–76), a group of dissident intellectuals, splinter FFS militants and artists in Paris formed the Berber Academy for Cultural Exchange and Research (ABERC) in 1967,⁵ with an ambitiously universalist programme: ‘the preservation of distinctiveness, and consequently the preservation of ethnic groups subjugated by the peoples who dominate them to institutions and disciplines that are incompatible with their true needs and aspirations’.⁶

⁴ *Al-Chaab*, 23 October 1976, cited in Grandguillaume 2004: 16. Several Berber names were removed from the list of accepted names for the *état-civil*, a measure that is still cited as a cause of resentment among Kabyles today.

⁵ The prominent figures involved in the ABERC included Mouloud Mammeri, Mohand Arab Bessaoud and Taos Amrouche.

⁶ *Amazigh, revue du monde berbère et des entités ethniques*, single issue, ABERC: 115; cited in Dirèche-Slimani 1997: 92.

The ABERC became the Agraw Imazighen in 1969 under the guidance of the former FFS activist Mohand Arab Bessaoud, one of the foremost ideologues in the ‘Amazigh-revivalist’ strain of political radicalism discussed in the Introduction. In his hands, and with a strong support base among immigrant workers (Goodman 2004: 69) the Agraw adopted an isolationist position in vehement opposition to the Algerian regime, a populist emphasis on Arab–Berber difference, and a rhetoric of Berber exceptionalism that moved away from the ABERC’s proclaimed universal goals. It was also the Agraw that was largely responsible, in its monthly review *Imaziɣen*, for codifying the neo-Tifinagh script. This was drawn from a set of symbols garnered from Libyco-Berber inscriptions in Tuareg areas of the Sahara, and used as evidence that Tamazight had a ‘historic’ script form and could not simply be sidelined as an oral tradition irrelevant to written modernity. Tifinagh is today commonly seen in activist symbolism (see Fig. 3) – on banners, ornamental plaques, album covers and so on – but has never been in popular use for communication or even book publications by Kabyle activists.



Fig. 3. Tifinagh script on memorial at site of Matoub’s assassination near the village of Tala Bounane in Greater Kabylia. Note use of Berber calendar to give date of Matoub’s death (‘13.6.2949’). Photograph by author.

Subsequent initiatives based in Paris, principally the Groupe d'Etudes Berbères at the Université de Paris-VIII Vincennes⁷ in 1972, which attracted the support of prominent French intellectuals including Pierre Bourdieu, moved away from the explicitly political rhetoric of the ABERC and the Agraw to focus more exclusively on the teaching of Tamazight. This came amidst the progressive suppression of Berber language and cultural programmes in Algerian universities, and notably the (already unfunded) Tamazight course led by Mouloud Mammeri at the University of Algiers and removed from the curriculum in 1973.

Mammeri was also the first Algerian scholar to produce a systematic grammar of Tamazight, published in Algeria as *Tajerrumt n Tmaziɣt (Tantala Taqbaylit)* in 1976 and republished in France as *Précis de grammaire berbère (kabyle)* in 1986. It included linguistic neologisms intended to update the pedagogy of written Tamazight to the requirements of a viable alternative to MSA, and most importantly a systematic codification of the transliteration of Tamazight in Roman script, avoiding the use of double consonants and diphthongs typical of French transcriptions and working instead on the principle of one sound equals one letter in order to simplify words on the page. This is the script now used for 'official' activist purposes and book publications, and has been adopted in France by the INALCO (National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilizations, the major centre of Tamazight linguistics teaching and research in Paris) and the Haut Commissariat à l'Amazighité in Algeria.⁸ The publication of the grammar in 1976 coincided with the suspension of the *Fichier de documentation berbère* (FDB), a periodic publication instigated in 1946 by a group of Pères Blancs

⁷ Now incorporated in Paris-VIII Saint-Denis.

⁸ The HCA was established in 1995 following the school boycott in Kabylia (see below).

(Christian missionaries in Algeria) with the aim of diffusing Kabyle literature and research on the region.

Mammeri continued his work on Berber ethnology at his Centre for Archaeological, Prehistoric and Ethnological Research (CRAPE) in Algiers until 1980, when following the events of the Berber Spring – usually known simply as *Tafsut*, ‘the Spring’ – he was removed from its directorship. Unrest in Kabylia broke out following the cancellation of a lecture scheduled for 10 March 1980 on the *Poèmes kabyles anciens*; en route to deliver it, Mammeri was stopped at a roadblock and informed by the *wali* (governor) of Tizi Ouzou that the event posed a ‘threat to public order’. Widespread rioting broke out in Kabylia, led by university students many of whom had been radicalized by the aggressive period of Arabization in school education before 1977. *Tafsut* culminated on 20 April, the date on which it is now commemorated, in the early-morning storming of a university dormitory, a local hospital and a factory (Goodman 2004: 61). Several activists were arrested and many more wounded. *Tafsut* has since been constituted as a foundational moment of political Berberism in its modern form.

Language rights, though they played only an indirect role in *Tafsut* – which expressed a broader strain of militancy for a redefinition of Berber self-identification in relation to the Algerian state – have since been reconstituted as one of its central themes. The campaign for *Tamaziyt di lakul* (Tamazight in schools) that ran through activism in the 1980s and 1990s was the basis for a year-long school boycott in Kabylia in the academic year 1994–5, following which *amazighité* was for the first time recognized as a component of Algeria in the Algerian Constitution of 1996. It was another six years before, following the ‘Black Spring’ of 2001, Tamazight was recognized as a national

(but not official) language, with the relevant constitutional amendment passed in April 2002.

Against this backdrop of the history of linguistic activism, and to lay the ground for the discussion of approaches to writing history in Chapter 3, let us now look at how Kabyles today discuss the status of Tamazight as a written language, and Taqbaylit as a spoken dialect. The quest to ‘reconstruct’ a standardized form of Tamazight has in many ways faced the same difficulties encountered by the Arabization process, and I structure the overview below around these parallel tensions.

i. The region–transnation gap

Firstly, both Arabization and Berber linguistic activism have suffered from a gulf between local dialects too distinct for the purposes of nationalism, and a transnational form (Tamazight, or MSA) too far from spoken dialects to elicit allegiance and identification. Tamazight, like Arabic, properly designates a language group rather than a single language. Its variants across North Africa and parts of the Sahel differ to the point of incomprehension; dialects diverge radically between different Berber-speaking regions within Algeria, and even within these regions themselves. Taqbaylit, the Kabyle dialect of Tamazight, itself has a staggering range of localized subdialects, often varying from village to village; and while this is on one hand seen as evidence that the language is ‘alive’, it also reinforces a feeling that Tamazight as a ‘modern’ (ie. standardized) language, if it exists at all, is a far-off abstraction.

Berberist linguistic activism therefore holds emotive power at two levels far removed from each other: dialectal region or subregion and pan-Berber whole, notionally encompassing Berberophone groups across the Maghrib. Since Tamazight is marginal at the national level in Algeria, Kabyle activists often depict the Algerian regime as an anomaly, an interference between what ‘should’ be the continuity of Berberophone community from subnational region to supranational linguistic group. This also serves to explain the hiatus between the two, the argument being that the language would be more homogeneous had the state not thwarted the instigation of Tamazight as an official national language and thus kept dialectal speakers in isolated compartments. Activists attempt to support this view – two scales of Berberophone community disrupted by the Arabizing state – by invoking historical sources which they claim confirm that Kabyles, and other subnational Berberophone groups, have long defined themselves *both* as regionally rooted *and* as part of a wider Maghribi community of indigenous Berber-speaking peoples (cf. Chaker 1998: 85, quoting Boulifa).

There is a conflict, then, between two conceptions of language as the substratum of Kabyle identity. On one hand, oral tradition and the localized variation of Taqbaylit represent the ‘rootedness’ of language and the survival of a predominantly oral language in the face of Arabization. But orality and the lack of a standardized written Berber are precisely the traits that post-independence regimes, above all that of President Houari Boumediène, have invoked to marginalize Tamazight as a ‘folk’ language rather than one worthy of official status.⁹

⁹ While the story of Tamazight/Taqbaylit as a purely oral language must be nuanced, as I discuss further in Chapter 5, existing transliterations predating the French period are in Arabic script: in transcribed *qawanin* (Scheele 2008; Parkes 2010), poetry collections, family records held in *zawaya*, and even a translation of Genesis and the Gospels from the early nineteenth century made for the US vice-consul in Algiers (Goodman 2003).

ii. *Linguistic purism versus code-switching*¹⁰

Another facet of the same problem is a tension between a purist–revivalist conception of language and the realities of a hybrid, code-switching and changing modern form. Like all Algerian dialects to a greater or lesser degree, Taqbaylit exhibits extensive code-switching and integration of Arabic and French terms into the vernacular, either as isolated morphemes or grammatical naturalizations. This leads many dialectal speakers to identify Taqbaylit as an ‘incomplete’ dialect ‘diverted’ by long experience of foreign imports, and correspondingly to describe the process of codifying Tamazight as a revival of the ‘real language’ that they imagine to have existed before this, transcending regional differences. In this vision, dialects are perceived not as equal variants but as greater or lesser instances of divergence from an original root:

It’s a reconstruction rather than a codification. They [linguistic activists] take all the dialects, Taqbaylit, Shawi, Itergi [Tuareg dialect] and so on, and they try to see who says it most correctly, who’s most right and closest to the original, so as to create an official language that can be applied to everyone [i.e. all Berberophone regions] – in writing of course, orally we’ll all go on speaking our own dialects ...

We have to create Berber words for everything and make them known; for example if you ask me how to say ‘I’m going to park my lorry’ the best I can do is ‘ad stationnile akamium’, Kabylized French. And the most used verb in Kabyle, ‘xdem’ [to do/work] is from Arabic. As you know, we’re constantly using Arabic words. As far as I can see our language is an incomplete language; we have to find equivalents for these foreign words and also enrich the grammar, the conjugation, all the elements a real language needs. (Brahim)

But paradoxically, when this process is undertaken, it renders the ‘real language’ of Tamazight well nigh incomprehensible to many dialectal speakers. Previous

¹⁰ By code-switching I mean not the situation of linguistic diglossia discussed above (the co-existence of a ‘high’ official form with dialects of the same language) but rather the extensive shifting between languages – Arabic, Berber and French – in everyday speech. Switching may happen several times within a sentence or for whole phrases.

transcriptions of Taqbaylit into the Roman alphabet – by missionaries,¹¹ ethnographers and French administrative personnel – had been made according to French phonetics, which gradually formed some measure of informal codification (Ould-Braham 1969) towards a common transcription that had become ‘standard use among most [French] academics by the 1960s’ (Goodman 2003). This phonetic system employed double letters to render the soft dentals of Taqbaylit (thus ‘th’, ‘ch’, ‘dh’) and diphthongs, producing long words of consonant clusters: *thaqvailith* (*taqbaylit*), *thamachahouth* (*tamacahut*), *dhayene* (*dayen*) and so on. Though complex, this system retains a basic advantage for everyday use: for Kabyles schooled in French literacy, it sounds as it looks. The majority of Kabyles who write Taqbaylit for everyday communication purposes today therefore do so according to French phonetics; Mammeri’s simplified standardization correspondingly meets with surprisingly tepid approval, and is frequently described as the preserve of a ‘university’ elite of literate activists or a ‘newfangled’ attempt to make the language less rather than more accessible:

You [speaking to me while I was attending Tamazight clases at the INALCO in Paris] shouldn’t learn Taqbaylit from grammars and dictionaries, like the Mammeri one your professor gave you. When we write, in emails or texts and so on, that’s not how we do it – no one will understand you if you write in that other system [ie. standardized Tamazight]! It’s much easier for everyone to use the old French way, because that represents how we’re used to hearing sounds off the page once we’ve learned to write French at school. What Mammeri did, I know it was supposed to help us, but you can only learn it by sitting down and studying it; that’s why only university people and *intellos*¹² use it. You’ll never see anyone write Taqbaylit like that other than in books. (Salas)

According to this criticism, standardized Tamazight often sounds as well as looks like a foreign language to Taqbaylit-speakers, a fact that paradoxically exacerbates the

¹¹ The most important of these being the work done under the aegis of the FDB. The *Fichier* had provided a standardized transcription of Tamazight in the Roman alphabet, which Mammeri extensively adapted.

¹² Pejorative French slang for ‘intellectuals’.

feeling of distance from a literate elite and exclusion from the realm of single-language modernity:

I once went to a linguistics thesis defence at the university in Béjaïa. It was conducted in Tamazight and I swear I hardly understood a word! We mix everything up, Kabyle, Arabic and French, but at this defence they were speaking the proper Kabyle [*sic*] without any of that, and it didn't sound anything like the Kabyle I know. Isn't that a ridiculous situation?

Speaking Kabyle is very different from mastering it properly, in writing. Of course we've learned some of that, but we don't use it – we all write any which ways, according to our own phonetic transcriptions of what we hear. And that's very different from region to region, or even sometimes from village to village [here he referred to a village that we had visited together in the Azazga region of Kabylia, where there is a highly localized speech habit of replacing the 'l' phoneme with 'z'], so just imagine what it would be like if we were talking to a Mzabi or a Tuareg. (Ferhat)

iii. Language as Berber resistance

This desire to 'reconstruct' a once existent unified language, then, reflects a more general perception of language as the root of Berber 'existence', similar to the conception of Arabization as recovering an original linguistic form in order to restore continuity, and the use of language in both cases to posit a prior unity over dialectal fragmentation. The language issue in Kabyle activism therefore stretches far beyond the main institutional demands (the question of Tamazight in schools, or of Tamazight as an official language). If Kabyle activists have shown little sign of being placated by constitutional concessions such as the 1996 and 2002 amendments discussed above, it is because these demands are merely the tip of an iceberg. This is the grievance of perceived oppression and 'denial of identity', and a perception that language is the crux of Berber 'cultural permanence' in Algeria, the most tangible marker of identity, and therefore the most important element to preserve from eradication by assimilation.

Salem Chaker's *Berbères aujourd'hui*, one of the few standard scholarly references for popular activism, articulates the problem as follows:

Berberophones, identified by a specific linguistic practice, are of course currently a demographic minority only because the Maghrib has since the Middle Ages witnessed a slow process of linguistic Arabization. This means that the essence of the population of the Maghrib is Berber: the vast majority of current Arabophones are merely more or less recent 'Arabized Berbers'. Originally, Berbers covered all of the Maghrib and the Sahara, and from a certain (historical and anthropological) point of view, we can say without argument that all Maghribis are Berbers. But in terms of present socio-cultural realities, the awareness of being Berber is linked to being Berberophone and concerns only a (large) minority of the population. The 'others' define themselves (and must be defined) as 'Arabs' because they are culturally and linguistically Arab. In terms of culture and identity, unless we subscribe to dubious racial or racist interpretations, reality is always made up of individual and collective awareness. (Chaker 1998: 16)

This conception of language as the ultimate token of existence in the face of oppression also translates into an everyday politicization of language choices. This is especially important in interactions with state officials, and several of my respondents made elaborate distinctions between the different 'levels' (*wilaya*, *daïra*, *commune*) and types of administrator with whom they expected to speak either Arabic, French or Taqbaylit. Most importantly, many drew a symbolic divide between administrative personnel whom they described as 'sent by the state' – generally those associated either with *wilaya*-level bureaucracy or with law and order (police and military) – and those designated in contrast as *ney* ('ours'), generally mayors and administrative personnel at the *commune* and *daïra* level. In these situations, language may force reappraisals of the true 'allegiance' of Kabyle state employees (see Chapter 2):

I remember the first time met a Kabyle *gendarme* in the village and he spoke to me in Taqbaylit, I was utterly shocked. I must have been in my late teens already, and I didn't think that existed: I thought by definition they couldn't be 'ours'. For a while after that I was disgusted at the thought that Kabyle police had probably been part of the violence against their brothers [during the 'Black Spring']. (Mourad)

The availability of language choices and particularly that of French as a ‘third way’ provides a way of preserving the impression of resistance when dealing with state officials, or in other situations promoting a ‘modern’ image of Kabylia to the outside:

When I have to stop at a roadblock manned by the army, or go to see the *wali* for example [the administrative prefect of the *wilaya*], Arabic is the first language we have in common but I hate speaking it to agents of the state. Like a lot of us, I prefer to speak French in those situations.

Mayors on the other hand are always ‘ours’. Generally we speak Taqbaylit with them, but their strength is that they can also speak very good French. Take B. [mayor of the *commune* based in the informant’s village], he always gives interviews [to journalists] in French so that everyone [ie. non-Kabyles] will be able to understand our demands, and respect that they come from a place that believes in modern values, not an out-of-date backwater. (Hakim)

The other key facet of this description of language as the root of group definitions is the popular notion of orality as a guarantee of Kabyle autonomy in the face of colonization. The vernacular narrative thus holds that invading powers were unable to gain access to information about Kabyle affairs by textual channels, a contention that translates a more tangible reality at the village level: that of the principle of secrecy on the regulations provided in the *qanun* and the conduct of village affairs, intended at the most basic level to prevent exploitation of this information by hostile others.¹³ This idealized conception of orality as a guarantee against ‘meddling’, and the preservation of secrecy as an absolute requirement of the code of *taqbaylit*, serves as a basis for translation into narratives of Kabyle autonomy against the state in more recent times:

In our village, there’s a story everyone knows, that some of the old people still remember. It was an awful case where a son killed his mother; some people say it was an honour thing, that she’d been unfaithful, but probably he was just mad. Either way, word of it somehow got out and the *gendarmes* arrived, but the villagers rallied and refused to let the truth out, and made it look like an accident, and the *gendarmes* had no evidence and had to leave. Then *tajmaet* took care of punishing the guilty man, I think he was banished from the village or put in quarantine.¹⁴

¹³ See Scheele 2008 for full discussion of this aspect of village self-regulation.

¹⁴ The recourse to excommunication from public life and social interaction occasionally imposed by a village *tajmaet* for exceptionally serious crimes.

That's still how we work today, taking care of punishing things that happen in the village, and the state has no hope of understanding because it's all done in words [*la parole*] with no record. ('Sheikh')

Finally, this also produces an ideal of affairs recorded only in memory and oral transmission, and the consequent role of village deliberations themselves in reproducing the importance of *taqbaylit* as morality:

Really it's thanks to Taqbaylit [the language] that we've managed to stay who we are. The centre of it all is *tajmaet*; there's a French woman who moved here [to Ajmoun] twenty years ago, and because she took the trouble to learn Taqbaylit the *imɣaren* [council 'elders'] offered her the choice to be buried here, which is usually a huge thing. I know it may look very closed, the fact that they [*tajmaet*] hardly ever admit 'foreigners' and so on, but really it's only thanks to this that the Kabyles have managed to pass all this on intact until now. (Wardia)

It is this fundamental connection between language, morality and transmission – also represented by the three meanings of the word *taqbaylit* itself – that lays the basis for a highly didactic conception of history and nationalist legitimacy, to which I now turn. Since this connection reflects not merely 'local' Kabyle understandings but a far more thoroughgoing link between language, continuity and 'truth' rooted in Islamic epistemology (see Introduction), we shall see that Kabyle history-making faces a difficulty which reflects the dilemmas outlined in this section: that of expressing opposition to a narrative of Arabo-Islamic history with which the Kabyle vernacular narrative shares a thoroughgoing discursive framework.

Chapter 3

Making the past

On top of it all, Jaroslav was a dyed-in-the-wool Moravian patriot and an expert on local traditions, and in his passion for folklore he was turning the wedding into a showcase of traditional rituals and customs ... all reconstructed more from textbooks of ethnography than from living memory ... He had the patriarch give all the ritual speeches, but purged them of all Biblical motifs, even though it was Biblical imagery that held them together.

Milan Kundera, *The Joke*

The Kabyles are a minority group in an assimilationist state that promotes literacy and textual authority as the basis for nationalism. Algerian nationalism, as articulated first by Islamic reformism (*islah*) and then by the ideology of the FLN-state, has been heavily premised on assertions of the superior modernity of urban, literate culture as a justification for the authority of the centralized state (Colonna 1995) and the ‘recovery’ of an Arabo-Islamist national personality from colonial oppression. The corollary has been a marginalization of minority linguistic groups, chiefly Berber-speakers, and an attempt to effect assimilation by a policy of Arabization of state education and bureaucracy (Grandguillaume 1983).

Minority groups claiming historical legitimacy in a state that asserts unitary national identity in this way have two paths open to them. Either, firstly, they attempt to challenge the state on its own ground by producing their own canon of written history, attempting to demonstrate that a non-state narrative is worthy of nationalist legitimacy. But the Algerian state has doggedly depicted the symbolic capital of textual knowledge as a corollary of the scriptural sanctity attached to Qur’anic Arabic, and thus an exclusively Arabo-Islamic conception of national ‘modernity’. Claims to construct a

canon of Berber history in Tamazight are therefore disadvantaged from the outset by the state's effective invention of Arabic-language textual tradition as the basis for nationalism (Mostari 2004).¹

Or, secondly, such groups resist the state narrative not by producing an alternative canon in the same textual form, but by asserting the legitimacy of different forms of knowledge that state ideology marginalizes: oral poetry and music,² folklore,³ customary law (the spoken word as contract, concepts of tacit local knowledge replacing written transmission of rights such as wills or deed polls),⁴ and a consensual canon of cultural symbols as an alternative to written history.⁵ Because they emphasize local distinctiveness, these ideas are effective in mobilizing support for a minority cause and an emotive sense of belonging. As a political tactic vis-à-vis an assimilative state, however, they are powerless or even harmful for the same reason.

Groups once privileged by colonial science occupy a particularly awkward position in relation to an assimilationist post-independence state. In the Kabyle case, the language of custom or 'tradition' as the basis for nationalism, passed down from colonial ethnography, is a key repertoire available to contemporary claims for minority rights (Silverstein 2004); indeed, its availability may well have blinded minority activists to other possible discourses of legitimacy. Since postcolonial state nationalism in Algeria

¹ State authorities have at various times countered charges of oppression by arguing that the 'Berber element' of Algeria has voluntarily subscribed to this unitary conception in adopting Arabic as the 'language of religion'. Cf. Rapport Final du Président Chadli Benjedid, V^e Congrès du FLN (1983): 'We must ... emphasize their [the Berbers'] adoption of the Arabic language as the language of religion, the vehicle of civilization and science, and acknowledge that as a result the Arabic language has taken on a cultural character devoid of any racial oppression.' Text reproduced in *Révolution africaine*, 1036, 30 December 1983–5 January 1984.

² Finnegan 1977; Goodman 2002.

³ See for example Dorson 1972; Oinas 1978; Dundes 1980; Herzfeld 1982.

⁴ Gluckman 1969; Dresch 1984; Scheele 2008.

⁵ Smith 2009.

is premised on the contention that ‘popular’ or folk cultures threaten the unity of the nation by giving encouragement to divisive group loyalties,⁶ state discourse has two ways of discrediting Kabyle claims: it can represent them as remnants of colonialism which by nature are hostile to the new nation-state;⁷ or, alternatively, as issuing from a local subgroup promoting a ‘folk’ culture in opposition to the growth of modern national identity.⁸ This chapter discusses how Kabyle discourses of history and ‘tradition’, and party political uses of the past, steer a path between these difficulties, simultaneously appealing to exceptionalist views of Kabylia and attempting to uphold Kabyle legitimacy in the Algerian nationalist field.

The first strategy used to this end is a representation of the past as the repeated fragmentation and reconstitution of an Algerian ‘nation’ (understood in the fluid sense already discussed) in which Berbers or Kabyles played a supposedly constitutive role. The vernacular narrative describes two key periods – pre-Islamic Numidia and the Algerian war of independence – as representing an original national wholeness based on Berber identity, whose breakdown is in each case explained as the result of artificially introduced Arab hegemony. This bricolage – casting Algerian history as a protracted succession of moments of apotheosis followed by destruction – produces an ‘idealized narrative that explain[s] in the most linear terms possible how the concrete present

⁶ The proverbial *nation une et indivisible* stands at the heart of Algeria’s founding texts, and this rhetoric was stepped up by the Chadli regime after the Berber Spring; cf. Déclaration du Président Chadli Benjedid à la séance de clôture du séminaire sur la planification (1980): ‘Algeria is an Arab, Muslim and Algerian country. The question of being Arab or not simply does not arise. Our language is Arabic, our religion is Islam ... National cultural patrimony is not the monopoly of a region or a group.’ Text reproduced in *El-Moudjahid*, 20 April 1980.

⁷ During the war of independence and after, the regime and its supporters often referred to Berbers and particularly Kabyles as *hizb fransa* (the French Party), indicating the widespread fifth-columnist view that preferential French treatment of the region had made Kabyles disloyal Algerian nationalists.

⁸ Cf. Rapport du Président Chadli Benjedid devant le congrès extraordinaire du FLN (1985): ‘Other groups champion Berberism, and here, I wonder who exactly is Berber and who is not in our country? We categorically reject this term which was in times gone by imposed upon us [by the French]. This old refrain comes, in reality, from regressive ways of thinking exacerbated by colonialism by means of the politics of “divide and rule”.’ Text reproduced in *El-Moudjahid*, 26 December 1985.

emerged from a more abstract past ... explain[ing] present social organization in terms of past kinship, politics, and cultural origins' (Light 2011).

In this case, to explain a 'concrete present' of perceived Arabo-Islamic oppression, activists posit a historical cycle of Arab invasion and Berber resistance, which seeks to explain in narrative form why the reality of Kabylia's predicament in the contemporary nation-state does not match the public script of Kabyle identity as eternal resistance. They use this cycle to explain why Kabylia is under the sway of oppression by a 'non-indigenous' state, and why the apparent promise of Kabyle nationalist visions before and during the war of independence did not come to fruition. This involves portraying the independence struggle as a temporary fusion of Arab and Berber historical genealogies into a single essence of postcolonial *Algerian* identity, and the capture of power by Arabist elites in the post-independence state as the destruction of this national consensus or 'betrayal of the revolutionary family'. The contemporary activist depiction of a cycle of Arab–Berber struggle bears striking resemblances to the story of the Maghribi past propounded in several colonial ethnographies studied by early Kabyle activists (cf. Chapter 1 and Interlude).

The other notable Kabyle strategy in response to state discourses has lain in the formulation of a federalist-type alternative to the centralized state, which maps notions of traditional Kabyle political organization onto previously available discourses of 'natural society'. For this, contemporary Kabyle activism has drawn on colonial paradigms of Kabylia as an ideal part representing a lost whole, which themselves arose in a broader context of Romantic nationalist ideologies of the nation as natural community. I therefore discuss the indirect relationship of the vernacular nationalist

credo with the classic Herderian paradigm of *völkisch* culture,⁹ a useful prism for thinking about minority nationalisms because it is also premised on ambiguous definitions of the nation. The unified people said to be the ‘spirit’ of the nation in this model were precisely those thought to embody the ideal of innate, organic identity *without* constructed ‘national’ consciousness; small, face-to-face communities, in other words, were idealized as a model for national belonging through the notion of a ‘natural’ solidarity group.¹⁰ As we saw in Chapter 1, colonial ideologues repeatedly foisted this concept on Kabylia.

The Herderian concept of the *Volk* emerged as Europe was struggling with the task of aligning national loyalties with bureaucratic states, a problem that the so-called ‘nation-state’ international system is in many cases unable to resolve. With its deliberate ambiguity between the two meanings of ‘nation’ – community cohesion at the small scale, and its attempted extension to a loyalty group corresponding with state boundaries – the Romantic nationalist paradigm is a (perhaps surprisingly) powerful concept for contemporary substate minorities that attempt to claim both regional exceptionalism and national legitimacy.

In the context of a state predicated on the idea that ‘national’ by definition means universal rather than composite, the Kabyle vernacular narrative invokes Romantic paradigms of natural society to argue that the repository of truly ‘national’ culture should in fact be the geographical region; and that the bureaucratic state, if it exists, should be a federal-type layering of many such communities. It is an essential condition

⁹ Excellent introductions to Herder’s concept of the *Volk* and folk culture are Wilson 1973, Abrahams 1993, and Baycroft and Hopkin 2012.

¹⁰ This element of Romantic nationalism was also the context for the early development of sociology and anthropology, which expressed a similar fascination with bounded communities. See Chapter 1.

of such an association that each ‘natural’ region retains its own coherence through self-regulation, which the vernacular narrative identifies as a tradition particularly germane to Kabylia. Party political agendas have also depicted the geographical region as the natural unit of political organization, and therefore the truest expression of ‘national’ coherence.

These two ways of using the past to explain the present, and formulate suggestions for its betterment, will be the subject of three case studies in the latter part of this chapter: the first examining the invocation of Numidian history by Kabyle cultural activists; the second the use of the ‘natural region’ discourse to support a recent RCD party political agenda; and the third another use of the same discourse, this time to legitimate the programme of an explicitly Kabyle citizen movement in 2001 – the *Mouvement citoyen des Aarchs* – which aimed to revive Kabyle ‘tribal’ modes of management in response to state mismanagement.

Before we arrive at this examination of strategies for representing a specifically Kabyle or Berber past as the basis for an alternative idea of the Algerian nation, let us step back and look in more detail at the context in which these have evolved: state-led discourses of unitary national identity and historical legitimacy, resulting trends in Algerian historiography, and Kabyle party political appeals to the history of the war of independence to bolster contemporary legitimacy. Throughout the chapter, I discuss how these uses reflect the tension between a desire for written history and a reliance on discourses of ‘tradition’, oral forms, and folklore.

A) ONE NATION, ONE PAST: HISTORY AS TEXT IN STATE AND KABYLE DISCOURSES

Every group seeking to assert cultural identity as the basis for a nationalist vision in Algeria has faced one common problem: none can unambiguously claim ownership of an 'Algerian' past. The postcolonial state tradition is barely fifty years old, and the population it attempts to govern under a centralized state is not only linguistically and culturally diverse: historically self-governing tribal societies also account for a large (mainly rural) part of it, and in many cases continue to express hostility to governance by a bureaucratic state. In order to work in the service of national legitimacy, history must therefore invent national tradition (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) rather than merely recount its past. This tendency is perhaps intensified both in postcolonial situations (in response to the need for cultural reinvention) and multi-nation states¹¹ (to invent a 'national' past for a disparate set of loyalties), but it is a well-documented habit of nationalist enterprises more broadly. In its classic formulation,

'Invented tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past. (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983: 2)

If a 'suitable past' for the nation as a whole is not readily available, invention is likely to be undertaken with particular fervour. Insecurity about the very existence of Algeria as a political unit, and above all the difficulty of creating a shared past with which most could identify, has therefore led to an obsessive concern with historical coherence and 'national personality' in state ideology since independence, both under the FLN-state

¹¹ Those, that is, that bring several ethnolinguistic or cultural groups under common administrative control without devolution of powers.

and in the nominal democracy that followed. As a political and cultural system, Algeria has invested heavily in the construction of a unitary national identity premised on linguistic, ethno-cultural and religious homogeneity, and the Arabization policies that have underpinned the state's attempts at nation-building since independence are aimed at absorbing non-assimilated minorities to a dominant cultural conception. Beyond linguistic Arabization, successive constitutional texts have laid down the notion of a unitary 'national personality' in more diffuse terms:

The Algerian people declares its allegiance to the Arab homeland [*Patrie*] of which it is an indissociable part ... As of the seventh century, the other elements of the Algerian Nation were gradually integrated, namely *its cultural, linguistic and spiritual unity* ... Islam and Arab culture constitute a framework that is *both universal and national* ... It is in this dual framework ... that the choices of our people must be made and its evolution pursued. (National Charter, 1976, paragraph 1. Emphasis mine)¹²

The Algerian state, as successive versions of its constitutions, presidential speeches and FLN congress proceedings remind us, was born not only as a state independent of colonial rule but also – though contemporary political narratives as a rule downplay the importance of this element – as a state fighting for position in the pan-Arab nationalist community.¹³ The confusion engendered by these requirements (loyalty to a single 'nation' alongside membership of a transnational 'Arab homeland' and allegiance to Islam) reveal the paradox of a quest for unitary national personality expressed as an appeal to several loyalties at once. This 'confusion', of course, is to some extent deliberate: the creation of an Algerian people after independence required above all else an identity with which all could identify, and in this regard the less ideologically precise and more diffuse the better (Roberts 2003: 53–5). In this sense, the simultaneous

¹² Text reproduced in Chaker 1998: 123.

¹³ See Freitag 1994 for the impact of Algeria's early Arab nationalist politics on historiography.

reference to a 'people', a 'nation', a transnational 'homeland' and religion arguably stems from pragmatic strategy rather than ambiguity of thought.

The insistence on unitary cultural identity as the guarantee of Algerian national 'personality' has its roots in the early nationalism of Sheikh Abdulhamid Ben Badis' reformist movement, formally constituted as the AUMA in 1931. In the vision of Ben Badis and the reformists, the new national (though not necessarily independent) culture was to be based on Qur'anic scriptural exegesis and education in classical Arabic as a means of removing the need for intermediaries between the Muslim and divinity, and the recovery of an Arabo-Islamic national 'personality' from its colonial oppression. As Christelow (1987: 269) argues, the reformists' main concern in defining this personality

was not with moral or ritual purity or correctness, but rather with what might be called cultural coherence ... In Algeria, it is language and culture, much more than religion, which escape the effective management of the state authorities, and which form the strongest basis for efforts to define a sphere of activity and of thought beyond the direct control of the state ... the most enduring contribution of the Reformist Ulama was not to have settled the question of Algeria's political identity, but to have raised the question of its cultural identity.

The corollary to this was a disqualification of popular oral languages and cultures as a folkloric artefact that had no place in the construction of official national culture, as notoriously expressed by Ben Badis: 'The language on "tongues" at the market, by the wayside, and other public places frequented by the masses must not be confused with the language of pens and paper, notebooks and studies, in short that of an elite.'¹⁴

As Colonna (1995) argues, the unitary fervour of *islah* ideology laid the ground for post-independence ideologies of nationalism formulated by the FLN-state to take on a similarly totalizing character: totalizing in the sense of aiming at absolute consensus,

¹⁴ Cited by Boumedini and Dadoua Hadria 2012.

but also in the sense that reformism often worked on the assumption that cultural coherence must encompass several domains at once – language, religion, political identity – and that these were so interdependent that none could exhibit coherence without the others:

By showing how the religious reform project of the 1930s aimed to destroy popular languages and cultures ... and to impose a sort of unitarist counter-reform, I have tried to demonstrate the genesis of a totalitarian cognitive structure that was subsequently the root of a religious State and a *pensée unique* that became the ideology of the party in power for 25 years [the FLN-state of 1962–88]. If the period from 1920–40 ... weighs so heavily on the present, it is because it witnessed a thoroughgoing destruction, albeit with the best intentions – the restoration of an independent nation and State – of the religious and intellectual diversity that had been the lifeblood of society. (Colonna 1995: 23)

Like many countries in the aftermath of colonialism, Algerian independence was thus clearly premised (at first implicitly, and then explicitly with Boumediène's *Révolution culturelle* in the mid-1970s),¹⁵ on an attempt at cultural 'purification', to be achieved by rewriting the continuity into a particular narrative of national history based on Arab and Islamic identity. Both *islah* and FLN ideology therefore relied on an association between the existential idea of unity and its expression as a coherent monocultural narrative, in the case of the FLN broadly speaking, and later that of the AUMA,¹⁶ moving towards the endpoint of modern national liberation. During the war of liberation, the FLN mouthpiece *El-Moudjahid* repeatedly reinforced this view of history as a teleological continuity of Arabic culture interrupted only by French rule:

The Algerian Nation emerged from the revolution that occurred thirteen centuries ago in North Africa with the Arab arrival and the Islamization of the Maghribi peoples. For the first time in History these peoples, freed from foreign domination at the hands of the Romans and their

¹⁵ See Taleb Ibrahimi 1973 for a view of the *Révolution culturelle* and its links with the AUMA from the inside: the author, known as a fervent advocate of Arabization, had been one of the founding members of the AUMA's French-language journal *Le Jeune Musulman*, and went on to serve as a government minister under both Boumediène and Chadli.

¹⁶ The AUMA, long ambivalent towards the aim of full political independence (Brown 1964) formally aligned itself with the FLN only in 1956, and was absorbed into it a year later.

Vandal and Byzantine successors, took their destiny into their own hands and retained permanent control of it until the modern French colonial period.¹⁷

What Colonna calls the ‘totalitarian cognitive structure’ prepared by *islah* can therefore also be said to apply to history-making as a narrative enterprise in Algeria. Group histories, including the Arabo-Islamic narrative that currently dominates state nationalism, are legitimate only if watertight: if, in other words, they eliminate anomalies and historical deviations from the supposed continuity and coherence of the group narrative in question, evolving, in the words of Mostefa Lacheraf, ‘without lapses or fallow periods’.¹⁸ This type of idealized historical narrative must unfold in organized and progressive chronological ‘phases’, each clearly delimited and moving logically towards an end point in order to exist as a public – and specifically national – good.

This concern with unity in the telling, however, was not merely a contingent result of Islamic reformism or the liberation struggle; there are various more wide-ranging explanations for its importance. One is that of the Islamic principle of *tawhid* (unity, the oneness of God) and revealed knowledge, which in dominant Salafi interpretations implies literalism in the interpretation of the Qur’an, the *sunna* and the *hadith* (the acts and sayings of the Prophet). According to Joffé (1997: 141), the recurring theme of a return to ancestral purity in Islamic responses to Western modernism – not least in the very name of the *Salafiyya* movement, with its reference to the *salaf al-salih* or pious ancestors – betrays a broader epistemological principle inherent in Islamic philosophy. This is that if truth is considered absolute and revealed, then any divergence from it can only be explained as a digression that must be reversed by the ‘attempt to restate its basic elements, after an intense self-examination designed to purify itself of aberration

¹⁷ *El-Moudjahid*, 17, 1 February 1958.

¹⁸ Preface to Zamoum 1996: 17.

and distortion'. If we accept the deep influence of *islah* ideology on state nationalism (Christelow 1987), it will come as no surprise that this concern with writing out anomalies extends to history-making.

Another explanation is that of postcolonialism as a Fanonian paradigm of 'total reversal',¹⁹ in which not only the material but also the symbolic power structures of imperialism – including historical narrative – must be turned upside down in order to achieve true independence. Hence the fixation on creating a uniform cultural identity to reverse French influence. Ironically, this was a paradigm born in part of French historiography, and particularly the narration of 1789 as an absolute confrontation between two opposed moral and political systems (republicanism and monarchism).²⁰ During the liberation struggle, indeed, FLN ideologues did not shy away from making explicit the comparison between the two revolutions as total reversal:

What Algeria needs now is Revolution, a great Revolution, like that of 1789. The Algerian people, united around the FLN, is making this Revolution ... But it will cease only when the European in Algeria opens his eyes to a new world and accepts the principle of the equality of men.²¹ [Note the turning of the French republican principle of equality against colonial power]

A more circumstantial view is that the regime became increasingly aggressive in its quest for historical legitimacy during the 1970s, and above all under the presidency of Chadli Benjedid (1979–92) in response to a legitimacy deficit. Marnia Lazreg (2000), for instance, argues that the first twenty-five years after Algerian independence were

¹⁹ Cf. Fanon 2002 [1961]: 'the nature of colonialism is to impose dichotomy on the world. Decolonization reunites this world by destroying its Manichaean structures in one radical decision, by unifying it on the basis of the nation or, sometimes, that of ethnicity ... colonialism is not a system of thought nor a body imbued with reason. It is violence in its primitive state and cannot give way except to an even greater violence.'

²⁰ Exploring this parallel is beyond the scope of my study; for discussions of the conflict of 'political cultures' in post-revolutionary France and their ongoing relevance today see Ozouf 1991; Gildea 1994; Kedward 2006.

²¹ *Résistance algérienne*, 31, 20–31 May 1957. The journal, edited from Tetouan in Morocco from 1955, was the first mouthpiece of the FLN; *El-Moudjahid*, founded in 1956, was an initiative of Abane Ramdane intended to reflect the fact that the FLN was not entirely univocal.

marked by increasing state intervention in the national economy to save flagging business, which – exacerbated by the dramatic drop in oil prices in 1985–6 – led to an inability to guarantee loyalty by providing materially for its citizens through welfare and employment, and thence to a loss of legitimacy.²² In such contexts, the state may then attempt to compensate for this deficit by intensifying its appeal to cultural identities, ‘residues of tradition’ and historical legitimacy, dangerously amplifying the potential for overinvested historical narratives to fuel further antagonism between groups competing for control of the state apparatus and popular loyalty. Roberts (2003: 139) similarly argues that the intensification of the debate on historical identity and culture during the Chadli years was a deliberate ‘diversion from the regime’s mishandling of the social and economic question’.

A final, related theory also propounded by Hugh Roberts is that it is a dearth of political ideology itself (in the sense of social conceptions of the polity) that has led to over-reliance on identity narratives in the conduct of the state since Algerian independence. In the hands of the post-war FLN, this ideological ambiguity may have been a deliberate strategy rather than a failing, designed to leave the meaning of the ‘nation’ open to interpretation and thus to attach the widest possible range of loyalties to a vaguely defined entity. But as Roberts discusses, rural Algerian political structures such as the village *jemea* and the tribal confederation of the *aerc* operate in a broader sense (and this may indeed be the origin of the FLN’s tactic) on an agenda of policy as problem-resolution rather than ideological debate; and where problems cannot be resolved by the members of a given political structure, what remains is therefore a set of conflicting, irreconcilable, cultural narratives (see Chapter 2). Thus, Roberts (2003: 53)

²² Se Pierre and Quandt 1995 for a detailed analysis of this process in Algeria.

argues, even movements which may appear to be based on a political ideology – Ba‘athism or Nasserism or, for instance – have in Algeria expressed ‘opposed *cultural* orientations, because of the mutually exclusive conceptions of the state which they have implied’; hence the need for aggressive coherence in their self-representation.

In the nationalist field, this has a consequence that we shall now see running through uses of the past to support Kabyle claims to rights within the Algerian state. Given ‘the impossibility of thinking cultural personality outside the political idiom’ (Colonna 2003), historical narratives also become highly politicized, and the result is a series of ‘clashing monologues’, each of which aims to attract a loyalty constituency through claims to nationalist legitimacy. As McDougall (2006) describes in detail, this process makes of the nation a conceptual battlefield, with each group attempting to depict its particular vision as the natural basis for a unified nationalism:

‘The nation’ is a contested space, a terrain of conflict between competing claims for hegemony. The resources of meaning-creation are not equally distributed – each would-be spokesman seeks to shape the world through a particular ‘legitimate language’, a particular order of words. The emancipatory name is formed and expressed in, and bound around with, very specific forms of language, words seeking to structure the world, to imagine community, past and present, in a specific programmatic way. Such language cannot be equally articulated by everyone. If it frames and enables a new way of acting in and on the world, it also imposes forms and frameworks that define and limit the meanings of ‘self’ in new ways. (McDougall 2006a: 226–7)

Let us look now at how Kabyle discourses of history have operated in this contested field.

Kabyle historical talk

The Kabyle cause as recounted by the vernacular narrative of identity seeks fairer treatment and recognition within the Algerian nation-state; it stresses the importance of Kabyle *mujahidin*, FLN ideologues and intellectuals in creating post-independence Algeria,²³ and by extension the right of Kabyles today to define Algerian national identity. It is not a separatist or radical autonomist cause, but a campaign to change the political and social order of the nation-state born of the war of liberation. As such, it contests the unitary Arabo-Islamist narrative of national identity, but embraces a nationalist historical consensus founded on the war of independence as foundational story and martyrdom as the highest mark of legitimacy.²⁴ It also vigorously asserts the importance of Kabylia (or, when that is impossible, other Berber regions)²⁵ in producing the constitutive moments and figures of the independence struggle.

The claim that Kabylia, or Berber Algeria more broadly, has been excluded from the gains of national liberation finds expression in the notion (always articulated in French) of the so-called *déni d'histoire*. This is the idea that Berber history exists as a coherent counter-narrative to official state history, but has been 'buried' by a hegemonic narrative of Arabo-Islamist national identity propounded in state education and linguistic policy. It is telling that activists also speak of the *déni d'histoire* interchangeably as the *déni de culture* or the *déni d'identité*. Without a recognized

²³ See for instance Zamoum 1996, Mehenni 2004 and Sadi 2010 for activist accounts of the role of Kabyle *mujahidin*. Abane Ramdane, whom many dub the 'architect of the revolution' in reference to his role in the Congress of the Soummam in 1956, is the figure most commonly named as evidence for the importance of Kabyles in the political leadership of the FLN.

²⁴ For analysis of concepts of martyrdom in Algeria see Martinez 2004; McDougall 2006b; Miller 2007.

²⁵ Hence for instance some Kabyles refer to the 1 November 1954 attacks in the Aurès (among other places) as evidence for the pioneering 'Berber' role in the revolution.

narrative of history, this suggests, a group is also stripped of two attributes usually mentioned in complement to the word ‘national’: culture and identity. A requirement for valid national history therefore becomes the ‘recovery’ of a precedent for national unity: a demonstration that a particular narrative of history represents the precursor to modern Algerian values in a way superior to those offered by rival narratives. History, in other words, is rarely divorced from political or cultural partisanship.

This perception of history as a narrative that brings ‘culture’ into existence is a mainstay of nationalist ideologies (Anderson 1983; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Smith 1999). It is especially prominent, however, in postcolonial states that seek to construct national modernity around the symbolic capital of textual knowledge and to create a centralized, unitary identity based on language (Goody 1986). Here, the legitimacy of national history as an idea becomes especially dependent on its form: on textual codification often drawing legitimacy from the scriptural origins of the newly instated national language, creating what Shryock (1997: 5) concisely calls a link between “‘externality”, “textuality” and “truth””.

In line with this analysis, it was a recurring theme in my interviews that Berberist representations of the past could constitute history only if they adopted an archaeological approach, recovering a forgotten identity or culture through written artefacts. This aspect of the vernacular narrative rests on claims that maraboutic families and the archives of *zawaya* have, since long before Algerian independence, conspired to make the written sources for this Berber history unavailable to Kabyles (Scheele 2009). There are two stages to the argument: firstly, that there is a coherent narrative of Berber history and culture in Algeria, distinct from the story of Arabo-Islamist nationalism as

promoted by the state; and secondly, the assertion that sources for reconstructing this history exist – somewhere, and even if in fragments – in textual form. Many Kabyles today therefore advocate the production of written Berber history to ‘reinstate’ the past and remedy the *déni d’histoire*.

The notion of a concealed historical text is pragmatic as well as emotive: it explains the underrepresentation of Berber history by the alleged concealment of textual sources, rather than a failure to write this history. Other responses to the question – the institutional constraints of university education in Algeria (Colonna 2003), Kabyle factionalism and links between party politics and scholarship – are less palatable, and less powerful emotionally. The claim that written history has been ‘captured’ or stolen is therefore key to maintaining the story of the buried past as the latent basis for a future Kabyle breakthrough. This also means that the recent past must be disqualified from the enterprise, making the texts produced by several scholars and activists on the so-called ‘Berberist’ cause insufficient to remedy the *déni d’histoire*:

When we say history’s hidden, we don’t mean the last few decades – that’s not history! It’s just what we’ve lived through, either directly or through what’s passed down to us from our parents.

What we mean is the real History of the Berbers, the one that no one remembers and has never been properly written – of Kahina and Massinissa [ancient Berber war heroes popularized as icons of the identity cause], the Numidian kingdom, the coming of the marabouts, the way Kabyles resisted successive colonizations. Eventually this should be written in Tamazight, but that will be later on, once the language is more fixed: more people will understand if it’s in French for now. This is what you should be researching and making people aware of. (Tassadit)

What, then, is declared missing from Berber history? The *déni d’histoire* claims that it is not knowledge of the past as a sequence of events that is missing, but the material artefacts of national modernity, expressed in written form and in a standardized, recognized language. Above all, it is the past understood as a coherent story of identity

consonant with the requirements of nationalist legitimacy today. Kabyles who identify this type of history-making as a possible source of increased legitimacy within the nation-state are perhaps confusing cause with effect. Nationalist history by and large serves to legitimate already existing power relations; rarely does it attract new recognition to a subordinate group. By this token, talk of ‘recovering’ the Berber past as a prerequisite for political recognition is perhaps falsely premised, and indeed, some have suggested that the *déni d’histoire* is merely a symbolic expression of fundamentally material grievances about Arabist hegemony in the state and military apparatus, resource capture, and the marginalization of Kabylia in national wealth distribution.

What written history often does achieve, on the other hand, is a shift in loyalties between rival contenders for political legitimacy within the Kabyle cause, whose ability to translate regional values into a viable ‘nationalist’ creed is a key gauge of legitimacy. This is especially important for the leaders of the three political movements whose base is almost exclusively in Kabylia and the Kabyle diaspora: the FFS, RCD and MAK.²⁶

Each of their leaders has produced a monograph, and the difference in format and focus between them is telling. Hocine Aït Ahmed, one of the nine historic chiefs of the FLN during the war of independence and subsequently the leader of the dissident FFS party, published his historical work as a personal testimony laying claim to the war’s legacy, the *Mémoires d’un combattant : l’esprit d’indépendance* (1983). Saïd Sadi, the leader of the RCD which finds its main electoral base among middle-class, educated

²⁶ Since they are constituted as political parties, the FFS and RCD are of constitutional necessity national, in name at least. The MAK, meanwhile, is explicitly a ‘movement’ rather than a national party, yet even the most ardent MAK activists appear to advocate partial Kabyle autonomy as a bridgehead for their ideas about Algerian identity, rather than as a separatist solution.

(and often diaspora) Kabyles, published a historical biography of the legendary *mujahid* Amirouche in 2010. Sadi's focus was on claiming Kabyle inheritance of the nationalist war legacy and attempting to present the account as a national story with local players, as witnessed in the book's subtitle: *Une histoire algérienne*. The self-proclaimed head of the MAK, former political singer Ferhat Mehenni, meanwhile, came down hard on the other side of the national–regional dilemma with his 2004 monograph *L'Algérie : la question kabyle*. The treatise recycled several colonial stereotypes of regional exceptionalism to argue for Kabylia's right to 'choose its own destiny', and claimed the author's rightful place as its figurehead on the grounds of his father's role in the war of independence:

Chance dictated that it was the child of a martyr like me who took responsibility for this choice [to initiate an autonomist movement] and breathed new life into it, far from the blind alleys taken until now in Kabylia. Perhaps it would have been difficult for anyone but a martyr's son to claim a unique destiny for the region. It would surely not be totally legitimate for the advocates of a strict nationalism. (Mehenni 2004: 31)

Let us now look in more detail at one of these instances of Kabyle political use of textual history to bolster leaders' legitimacy as national representatives.

Uses of the past (a): alternative 'history' in the service of party politics

Saïd Sadi's biography of Amirouche exemplifies both some recurring habits of Algerian historiography and how internal politics can shape its presentation. The book appeared almost simultaneously with Ferhat Mehenni's declaration of the GPK, the proposed exile government constituted by members of the MAK resident both in Algeria and, predominantly, the European and North American diaspora. Ferhat's

initiative, though it has since appeared more or less inactive, was at the outset a grandiose affair. There was a lavish opening ceremony held on 1 June 2010 at Paris' Palais des Congrès, with a newly composed 'national anthem' performed by iconic figures of Kabyle 'New Song' (see Chapter 5), investment of a new 'cabinet of ministers', and all surrounded by extensive conspiracy theorizing about the funding of the new initiative.²⁷

Several of the GPK ministers were splinter RCD supporters, and Sadi's presentations of his book therefore took place in explicit antagonism to the initiative. The RCD frequently promotes itself as the party of the educated Kabyle 'middle class', and particularly that of the diaspora, and Sadi's presentation clearly sought to reinforce this image. The three book launches that I attended were explicitly structured as academic occasions, with Sadi and a discussant at a conference table, questions from the floor following the presentation, and prominent French anthropologists and historians of Kabylia conspicuously positioned at the front of the audience. The discussants' introductions reiterated the 'long years of research' undertaken by Sadi, his 'deep scholarly and personal involvement' with his subject, and his (nonetheless) fervent commitment to 'academic objectivity'. Where the GPK had staged its ceremony at a large hired venue, Sadi's main book launch took place at the headquarters of the French Communist Party, and his public relations work in the run-up to the book's publication included interviews on France Culture, France Inter and other national television and radio stations. In this way, Sadi staged his own status as an 'intellectual politician' in

²⁷ Most of this focused on the widespread rumour that the GPK had benefited from substantial Israeli state funding; in May 2012 Mehenni visited Israel, where he was received with some ceremony by MK Danny Danon (Likud) and other government representatives, and declared that 'the Kabyles have always had sympathy for Israel. During the War of 1967, Kabylia applauded the defeat of the Arabs.' He also took the opportunity to export several commonplaces in support of the solidarity agenda: the image of Kabylia as the 'Switzerland of Algeria', Kabylia's adoption of liberal French values, the (supposed) non-veiling of women, and so on.

implicit contrast with the theatrical style adopted by Ferhat, a singer turned politician; and he took care to position himself as the privileged interlocutor of a Kabylophile French cultural elite, while depicting Ferhat's initiative, in barely euphemistic remarks during the launch discussion, as pertinent only to a negligible and unrealistic group of insular Kabyles.

In his book, Sadi makes the figure of Amirouche an embodiment of everything Algeria might have been after independence, had it not been prevented by the historical 'burials' effected by the state apparatus in order to delegitimize rival claims to power. These metaphorical burials are made material by a real one, the subject of Sadi's book: the clandestine unearthing and sequestration of the remains of Amirouche and the *maquisard* killed with him, Colonel Haoues, allegedly carried out by the 'Boussouf-Boumediène clan' two years after independence. Sadi calls this an 'abomination [which is] both the symptom and illness that eat away at a country in which the confiscation and the falsification of the war of liberation have taken on the role of historical reckoning and political project'. The sequestration of Amirouche's remains thus acts as a metaphor for what Sadi repeatedly terms the 'confiscation and falsification of History'.

Amirouche himself, meanwhile, is depicted as being everything that Algeria longed for but has never seen since. Firstly, he is (supposedly) a Great Man in instinctive tune with the true course of a Marxist brand of teleological history:

The hero, driven by a highly personal impulse, puts his fervour and talent in the service of a cause that he confuses with his destiny. In a quasi-mystical relationship with the march of History, he never doubts the essential and therefore allows himself no pragmatic calculations. History, in this area, has often belied the saying that a hero never dies ... (Sadi 2010: 27)

Note the terminology of authenticity, indubitable certainty, a path already defined: a quasi-mystical destiny that never swerves from the essential course. This sense of a determined coherent narrative is the essence of the *déni d'histoire*. Next, Sadi represents Amirouche as the antithesis of the *Pouvoir*-based mode of politics (see Chapter 2) on which Algeria has subsisted since independence:

Post-independence Algeria, which has had so many men of power, has – with the exception of Boudiaf's brief return – never had a true Statesman. The former are obsessed with control and maintaining the apparatus of army, police, single party, clientele ... The latter work towards implementing the developments that emancipate society: education, justice, health, women's rights, the place of religion in public life, and so on. It should become very clear to which group Amirouche belongs. (*Ibid.*)

Amirouche as depicted by Sadi has everything that a modern state needs: leadership, heroism, progressivism and interest in constructive politics – again a result of his 'quasi-mystical relationship with the march of History'. It should not be forgotten here that Sadi is at the head of a party that has long promoted French-influenced, republicanist ideals of democracy and secularism; his evocation of the post-independence history that Algeria should have enjoyed if put in the hands of (Kabyle) statesmen like Amirouche – education, women's rights, democracy and so on – is thus also a statement of his own political credo, or in any case the values he claims to promote. The idea of history thus takes on strong connotations of morality and truth. Playing games with the past is correspondingly an 'original sin' that is bound to give rise to other forms of dishonesty:

When power abuses and falsifies its symbolic heritage in order to confer legitimacy upon itself, it has deliberately and irrevocably made a decision for the worst. Political assassinations, electoral fraud and the embezzlement of national resources betray, in the etymological sense of the term, an original sin that only a change on the same scale as the abomination could put right. (*Ibid.*: 16–17)

The biography, clearly, is fertile ground for some highly didactic contemporary political commentary and pedagogic history in Algeria. This is also frequently the case in war memoirs of former *mujahidin*, which tend to focus on demonstrating how the truth of the witness's testimony in some way 'recovers the past'. Words devoted to this didactic strain of the biography, indeed, often match or outweigh factual testimony. In his preface to the Kabyle *maquisard* Ali Zamoum's memoirs, for instance, Mostefa Lacheraf writes the following:²⁸

[This book] truly honours the recent history of our country ... without wishing to judge other memoirs of this sort or suspect their authors' honesty, I can say that the present work stands out from the field by virtue of the sincerity and total lack of artifice or evasion on the part of the witness ... We might say that Zamoum is sincerity made man ... [His story] miraculously restores to us a country whose *algérianité* we have despaired of finding again since losing it in 1962. (Zamoum 1996: 9–10)

In both of these examples, we see how the notion of the hero whose life reflects History (with a capital H), and whose morals embody the national ideal, allies with the teleological current discussed above, which insists on history as an ordered, evolving story matching the purportedly coherent path of national development:

In this type of historical account, we find facts and acts all linked to each other and which in their overall movement have a rare coherence and homogeneity, both by virtue of their ideal chronology and their highly significant national meaning ... We see ... an ideal sequence of phases, each with a start and an end, in an unbroken path without lapses or dead periods, if we consider that the dialectic of Liberation had to be made up of ... many such 'moments'. (*Ibid.*: 16–17)

After this brief overview of how Kabyle party politicians and *intellectuels engagés* have espoused a conception of history as a didactic, teleological narrative in order to argue for Kabyle rights to the legacy of nationalism, we need to look at the other face of

²⁸ See Colonna 2003 for a summary of Lacheraf's positions; though not Kabyle himself, he is widely praised in the region, not specifically for furthering the interests of Tamazight, but for his role in halting Arabization policies in favour of Arabic–French bilingualism during his tenure as Minister for National Education (1977–9).

activist conceptions. This is an alternative view of the past as ahistorical ‘tradition’, an attempt to distinguish Kabyle nationalism less as a radically different ideology from state-led discourse than as a strain of nationalism carried and transmitted by different, more ‘rooted’ or local forms of knowledge.

B) RESISTANCE: VÖLKISCH HISTORY AND GOLDEN AGE NARRATIVES

As a claimant to legitimacy in Algeria as an institutionalized nation-state, the Kabyle cause cannot afford to ignore the legitimacy attached to literacy and the written word, which on the one hand suggests a parallel course for Kabyle activism as the constitution of a ‘collective personality’ through the elaboration of a corpus of privileged knowledge – cultural, linguistic and historical – to rival the Arabo-Islamist narrative. This is what we have been looking at so far. On the other hand, however, the vernacular narrative defends exceptionalism and an ideal of autonomy from a hegemonic state by promoting local concepts such as oral tradition and tribal identity as the basis for legitimacy. It attempts to demonstrate that these are grounded in indigenous ‘tradition’ rather than fabricated national identity, and in the wisdom of experience rather than institutionalized learning.

Alongside calls for the creation of a Berber canon, there was therefore another reaction to the perceived attempt to impose culture ‘from above’ after independence. The nationalist focus on official knowledge and marginalization of minority groups gave rise to a widespread feeling that the appropriate response was to fight on the front not of a parallel canon of ‘official’ Kabyle (textual/historical) knowledge, but rather by attempting to present a timeless vision of ‘folk culture’ as an alternative weapon of

activism. Poets and exponents of New Kabyle Song (see Chapter 5), above all Idir, were especially active in collecting folk songs in order to revive local traditions as the basis for regional identity (Goodman 2005), while linguistic activists set about transcribing Kabyle proverbs, folk tales and oral poetry (Taos Amrouche 1966; Mammeri 1980; Ould-Braham 1989).²⁹

This strain of the Kabyle cause has taken shape above all around a canon of imagery evoking a prelapsarian period known as *zik*, or ‘before’. The symbolism of *zik* revolves around traditional activities, often associated with women: weaving, rolling couscous, butter churning, olive harvesting, fetching water. It also frequently evokes the ideal of the supposed ‘European’ or Aryan genealogy of Kabylia through images of fair-skinned, blue-eyed women.³⁰ Both of these symbol sets evoke resolutely traditionalist imagery in the service of a counternarrative of loss and deviation, juxtaposing ‘golden age’ symbols with images of hybridization and corruption of Berber ‘authenticity’ today.

The concern with deviation and attenuation of an authentic identity ascribed to a civilizational golden age is also a feature that has defined successive incarnations of Algerian nationalism. Nationalist history-making in Algeria, whether in reformist, wartime FLN or post-independence elite hands, has relied heavily on casting the present as a revival of past Arab grandeur.³¹ As Lazreg (2000) points out, the ‘mythical

²⁹ See Yacine 2011 for full discussion of this facet of Kabyle activism since independence, which built on a French scholarly tradition of searching for the ‘essence’ of Kabylia in the ‘unsaid’ of its oral forms: most famously Bourdieu 1977, see also Genevois 1962.

³⁰ A frequent explanation given for this common Kabyle belief in European genealogical heritage is a contention that the region witnessed significant intermixing between indigenous women and Vandal men during and after the fifth-century AD invasion of North Africa, as well as earlier Roman encounters.

³¹ See for instance ‘Résurrection nationale et révolution démocratique’, *El-Moudjahid*, 17 (1 February 1959): ‘Like most Muslim nations, Algeria wrote the most glorious pages of its history in the centuries when Islamic civilization was at its zenith. It is these eras of construction and progress – during which

primordial era' and relentless depictions of the present as a continuation of the past are characteristic not only of the Arabo-Muslim narrative but of all aspiring nationalist stories in Algeria. As the legitimacy deficit and the Islamist challenge caught up with the Chadli regime in the 1980s, these emotive historicist arguments took on increasing power, and were invoked with particular fervour by various Salafi groups to found their claims to legitimacy.³²

Again, even if we subscribe to the view that postcoloniality accentuates the need for an invented past, this is of course a far broader nationalist habit. Attenuation narratives used in the service of nationalism, and often associated with a project of codifying national identity by 'reviving' lost folk culture, have a long history outside Algeria. We need to examine this briefly before moving on to examples of how Kabyle activists fuse the registers of 'official' and vernacular history.

Folklore and nation

Since the advent of the Westphalian system in 1648, nation-builders in Europe and elsewhere have struggled to resolve the anomaly of what Anderson (1983) famously articulated as the 'imagined communities' problem, or the fact that states have nothing to justify their claim to the people's loyalty – and must therefore invent a nation. The Romantic nationalist concept of *völkisch* culture, first elaborated by Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), has provided a powerful reference for portrayals of the nation as a

Algerian national personality took shape around well defined cultural and spiritual values – that imperialism refuses to recognize and relegates to oblivion.'

³² See also the discussion in Roberts 2003 of how the foundation of the FIS as a political party involved 'posturing as the lineal successor and rightful heir (son, *fiils*, FIS) of the historic FLN of 1954–62'.

unified people, rooted in a particular place, and therefore sharing particular customs and ways of living. The Herderian concept of the *Volk*, as a putative ‘natural society’ that exhibits unconscious feelings of belonging in a certain place, lends a more tangible quality to the abstraction of national community. Under bourgeois regimes and amid industrialization and urbanization, this produced a nationalist paradox: those depicted as the guardians of ‘authentic’ national spirit were, by definition, those not in power.

In Europe, notions of folklore developed alongside nation-building processes, reaching their zenith by the mid-nineteenth century (Porter and Teich 1988). As rulers attempted to consolidate both territorial borders and groups of loyal subjects, they needed to depict the nation as a natural unit. One such way of doing this was through narratives of shared origins, constitutive moments, sacrifices and heroes: national history validating the natural bonds of achievement and suffering between members of a given group. Another way was by depicting natural territorial unity evidenced by human practice – language, custom or tradition. For this to work, something more mystical than mere ethnographic observation of shared practices was needed. The national community must be bonded not by chance habits but by something more determined and innate. There must be a naturalized connection, felt rather than understood, between land and belonging. This in turn must be linked in the most natural-seeming way possible to constructed stories of the shared past.

The idea of the *Volk* sacralized the connection between genealogical origins, territory and the customs of those rural ‘folk’ whose perceived simplicity was taken as evidence of their ‘rooting’ in the land. The term *völkisch* in this definition means ‘rooted in a certain genealogical and geographical origin group’: ‘popular’ not merely because it

happens to be shared, but because it is supposedly innate to a certain group of people attached to a certain place (Wilson 1973). This notion is clearly useful to political projects that seek to naturalize the idea of the nation.³³ Nation-building thus relies on the notion of an unspecified time when the organic forms of cohesion thought to account for folk culture and its transmission were intact: a time when the nation was (supposedly) a ‘community’ in a more purist, face-to-face sense of the term.

Romantic nationalists, following Herder, therefore imagined the types of community that were disappearing amidst industrialization, urbanization and increasing individualism in the nineteenth century to be precisely the communities responsible for folk culture. This reasoning was all the more pertinent to the quest for natural communities in colonial territories (cf. Chapter 1), often therefore described in especially purist terms of authenticity and primordial nature. These were by and large characterized as small units rooted in a clearly defined area, based on face-to-face interaction and oral rather than written transmission. The desire to collect and present folk culture arose in large part from a fear that industrialization and the bureaucratic nation-state would destroy rather than create a sense of belonging; and as a bulwark against this ‘under conditions that called for revitalization, folkways would be available that could provide a perspective from which to recognize and expunge the contaminations of over-civilization’ (Abrahams 1993: 10).³⁴

³³ See Kaufmann and Zimmer 1998 for an interesting discussion of the role of landscape in *völkisch* theories of the nation as a natural unit.

³⁴ This was not a nineteenth-century innovation: masques and courtly entertainments depicting peasants and shepherds as carriers of embodied native wisdom were in high fashion throughout Europe in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It was under bourgeois rule and the formation of the Western European nation-state in the nineteenth century, however, that this attitude to rural ‘simplicity’ was schematized as the notion of a popular counterfoil to national character: the *Volk*, whose local diversity of custom was belied by its mystical unification of language and supposed genealogical origin.

For this to hold true, it is strictly necessary for things *völkisch* to be once existent and now (almost) lost; the attenuation element of folklore, indeed, is a *sine qua non* of its use for political purposes. In the hands of both nationalists and folklorists, notions of *völkisch* culture therefore tend to go hand in hand with stories of a fast-retreating past constantly on the brink of disappearance, and the need to salvage remnants of it from the ravages of time and ‘modernity’ (Glasser 2008). Indeed, this notion of folk or popular culture was first articulated in several European languages in explicit connection with things archaic. French had its *antiquités populaires*, and when William Thoms coined the English term ‘folklore’ as an Anglicized alternative in mid-nineteenth century it was with a call to collect and record ‘the manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs, &c of the olden times ... of the British Isles’ (Thoms 1846: 862). This serves the emotive need for a not-quite-accessible past, and an imperative of protecting it, to provide national mystique.

The fascination with romanticized notions of orality and non-bureaucratic societies as an alternative to the industrializing world, and the need to ‘save’ their vestiges, also became the seedbed for the growth of nineteenth-century sociology, anthropology and folkloristics, which as we have seen extensively informed scholarship on Kabylia and have left remarkably tenacious vestiges.³⁵ The relevance of these disciplines to nation-building processes lies in the fluid conception of the ‘nation’ in the Romantic nationalist conception. As Dick (1989: 18–19) observes in his discussion of Herder:

Volk can stand for a number of meanings ... the people as nation (L. *populus*, *natio*) ... the people belonging to a historical subdivision of a nation, or to a tribal society (L. *gens*, G. *Stamm*); and ... the people of the lower classes, the governed class, the uneducated, who,

³⁵ With the advent of these disciplines, and later that of oral history, arguably came the extension of the folk category to figures marginalized in the nation-state: religious or ethnic minorities, nomadic or journeying people, exiles and refugees, migrants, and eventually other minorities (sexual, gender, class, political and so on).

depending on the point of view, may be regarded as the common people (L. *vulgus*) or as rabble (L. *plebs*).

This ambiguity was particularly useful for colonial ethnic classification in conquered territories, where, as we saw in Chapter 1, it could be used to idealize groups as ‘primitive communities’ while maintaining the possibility that they might eventually become ‘national’ in association with a state. In a similar way, the concept of *patrie*,³⁶ or *tamurt* in Taqbaylit, leaves open an ambiguity that serves the purposes of subnational resistance groups attempting to legitimate a ‘popular’ cultural sphere as an alternative to a unitary, centralized conception of national identity.

In Algeria, though the new nationalist regime after the war of independence quickly associated studies of folklore and customs on the periphery with the ‘Berber preference’ of French rule (Colonna 2003), it also joined in the revival of ‘folk’ art and indigenous traditions promoted by pan-African and ‘Third Worldist’ propaganda as embodying national soul, and hosted the first Pan-African Festival, which was held in Algiers in 1969 (Goodman 2002). Yet official representations in Algeria presented Berber folklore not as a rediscovered national essence (the post occupied by the Arabic language and Salafi Islam) but rather as evidence of a surviving but now marginal ‘ancient’ tradition, proof that colonialism had not penetrated Algeria completely in cultural terms but largely irrelevant to the project of building the modern nation-state.

The history of folk culture and its use for nationalist projects, then, has a paradoxical role in Kabyle activism. French colonial ideology had depicted Kabyles as closer to ‘nationhood’ than other Algerian groups largely by presenting their culture in a

³⁶ This is a well-known stumbling block for translators of Machiavelli (‘amo patria mia piu’ dell’anima’) and the city-state philosophers into English, which has no similarly blurred equivalent.

Romantic nationalist vein as the embodiment of indigenous authenticity. The post-independence Algerian regime reacted by marginalizing the place of indigenous Kabyle culture as a component part of the modern Algerian nation-state, branding folk culture as anti-modern and promoting in its place the ideal of an urban, literate national identity. The imagery of folklore pervades activists' representations of Kabylia, yet many condemn the treatment of Kabyle or Berber folk culture in dominant discourse as a weapon of exclusion, relegating Berbers to the status of a 'museum culture' rather than accepting them as valid participants in the modern nation-state. The supposed distinctiveness and exceptional characteristics that made Kabyles attractive as 'native exotics' to French colonial ethnographers, they say, have become a weapon in the hands of the Arabo-Islamic state to dismiss them as outdated survivals of an artificially contrived 'folk' tradition.

This is the problem that Gellner (1964: 168) described as the 'inverse reality between the ideology and the reality of nationalism. The self-image of nationalism involves the stress of folk, folklore, popular culture etc. In fact, nationalism becomes important precisely when these things become artificial. Genuine peasants or tribesmen ... do not generally make good nationalists.' Advocates of the vernacular narrative, in short, attempt to be both at once: to represent the 'natural society' that underlies the notion of *völkisch* culture, but at the same time to claim their status as the rightful nationalists of modern Algeria.

They do so by attempting to invest the register of prelapsarianism, tradition, timeless existence with newly modern values. In the next section, I examine how two models of supposed unity – either Berber in the narrative of Numidia as a pre-Islamic golden age,

or specifically Kabyle in the use of tribalism as a model for the Mouvement citoyen des Aarchs in 2001 – have served as sites for the elaboration of an alternative Kabyle nationalism founded on the demonstration of the region's past embodiment of 'national' principles.

Uses of the past (b): the ideal of a pre-Islamic Berber identity

Kabyle golden age narratives depict a Berber cultural purity before the Arab invasion and the spread of Islam, and associate this with a diffuse idea of timeless purity in a period, or state of affairs, referred to as *zik*. Strictly understood, the word means simply 'before'; used as part of the attenuation narrative, however, it has strong normative connotations of a time when an imagined authenticity was closer to its origins. The term is often used as shorthand for what is understood as purely indigenous and undiluted by foreign influence, as in the frequent use of the phrase *zik n tura* ('then and now') to punctuate narratives of 'tradition and modernity', both by Kabyles themselves and interested scholars (notably Bourdieu 1977). While this imagery of an archaic pre-colonial Kabylia is effective in creating a sense of belonging, it arguably isolates the cause further from state-led discourses by appearing to make Berber identity representative of a changeless, ahistorical past.³⁷

Perhaps the most powerful referent for this conception of pre-Islamic North Africa is the label 'Numidia'. It refers to the Numidian Kingdom of early antiquity (c. 200–46 BC), which at its height under Massinissa (c. 240–148 BC), one of two Numidian kings

³⁷ As extensively documented by Silverstein (2004), activists attempt to counter this outcome by asserting that the 'permanent' features of Berber identity have always in fact been 'modernist', juxtaposing images of tradition with official narratives of democracy and secularism as innate traits.

respectively controlling the tribal groups of the Massylii and Masaesyli (Ruedy 2005: 10), covered large parts of what are now Algeria and western Tunisia. The Numidian precedent is attractive to the contemporary Kabyle vernacular narrative for several reasons. It is the last instance before the Arab conquest of an influential and large-scale political unit under Berber leadership; and one which both co-operated in Roman military exploits under Massinissa and later resisted them under his grandson Jugurtha (c. 160–104 BC), offering a real comparison for the proposed place of Berber North Africa today as a frontier between ‘eastern’ and ‘western’ powers, and a prototype (Jugurtha’s eventual defeat notwithstanding) of Berber ‘resistance’.

The second reason for contemporary activist attraction to Numidia arises in large part from descriptions of the kingdom in classical texts, revived in French colonial-period texts through which Berber scholars gained access to them (Ghambou 2010). In texts by authors including Herodotus, Strabo, Polybius, Livy and Pliny, the Numidian kingdom is discussed as a prosperous agricultural area made viable by the sedentarization of originally nomadic peoples (see Ghambou 2010 for the likely fallacies of this view), a land of productivity and industry before the supposed desertification of the centuries after the Arab conquest. This upholds the view also revived in support of the Kabyle Myth by French colonial ideology, that of sedentary agriculture as not only economically superior but also more conducive to the development of stable political structures (see Chapter 1).³⁸

Indirectly, Numidia therefore provides a useful comparison for contemporary Kabyle narratives of economic and political ‘modernity’, and the portrayal of Arabo-Islamic

³⁸ But see Ghambou 2010 for the ambiguities of this nomad–sedentary distinction in classical works.

rule as a destructive force. Poems, song texts and fictional narratives produced by activist artists today frequently depict Numidia and its heroes as the figurative ‘ancestors’ of a historical genealogy subsequently ‘polluted’ by Arab invasion. The activist writer Ameziane Kezzar, based in Paris, has produced several allegorical texts on Numidia and the ‘capture’ of its memory by Arabization. *La fuite en avant*, a French-language play Kezzar published in 2001, presents under the title ‘Le retour d’un ancêtre’ a dream-sequence encounter between Akli, a modern-day Kabyle lost in the desert, and the revenant spirit of the Numidian king Jugurtha:

Jugurtha: And who, pray, are you?

Akli: Survivors. We survived the Roman, Arab, Turkish and French raids.

J: What do you live on?

A: On hope!

J: I have returned to free my people.

A: Stay back! Your people deny you. Their memory has been captured.

J: What has become of my people?

A: Uprooted!

J: And the children of Bocchus?³⁹ [ie. Arabs] Are they still alive?

A: They rule over us.

J: Come, let us march on to my kingdom!

A: But everything has changed, even the landscape. History has forgotten you.

The theme of a pure Numidian identity ‘forgotten’ by history and ‘captured’ by foreign invasion is used here to support the idea of a prelapsarian Berber unity, which many activists today use as the basis for a vision of the Algeria that should have emerged from the war of independence (see earlier section on biographies of *shuhada*). Following the passage above in Kezzar’s play, Akli represents this by explaining to the legendary Jugurtha that the destruction wrought by repeated conquest has fractured

³⁹ Refers to two kings of Mauretania (the kingdom situated west of Numidia, in present-day Morocco) a father and son usually known as Bocchus I and Bocchus II. The reference here is to Bocchus I’s betrayal of Jugurtha (his son-in-law), whom he delivered into Roman hands in 106 BC before incorporating part of Numidia into Mauretania. The notion of Arabs as ‘descendants of Bocchus’ also refers to the western kingdom as home to the Mauri, whom Kezzar associates (wrongly, since they were in fact Berber) with the connotation of the later term *maures*, Arab and Muslim inhabitants of the western Maghrib and al-Andalus.

original Numidian unity, leaving Algeria under the descendants of the ‘wrong’ Numidian king:

J: In what language do you speak to each other?

A: The Algerian language: a mixture of Berber, Arabic, Turkish and French. People don’t understand each other anymore. They have been divided into communities that endlessly attack each other.

J: Where are the wheat fields?

A: They were destroyed by the fire of man.

J: Where is the occupier?

A: There is no occupier. They have all left, but they left behind their scourges and guardians to keep them alive.

J: The children of Bocchus?

A: Yes.

Next, having led Jugurtha to Constantine – which Akli has to explain is the ‘Roman name of Cirta’, established as the Numidian capital under Massinissa), it is the turn of modern Algerian religious practice to pass the Numidian test in a comical sequence:

Seeing men on their knees ... on the pavement, Jugurtha frowned:

J: What are these slaves doing?

A: They are praying.

J: Are they sad?

A: No; they are Muslims! ... They came from the East, and brought their practices to us.

J: Like the Romans?

A: Not exactly. Muslims promise us paradise. They say that Allah is with them.

J: Is Allah their military commander?

A: No, their God.

One of the men praying heard Jugurtha’s blasphemous mistake. He threw himself upon Jugurtha, shouting ‘Allah Akbar!’ The warrior defended himself and the Muslim fell to the ground ... Akli was proud:

A: You nearly killed him!

J: I am not a killer. I merely needed to clear him out of my way.

As well as its emotive function as a sphere purged of Arabo-Muslim influence, Kezzar’s allegorical tale demonstrates that the symbolic domain of *zik* also serves a more practical purpose. The vernacular narrative is highly idealized, and many who

espouse it have difficulty reconciling its values with everyday and historical realities: the extensive Arabization and Islamization of Kabyle society, and the discrepancy between a myth of ‘eternal Kabyle resistance’ and the reality of Kabylia’s actual subjection to the modern state. The attenuation narrative of authenticity perverted thus also offers an explanation for current practices that seem to be in conflict with the ideals of prelapsarian Berber personality. In an interview, Kezzar⁴⁰ described this process in his own writing, which he had cultivated in response to what he perceived ‘degeneration of society’ under the influence of Islamism:

I turn to the classical texts because that’s the version I want to show people, what Algeria would have looked like but for Arab power and Islam. I look at the Algeria I left [in the late 1990s] and I feel sick, it’s like a gangland: everything dirty and in a mess, no respect for public places, cigarette butts and piles of rubbish everywhere. Who is responsible for this degeneration? We all know, but we can’t explain how it got as far as this. My lot [generation] who grew up in the civil war have nothing to hope for, this can only get worse, so the only way forward is to dig up our heritage [*creuser notre terroir*] and revive memory of our true history. That’s why I want to translate Homer into Kabyle and I’m interested in Celtic rituals, to show how much more related we are to those traditions than Arabic culture.

Similar arguments are frequently used to defend against accusations of ‘backwardness’ or anti-modernity in present-day Kabyle practices that run counter to the progressive, Europeanist rhetoric of the vernacular narrative. *Zik* is therefore frequently invoked as ‘evidence’ for the liberal nature of indigenous Kabyle tradition stripped of Arabo-Islamic influence. This is a popular defence, for instance, against accusations that the common activist insistence on gender equality is belied by continued constraints on women’s freedom in Kabylia today:

Before Arabization our women were free to go where they wanted; one of the Kabyle war heroes was even a woman!⁴¹ It’s the arrival of Islam and in particular the marabouts that

⁴⁰ Real name retained on respondent’s request.

⁴¹ This refers to the Kahina (Dihya), or ‘priestess-soothsayer’, said to have foreseen Arab victory and led resistance, in the late seventh century AD, to Umayyad incursions from the Arabian Peninsula.

changed all that. If you look at maraboutic families, they still force their women to marry among other maraboutic lineages, often against their will; it's inhuman, and irrelevant to life today. And [in response to another respondent's point that veiling among Kabyle women is increasing today] it's Islamism and the civil war that has put Kabyle women back in the house. Before then [*zik*], they could walk around unaccompanied with no censorship, but now it's not safe. (Hakim)

Zik, then, refers not just to the golden age of Numidia, but by extension to a diffuse notion of imagined cultural purity, reinterpreted by the contemporary vernacular narrative as a signifier of 'modern values' and supposedly extant before an archetypal fragmentation of unity. This imagination of unity followed by fragmentation stretches ad libitum from the seventh-century Arab invasion to the civil war of the 1990s, explaining the present as one phase in a narrative of a perennial alternation of Arab aggression and Berber resistance. This arguably limits the Kabyle cause to a form of historicism in the radical-oppositional vein of 'Amazigh-revivalist' discourse discussed in the Introduction, which arguably does little to advance Berberist claims to represent a modern nationalist alternative in Algeria.

Uses of the past (c): the 'natural region' and tribal identity

Another facet of the attenuation narrative lies in use of *zik* not as a term of Berber claims, but rather as a symbol of specifically Kabyle regional unity predicated on the existence of a 'natural society' defined by geography and political traditions. This device has been used on successive occasions to different political ends. In each case, its exponents invoke the ideal of a previously natural region, later denatured or fractured by colonial and neo-colonial practices, to be restored as the basis of a new vision for

Contemporary activists frequently cite the legend of the Kahina as evidence of 'ancient' Berber traditions of feminine power.

political administration. Here, I examine two such instances: the invocation of the ‘natural’ region to support a party political agenda modelled on (but not explicitly defined as) a federalist structure; and the use of pre-bureaucratic conceptions of Kabylia as structured by precepts of tribal organization to legitimate a recent ‘citizen movement’ formed in response to state mismanagement in the region.

At its Fourth Congress in 2012, the RCD formulated the conception of the ‘Unitary Regionalised State’ (with the French acronym of EUR surely no coincidence) as the keystone of its political programme. The premise was that since independence the state has carved Algerian society up into *wilayat*, or administrative districts, that cut across territories that ‘naturally’ cohere by virtue of social, economic or geographical uniformity:

Produced by geographical, historical, socio-economic or political contingencies, the region [referring to all regions of Algeria, not just Kabylia] is *a space defined by its unity and coherence*. In Algeria, although it has been denied and fought against, the historical, sociological, cultural, economic and even political reality of the region is undeniable. This reality long preceded its juridical institution. Regional administrative services inherited from [French] colonization and the Turkish beylicat, encompassing several *wilayat*, were in several cases maintained after independence. The *wilaya* has proved too small, as highest administrative unit, to manage the territory of Africa’s largest country.⁴² (Emphasis mine, in this and following extracts.)

The programme goes on to argue that if the *wilaya* is too small for purpose, the state is too large; the ‘regional administrative services’ mentioned in the passage above have allegedly become mere puppets of the centre, ‘conceived to entrench state administration at the local level and thus control society’. The programme therefore calls for a partial devolution in which the central government would continue to regulate strictly state affairs (foreign and monetary policy, national defence) while the devolved

⁴² ‘Programme du RCD adopté lors du IVe Congrès’, 13 March 2012, available on the party’s website at <http://www.rcd-algerie.org/> (accessed 15 September 2012).

regional assemblies would legislate on matters of social policy, regional economy and development, education and ‘cultural policy’. In delineating the new regions, meanwhile, the RCD text calls on the November 1954 declaration and the Congress of the Soummam as intermediate sources for the legitimacy of the ‘natural’ region:⁴³

At the historical level, the November 1954 declaration and the Soummam platform represent the most *consensual points of reference* for the Algerian people. The Algeria of November 1954 was divided into five zones which would, following the Congress of the Soummam, become the six historical *wilayat*. This division, which *matched the deep sociological and cultural map of the country*, demonstrated its reliability and aptness throughout the war of national liberation.⁴⁴

At several points, the programme juxtaposes descriptions of a ‘natural’ state of affairs recoverable from the past with statements of political purpose articulated resolutely in the language of modern state-building. We thus find regionalized development, as seen above, advocated as a return to past structures; democracy defended on the grounds that it has been ‘practised since time immemorial in our lands’; and state secularism by virtue of being

a socio-cultural fact that is widespread in North African countries. Today, *rural societies* always organize themselves in a peaceful separation between the powers of the head of village and those of the religious authority.⁴⁵

Another key area in which *zik*, understood as a domain of past authenticity, is frequently used to legitimate modernizing political demands is that of citizen-led democracy. Here, the RCD Programme invoke ideals of popular decision-making bodies – a prototype that originates in the structure of the *tajmaet* lauded by colonial

⁴³ Two of the foundational moments of independent Algerian legitimacy. The 1 November 1954 *Appel au peuple algérien* issued by the FLN declared that ‘after decades of struggle, the national movement has reached the moment of its realization’; the Congress of the Soummam, held in Kabylia two years later and orchestrated in large part by the Kabyle Abane Ramdane, produced a more systematic scheme for the organization of the insurgency into *wilayat* and subordinate military zones, and a series of political and economic goals for the institution of an independent Algerian state.

⁴⁴ RCD Programme, 2012.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

ethnographers – as evidence of a vernacular Kabyle practice of democracy, distinguishing in the contemporary context between a popular politics of universal inclusion and an elite politics of authority:

Citizenship is the freedom recognized in the citizen-individual to take part in politics and the management and direction of public affairs. In our country, abuses of authority, electoral fraud and social deprivation represent a significant obstacle to the exercise of citizenship.⁴⁶

Citizen movements and anti-politics

The advocacy of citizenship as a radical alternative to centralized state power has also come to the fore, in different ways, in the hands of explicitly apolitical movements seeking recognition of Kabyle rights. The most influential of these was the Mouvement citoyen des Aarchs (French orthography of *aerc*), a citizen movement constituted in the wake of Kabylia's 'Black Spring' of 2001. The Spring had seen mass rioting following the death of Massinissah Guermah, an 18-year-old Kabyle, at the hands of the Beni Douala gendarmerie brigade. The movement, officially known as the Co-ordination inter-wilayat [districts] des aarchs [tribes], daïras [departments] et communes [municipalities], aimed to represent demonstrators' demands on the state. It retained the narrative of the natural region, but supported it with more unequivocal appeal to the ideal of Kabyle autonomy from bureaucratic politics. Campaigners used discourses of tribal self-management to legitimate a contemporary movement based, as we shall see in the interview below, on a model of non-violent direct action.

The movement portrayed citizen-led initiatives as a practice ingrained in Berber tribal structures, and therefore an alternative to state practices founded on elite autocracy.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

This use of the ‘golden age’ as a bulwark against state mismanagement rests on a distinction between ‘politics’ understood as an institutional, centralized elite activity and a belief that traditional modes of local self-governance bypassed the need for bureaucratic institutions, and avoided the institutional corruption and power machinations of party politics (cf. Chapter 2). On 28 September 2001, the movement released a constitutive text describing itself as a horizontal structure with no permanent leader.⁴⁷ It was to function instead on the basis of coordinations representing participating *wilayat*, which would in turn be represented at an inter-*wilaya* coordination with a rotating presidency.⁴⁸ Delegates to the sub-coordinations were to be elected from each village or village subdivision in order ‘to respect the movement’s citizen nature and the transcending of partisan loyalties’. The text therefore proclaimed a determination to maintain absolute ‘independence and autonomy of the movement in relation to state power and institutions’, and a ‘refusal of any form of allegiance with, or substitution for, political structures’.

Both in name and organizational structures, then, the movement explicitly claimed to return to the authenticity of *zik*. But in a by now familiar paradox, it attempted to assert national relevance by enshrining universalist political principles (democracy, good governance etc.) in a particularly Kabyle language of organization. It made some attempts to proclaim that this language was more widely applicable, but was usually forced to paper over the cracks:

The citizen movement organized into Aarchs, Daïras and Communes has adopted a horizontal structure inspired by the ancestral model of organization, in that the smallest representational unit is the village or village quarter. This organization is *deeply linked to the history, sociology*

⁴⁷ Mouvement des Aarchs, ‘Principes directeurs’, available on the movement’s site at <http://www.aarach.com/> (accessed 10 December 2012).

⁴⁸ Some *wilayat* were not full members of the inter-*wilaya* coordination but instead adopted observer status.

and culture of our country, and of Kabylia in particular. This autonomous structure, endowed with the values of modernity, is more than ever called to play a key role in the evolution of our society and the democratization of Algeria.⁴⁹ (Emphasis mine)

With the onset of civil war in the 1990s, the perception of *zik* as an imagined time when Kabyle structures of autonomous self-regulation were at their zenith came into its own as a starting point for contemporary solutions. Several of my respondents who had previously been MCB sympathizers or cultural activists became involved with citizen initiatives in the late 1990s, and narrated their involvement *ex post facto* as an informal constitution of a ‘tribal’ movement before the formal birth of the Aarchs in 2001. The ways in which members of the movement mediated the values of *zik* to justify contemporary ends, however, revealed how far the emotional appeal of the *zik* narrative that underlay the Aarchs relied on an idealized view of the forms of knowledge that local administration should adopt, yet arguably cannot if it aims to be a contender for modern political legitimacy in Algeria. Here, a former MCB activist who had also participated in the Aarchs describes why the movement came into being and what it achieved:

GM: What about the *aerc*, does that still have any use today?

Mohand Chabane:⁵⁰ We reconstituted it around 1996, just when the civil war was really starting to paralyse the region. It started in my area; we rekindled the association between local villages to tackle collective problems. There were serious problems – infrastructure and sanitation were non-existent, the school building was unsafe, as I know to my cost, and then of course there was terrorism. At the time, it wasn’t the mayor who was in charge but a transitional administrator sent by the state to control things during the civil war period. As it happened he was Kabyle, but not from our *commune* [as the mayor had been]; it could just as well have been an Oranais or someone from the south or anywhere else. This administrator was purely a temporary measure put in place by the state to control the [civil war] situation, just like the French used to send in civil servants who had no knowledge of the areas they were posted to.

⁴⁹ Mouvement des Aarchs, Algérie, ‘Fonctionnement et Organisation’ (2004), available at <http://www.aarach.com/> (accessed 12 December 2012). By this time, the Aarchs had fragmented into two competing tendencies, and the wing responsible for this document was attempting to extend action to the national level beyond the movement’s original aims.

⁵⁰ Mohand, who sadly died in 2011, asked me to use his real name and to specify that his terminal cancer was caused by unremoved asbestos in the state *lycée* building where he taught at this time.

He wasn't tackling the situation at all, in fact he was making things worse, so we appealed to the thirteen villages of our *commune* and each drew up a written document of support for us. Then we led a movement to close the school and the town hall, and seized administrative power. Of course, movements like this are a great threat to the regime so they did what they could to stop us.

The movement stopped in 2003 because of the change in situation [end of the civil war] but it really achieved something, because *zik*, back in the day, it was the *aerc* that managed things, and we restored that at least for a time. Because before, you know, there was never any administration...

GM: When was that, *zik*?

Mohand: Well, *zik-nni*,⁵¹ before, I don't know exactly when. Maybe before colonialism ... did you know that until 1892 [*sic*] there was no *état-civil*,⁵² children were born and people got married with absolutely no administrative documentation? Even Ferhat's parents, they got married in the 1930s but I don't think they ever got it registered until after independence. Things worked much better when it was like that.

GM: Worked better?

Mohand: People trusted each other. They didn't have anything written, so they had to rely on each other's word.

In this narrative of the birth of the movement, leaping back and forth between references to the civil war, the colonial period, and the ideal time of *zik*, Mohand's description identifies the catalyst for the movement as the inaction of an outside administrator, 'sent by the state' to oversee a local reality of which he (unlike the mayor) has no knowledge. Particularly interesting is Mohand's explanation of the 'temporary administrator' problem firstly through a colonial comparison, and then as running counter to the supposedly administration-free system of *zik* which the movement attempted to recreate. What Mohand describes as a transitional administrator was the head of the local Délégation Exécutive Communale (DEC), a device put in place by the Minister for the Interior after the FIS was banned in 1992. The purpose of the DEC was to replace the Assemblées Populaires Communales (APC) or elected town councils over which the FIS had gained control in the municipal elections of

⁵¹ Lit. 'that [specific] past time', commonly used to refer to a defined period rather than the diffuse concept of *zik* as 'past authenticity'.

⁵² The *état-civil*, or register of patronyms, was in fact compulsorily introduced for the Algerian *indigénat* in 1882. In many cases this necessitated the invention of patronyms.

1990.⁵³ Appointed by General Larbi Belkheir, a figure already surrounded by accusations of corruption and widely condemned for his role in igniting the tensions that led to civil war, the DEC's were notorious for their anti-democratic political bias and alleged collaboration in Islamist atrocities (Martinez 1998). Yet Mohand's narrative condemns the DEC not on these usual grounds; instead, he delegitimizes it on the grounds that its head had no local knowledge and therefore no commitment, and compares this situation with the 'foreign' power of colonial administration.

Mohand's analysis, then, transforms a contextual response to the arbitrary nature and mismanagement of the DEC's into a fulfilment of what he claims is a timeless Kabyle trait: self-regulation and seizing autonomy back from intrusions of outside power. He interprets the contingencies of the civil war administration as a cyclical recurrence of 'unrooted' power, and argues that they demand what he perceives as a cyclical Kabyle response to it: the reassertion of local knowledge as the foundation for horizontal governance. It is telling that this ideal, although the Aarchs (as Mohand specifies) produced extensive written programmes and documentation, is articulated principally in the register of a non-bureaucratic society producing 'trust' through reliance on the spoken word. Once again here, the root of the claims made by the Aarchs was that a contemporary political crisis could be most effectively addressed by the restoration of a previous state of affairs thought to represent an ideal association between morality, narrative, and the 'right' course of history.

* * *

⁵³ The *commune* of Dellys, where Mohand's village is situated, in fact recorded the single most decisive FIS majority in Kabylia at the municipal elections of 1990; the Sebaou valley was one of the few Kabyle regions, indeed, where the FIS gained control over any *mairies*, and here it did so decisively, taking 53 per cent of all APC seats in the region (see Mahé 2006: 591–6 for comparative regional figures).

We have seen in this chapter how Kabyle approaches to the past illustrate common conundrums of nationalism: how to be exceptional yet belong, in this case to a minimum consensus on Algerian nationalist history; how to negotiate the often conflicting demands of external belonging and internal loyalty; how to assert distinctive values in a language of universalism. Above all, I have argued, the Kabyle case demonstrates two typical nationalist uses of the past to justify why a certain group of people should feel common cause with each other, and enjoy a certain degree of autonomy from interference. These are the naturalization of cultural heritage – the aim of the lost Numidian purity narrative; and of territorial unity, which we saw expressed both by party politics and citizen initiatives through inventions of Kabylia as a ‘natural region’ and grounded models of tribal self-management.

Here once again, then, we find Kabyle activists embracing a choice that emphasizes the primacy of social understandings over institutional politics as a model for the nation (both Kabyle and Algerian). The Kabyle view I have discussed is surprisingly close to prevalent Romantic nationalist conceptions in arguing for local reality as a bulwark against the bureaucratic abstraction of the state, for ideals of popular culture as the foundation for national authenticity, and above all for a fluid conception of the ‘nation’ that moves between local society, Kabyle region and an idealized Algerian whole. But there is a fundamental difference: Kabyle narratives of history apply these tenets in opposition to the ideology of a ‘nation-state’ – and one that refuses the nationalist legitimacy of local realities, popular cultures and above all any conception of the nation that is not strictly allied with *state* unity. In other words, the stories explored in this chapter embrace a vision which, in applying nationalist ideals to regionalist loyalties,

excludes the political realization of their ideal: recognition of Berber history as the foundation for an alternative Algerian consensus.

But in the Kabyle case a purely regional politics is invalid at the national level; and Kabyle parties must continue to espouse a largely Kabyle agenda in order to maintain their loyalty base. Thus as Chaker (1994: 112) observes, echoing a common view,

I remain convinced that Kabylia and Kabyle political figures – including Aït Ahmed, despite his historical legitimacy – will never be able to attract a substantial weight of public support at the national level. They are and will remain Kabyle, and at best will make inroads only into a small minority of the Arabic-speaking urban intelligentsia ... The many ‘democratic mobilization’ initiatives of the Kabyle parties, above all the FFS, have never attracted support beyond a largely Kabyle constituency – including for demonstrations in Algiers. A ‘democratic Algeria built around Kabylia’ is a fiction, a waking dream, devoid of the least sociological, ideological or political substance.

It is in this gap that identity politics, and its attendant overinvestment of group histories examined in this chapter, takes shape. It is perhaps one cause of Kabyle political stasis that activists have continued to work within this fixation on constructing and legitimating a group past based on a regional vision which, however carefully constructed, no other group will endorse in any numbers and the unitary state will by definition reject: a quest for recognition, in other words, through a criterion more likely to isolate and alienate.

This again raises the question that has remained open throughout this study so far: does Kabyle activism in fact seek external recognition, or are its first aims rather to create loyalty and common cause *within* a distinct regional group? In Part III, returning to a closer ethnographic focus, I examine how my respondents explain and promote the

‘survival’ of Kabyle identity through processes of internal transmission – comparisons between family heritage and the perpetuation of regional values (Chapter 4), and the investment of popular singers with responsibility for passing on a ‘pure’ form of popular knowledge (Chapter 5). Depictions of these transmission paths rest on the premise that Kabylia constitutes a self-contained social and cultural sphere, and that the ideal Algerian nation should represent an enlargement of this sphere. The final two chapters explore how my respondents account for the success or failure of the transmission of Kabyle values and knowledge, both across time and place.

Part III

Transmission

Chapter 4
Family, nation and state

<i>Awal fi smaren rekku</i>	The word that they sully
<i>S turrugza a d-yehyu</i>	Will live again with manly honour.
<i>Anta ttejra ur nesei azar?</i>	What tree grows with no roots?
<i>... Tidett a tt-id nessekfel</i>	We'll exhume the truth:
<i>Azar n lejdud yeghed.</i>	Our ancestors' roots are strong.

Lounès Matoub, 'An-nerrez wala ad-neknu' (1981)

I now explore how the Kabyle vernacular narrative sets about representing ideals of the Algerian nation, and criticisms of the actual state, through metaphors based on honour codes and images of the nation as a family, one which may either succeed in transmitting its heritage intact or progressively deform it through internal discord and betrayal.

In the first part of the chapter, I illustrate the expression of resistance in the language of *nif*, or Kabyle honour, wielded against the state. Like other facets of *taqbaylit* morality, *nif* applies between members of a defined group – usually the village, but in its 'political' translation into a language of Kabyle resistance, the region – and lies at the basis of a conception of public 'equality' defined by the ideal of identical normative constraints and rights for all members, regardless of wealth or status (see Campbell 1964 and Peristiany 1965 for this definition of equality in comparative context).¹ In this respect, the honour code stands in opposition to another norm that operates in private

¹ 'Members' here do not correspond exactly to 'residents'. Aside from those who live in a village but are not members of its *tajmaet*, the main exceptions to this definition of village community as public equality have traditionally been members of maraboutic lineages.

between members of a family unit.² This is the gerontocratic order of ‘respect’ (which my Ajmoun respondents referred to as *lmuqadra*, from Ar. *qder*) or deference to older family members. Though the strength of the constraint depends on the proximity of the relationship, the defining characteristic of *lmuqadra* is that it is non-negotiable. While the honour system turns on a belief all have equal rights to challenge others and to respond (Abou-Zeid 1965), the gerontocratic system demands submission to those more ‘powerful’ than oneself.

These two codes suggest two opposed understandings of the proper distribution of authority. Where the gerontocratic code broadly validates the imposition of arbitrary demands on subordinates, the honour code punishes attempts to impose this type of ‘power’ over others, especially if weaker than oneself (Bourdieu 1979).³ Used as metaphors, these codes therefore also present two alternative national models of authority and social equity. I illustrate how the vernacular narrative articulates different permutations of the relationship between Kabylia and state power through these models: rejecting Arabization in a language of *nif* as a response to challenge, criticizing the state’s illegitimate use of the gerontocratic model to legitimate its own authority, yet also – as I return to discuss at the end of the chapter – using the gerontocratic code to explain the reality of what many Kabyles experience as a ‘weak’ or oppressed position in an assimilative state.

² As with the definition of village community, what constitutes the ‘family’ has been a subject of debate (see Eickelman 1989). With the trend towards relatively smaller households, the gerontocratic order usually applies more stringently with members of the immediate *axxam* – household – than the extended lineage (*adrum*, a highly fluid concept in itself: see Roberts 2002b, Goodman 2005). But several of my respondents did invoke the ‘closeness’ or ‘ties’ of distant family as grounds for deference in contexts that would otherwise demand response.

³ This distinction, which I simplify here for the sake of concision, is of course not always clear-cut in reality. The tradition of endogamous marriage means that family relationships often cut across ‘village society’, and two individuals may therefore relate differently in different contexts. Thus for one Ajmoun respondent, ‘I sometimes see my nephew M. smoking or drinking in the village; if we were at home or among family he wouldn’t dare because of respect towards an uncle, but if it’s at the café or outside I don’t care: then we’re among equals. Many wouldn’t do it even there, but he knows I’m relaxed.’ (Massi)

The second part of the chapter then goes on to examine how the Kabyle vernacular narrative has used metaphors of ancestry and genealogy to represent a missing Algerian historical continuity. I examine how this sense of lost national purity is dramatized in political song as the suffering of a betrayed female forebear: *tamurt* or the homeland, as Matoub names the female voice in several of his songs. As portrayed in these texts, the virtues of *tamurt* are those of integrity, rootedness and purity. These ideals (which still reflect dominant, if changing, Kabyle conceptions of feminine conduct and motherhood as cultural transmission) correspond closely with the concerns of historical and cultural continuity that have informed rhetorics both of Algerian nation-building and the Kabyle narrative of ‘existence as resistance’. The song texts take the form of a dialogue between mother and male descendant – a *mujahid* or a martyr – whom the ‘motherland’ interrogates about the cause of her children’s discord. This iconic image of the grieving mother representing the purest source of cultural authenticity embodies the Kabyle nationalism of the ‘natural homeland’, or ‘the Algeria that should have been’ but for its perceived perversion by Arabo-Islamism.

The vernacular narrative rests on a vision of the Algerian nation as an extension of moral codes, which as well as abstract ideals are the basis for everyday norms of behaviour. Here as throughout this study, it is not always possible to distinguish between embedded Kabyle practice and self-representations influenced by academic studies or other ‘external’ sources. In this case, one theory of Kabyle honour – that of Pierre Bourdieu⁴ – has had a particularly strong influence on Kabyle activist translations of *nif* into a language of anti-state resistance. Bourdieu was involved with the creation

⁴ Originally in Bourdieu’s *Esquisse d’une théorie de la pratique* of 1972, citations here from Richard Nice’s translation in Bourdieu 1979.

of the ABERC (see Interlude) in 1967, and the Groupe d'Etudes Berbères at the Université de Paris-VIII Vincennes in 1972 (Silverstein 2003a: 34, n. 48), and collaborated with Mouloud Mammeri on a series of interviews on oral poetry and ethnology (Bourdieu and Mammeri 1978, Mammeri 1985). These interviews bring to the fore Bourdieu's own interest in how sociological structures, including the honour code, translate a 'mythico-ritual system' made up of oppositions (sacred and profane, right and left, female and male, wet and dry and so on) that escape spoken expression. Many Kabyle activists involved in the study groups of the 1960s and 1970s were familiar with Bourdieu's work on Kabylia, and incorporated elements of his systematization of *nif* and *lherma* into a new activist rhetoric of Kabyle resistance that was influential in the years leading up to *Tafsut* (Hakim Smaïl, INALCO: personal communication), particularly with those who went on to constitute the MCB.

Kabyle self-conceptions and 'external' comment on them have, then, always fed intensively into each other, and over the course of the chapter I use Bourdieu's analysis of *nif* as a starting point for the discussion of politicized expressions of Kabyle resistance-as-honour and everyday practice. While many academic commentators have criticized Bourdieu for representing Kabyle social values as timeless archetypes (Goodman 2003), it is important to stress that most of my respondents described the honour code not as a social relic or an abstract metaphor but as a guiding principle of everyday behaviour. Though many Kabyles (especially in the diaspora) express a wish to 'move past' the rigidity of honour codes, they remain in practice an important framework for relationships between adult men, including among younger Kabyles of my respondents' age; as I discuss later in the chapter, they do not work in the same way for relationships between men and women, or indeed among women.

I therefore juxtapose descriptions of honour as an everyday value with examples of its use as an abstract metaphor for relations with the state. Likewise, in the second part of the chapter, in order to understand the significance of family comparisons in discourses of national transmission I also look at the everyday sources of these metaphors: how women, for instance, represent geographical ties to origins through marriage patterns; and how my respondents justified the need for submission to gerontocratic authority within the family on an daily basis.

A) HONOUR AND INTEGRITY

This year [writing in 2011] as every year the RCD and the MAK, headed by their leaders, marched for the same cause [commemorating the Berber Spring] in opposite directions on opposite pavements ... turning their backs on each other as best they could, *noblesse Kabyle oblige*. As in any culture that clings to its primitive values, if you go against *nif* by giving in to another's will, you've lost. When the nose [literal meaning of *nif*], the organ of dignity and honour, is found wanting, the moustache [traditional symbol of manliness in Kabylia] under its protection ... can no longer carry its symbolism of sacrosanct virility.

In our Kabyle temperament, just as inaccessible as our rugged mountains, someone who gives in first to end a quarrel will be branded a coward who lost his nerve through a lack of *nif* – who bent rather than broke.⁵ In Tlemcen, the same person might be judged to have a purer heart. In any case, it is urban knowledge in Algeria that you're better advised to deal with a Tlemcenian than a Kabyle where anything contentious is concerned. (Chabane 2011)

In Bourdieu's (1979) famous analysis of the Kabyle code of honour, *nif* – as satirized in the commentary above, written by a Kabyle migrant living in the US – was characterized as the manly virtue of 'active irritability' (*op. cit.*: 120). Bourdieu describes *nif* as a response to infringements of *lherma*, the 'female' domain of

⁵ This is a reference to the Kabyle adage *an-nerrez wala ad-neknu*, the title of Matoub's song cited as an epigraph to this chapter, which holds that to 'break' or die in resistance confers legitimacy, while to 'bend' to pressure is a dishonour.

sacrosanct integrity identified as the symbolic quality of a man's possessions, above all house and family. Though criticisms of state power are (as the passage above suggests) mirrored in attacks on Kabyle party politics and interest-based factionalism as a breakdown of 'honour among equals', it is above all the characteristic of defensiveness as discussed by Bourdieu that activists have seized on: the image of Kabylia as a vulnerable domain of threatened integrity that must be protected from aggression.

It is this aspect of *nif* that many still invoke to justify the importance of maintaining Kabyle normative autonomy, not only by keeping an intrusive state at bay, but also – through a structuring principle which theoretically enables resolution of conflicts without formal arbitration – by ensuring a self-contained societal order.⁶ This connection between honour, self-regulation and rejection of state authority is by no means unique to Kabylia. It has long been a staple of scholarship on Mediterranean societies, from Southern Italy (J. Schneider 1971; Blok 1981) to Greece (Campbell 1964) and Bedouin societies in North Africa (Abou-Zeid 1965; Abu-Lughod 1985, 1990). A materialist strand of this scholarship has interpreted honour as a symbolic means of negotiating resource distribution – including the attempt to control access to the 'resources' of reproduction through constraints on women's behaviour⁷ – in a society where justice and distribution are not effectively ensured by a higher authority (P. Schneider 1969).

⁶ In this regard, however, the honour system clearly does not lead to the absolute self-sufficiency of village society often posited as its ideal, as witnessed by the extensive literature on the historical importance of the marabouts who lay outside the sphere regulated by the code of honour, and acted as conflict mediators in Kabylia and several other regions of the Maghrib. See especially Gellner 1969, and Brett 1980 for discussion.

⁷ Several studies have argued that social control over women's behaviour as an 'appendage' or integral part of male honour is an endemic feature of Mediterranean honour codes, and indeed sometimes the dominant element: see Blok 1981 on the sexual symbolism of honour rhetoric, and Brögger 1968 on the restriction of the use of *onore* in southern Italy to matters 'concern[ing] the sexual conduct of the female members of the household as reflected on its male members', where in any other situation the term *rispetto* would be used.

Another important thread running through these studies, earlier outlined in the collection of essays in Peristiany 1965, is the theme of internal moral codes as a means of creating order ‘when the definition of the group is problematic; when social boundaries are difficult to maintain, and internal loyalties are questionable’ (J. Schneider 1971: 2). Kabyle conceptions of honour relate suggestively to both of these descriptions of moral codes: as a definition of group belonging in the context of internal tensions, and as a means of negotiating material distribution. For my respondents, honour was especially important in maintaining the appearance of an ideal of material equality, which has long been described as a structuring principle of many Berber societies (Montagne 1930; Gellner 1973; Crawford 2008) and which many Kabyles still claim as a core principle of village community.

‘Kulci kifkif’: ideals of public equality

The description of *nif* outlined so far is the basis for an ideal of community in which all, despite discrepancies in wealth and social status, theoretically enjoy equal rights to ‘exist’ in the public domain by expressing their opinions, challenging others on disagreements, responding to those who issue such a challenge and participating in the collective decision-making of *tajmaet*. My respondents, when not speaking in French, usually expressed this concept with circumlocutions such as *kulci kifkif* (Arabic, adopted by Taqbaylit: ‘each [man] is the same’) rather than a single word.

However, actual inequalities of wealth and status remain significant obstacles to this ideal of *kulci kifkif*. Though the illusion of evenness is sustained in an institutionalized

sense by the ideal of *tajmaet* as a redistribution system that pools labour and resources in order to ensure material provision for the weak and dependent, members are in fact, as Bourdieu and others have acknowledged, vastly unequal in their resources.

This problem is sometimes addressed with an elaborate concealment of material inequality, achieved partially through systems that consecrate (as does any distributive system) a particular size of unit (nuclear family, extended family and so on) as the basis for equal division, at the expense of equality on another ‘level’. Thus, for instance, Crawford 2008 describes how, in a Moroccan village where he conducted fieldwork, the equal division of arable land between village *lineages* led to vast discrepancies in the means of individual *households* because of the different numbers of households in each lineage. There is a similar problem in Ajmoun, where households within the same *adrum* or patrilineage (often neighbouring or nearby) range from extremely poor to extremely wealthy; and to preserve the impression of social unity within the *adrum*, this must be erased from the acknowledged facts of social interaction. This concealment of material inequality was an acute concern for several members of my host family (‘family’ now used in the sense of ‘household’), who had lived well above average village means before Islamist control of forested areas in the surrounding region crippled their business in the mid-1990s. In order to maintain a public impression of equality, however, Ferhat described his father’s insistence on the importance of taking voluntary action to ‘level out’ the discrepancy:

Before 1995 [when the business folded], we lived very comfortably indeed, but no one knew, not even the others in our village ‘quarter’ (ie. the *adrum*). At home we had the best food available, but on the outside we lived as simply as everyone else. You’ve seen what the villa’s like, nothing fancy. This is why people respect us: we’ve never let good luck make us ostentatious. We act like simple people. When my middle sister got married [to a successful surgeon in Béjaïa], her husband’s friends all told him to watch out, that he’d have problems

with the daughter of a company manager, that she'd run him dry. Then on the first morning, he's told me since that he came into the living room and found her eating a bit of bread and olive oil, and he couldn't believe his eyes. They've never looked back.

My father always gave freely, and he was always reminding us that was part of our duty as members of the Z. family. There were people who used to come and steal food and tools from our workshop, and he'd show his worth by giving them more, of his own accord, to show them that they needn't steal from the rich because the rich would right the balance themselves.⁸ (Ferhat)

The code of honour also functions as a site where the ideational premium placed on equality in many Berber societies (Crawford 2008) can be sustained as a symbolic evenness of normative obligations and rights that 'corrects' discrepancies of material position.⁹ The importance of equality in this conception is therefore above all as a collective belief, perpetuated in social relations, which allows a public narrative of social values to be maintained. The crucial facet of honour understood as a public social value is this: *nif* not only compensates for material poverty in a remedial sense, but is in fact made *more* valuable by disadvantage: it gains rather than loses in value as the attribute of an otherwise 'weak' member of the community. This was the basis for Bourdieu's argument that the primary criterion of moral worth and male 'personhood' in Kabyle society was the ability to defend one's private domain, and that the greater one's vulnerability, the greater the moral worth of success in doing so:

Hurma [*lherma*] in the sense of the sacred (*haram*), *nif*, and *hurma* in the sense of respectability, are inseparable. Thus the more vulnerable a family is, the more *nif* it needs to have in order to defend its sacred values, and the greater are the merit and esteem that opinion

⁸ It is interesting here to note the merging values of 'free giving' described as part of the code of *taqbaylit* and the Islamic obligation of generosity and alms to the poor (*zakat*). My respondents usually focused on the supposed origin of this tradition in specifically Kabyle morals, but as Roberts (2002a: 18) points out these two registers of morality are always concurrent; 'there has always been an important element of interaction, interpenetration and identification between the ethics embodied in the traditional code of honour and the ethical teachings of Islam, founded on the opposition of Good and Evil and the corresponding importance of the distinction between the good man and the bad man.' The Kabyle ideal also merges indistinguishably with the Islamic obligation of *karam* or hospitality.

⁹ Hammoudi (1980), however, has argued that this supposed equality in normative rights and duties is also highly selective, with different social and occupational categories in fact operating 'like castes' (*op. cit.*: 287) and determining uneven access to symbolic as well as material equality.

accords it ... The point of honour only has meaning and a function in a man for whom sacred things exist, things worth defending. A being devoid of the sacred could dispense with the point of honour because he would in a sense be invulnerable. (1979: 119)

Conversely, Bourdieu relates the special provisions of the code of honour that apply to extremely weak parties in village society: clients, dependants and those from exceptionally small or poor families. Unlike other participants in an honour-based exchange, those publicly recognized as being in a weak position may respond to an offence not by riposte, but rather by adopting a public attitude of humility and ‘littleness’¹⁰ that acts to shame the offender for unfair treatment of a party unable to respond in kind. Given this institutionalized ideal of providing protection for the very weak, committing arbitrary aggression against the defenceless just because one can is therefore a heinous offence.

Criticisms of the state

These are the main foundations for Kabyle criticisms of the state. Firstly, the vernacular narrative holds, the regime wilfully increases the gulf between strong and weak, privileged and dispossessed, by using flagrant distributional injustice as a weapon of domination, and thus overturning the Kabyle ideal of ‘levelling out’ through voluntary generosity; this corresponds in large part with the idea discussed in Chapter 2 of the regime as a ‘dirty’ political domain, founded exclusively on material interests to the exclusion of moral values.

¹⁰ Often expressed by describing oneself (or another) as *meskin* (Ar.): being ‘poor’ or ‘humble’ in a way that demands compassion and generosity.

Secondly, many of my respondents argued, the regime then lowers itself further by committing arbitrary aggression against the weak in a way that belongs to the hierarchy of gerontocratic family order, not to the interaction between ‘equals’ which the vernacular narrative maintains should be the basis for the interaction between cohabiting ‘cultural groups’ within the Algerian polity (cf. Chapter 2). By acting in accordance with the ‘wrong’ code of behaviour, my respondents further argued, the regime forgoes any right to consideration from those it mistreats.¹¹ This is consonant with the meaning of ‘statelessness’ discussed in the Introduction, not merely as the preservation of a protected domain apart, but rather an active reciprocal turning of backs: the idea that the regime’s violation of proper modes of interaction, and its resulting transgression of the moral taboo on violence against the weak, break the social contract and therefore exempt Kabyles from the reciprocal obligation of respect for government edicts:

It’s as if someone big and strong, physically powerful for instance, attacks someone weak just because he can: just because he’s big and the other is small – like a playground bully. Often this happens in families – well, not an attack, but it’s totally normal for the younger ones to be at the service of the older and submit to what they want with no questions asked. But why should the government expect us to listen when it tries to act like that? If it has to be in power at all it should be dealing with us on an equal footing, not acting like a big brother expecting the Kabyles to submit blindly to its will! That’s why we don’t have too many qualms about breaking the law. (Ilyès)

In complement to the claim that the state is wrong in applying the code of ‘arbitrary’ gerontocratic authority to govern, the third criticism that emerged from my interviews was this: that even if it were participating in an exchange based on the ‘equality’ of *nif*

¹¹ I draw here on Roberts’ (2002) description of successive instances of mass rioting in Kabylia and other parts of Algeria – 1988, 1998 after the death of Matoub, the Black Spring of 2001 – as a revolt against state ‘contempt’, or *hagra* (Ar.) for the rights of the people: the resentment of leadership without ‘consideration’ for popular rights, or regard for any tenet of social order except the government’s own capacity for aggression.

rather than an arbitrary hierarchy, the state would be in constant violation of *lherma*. In this vein, several of my respondents portrayed Kabylia as an ‘inner domain’ whose violation incurred a strong reaction to protect integrity, and the Kabyle response – like the expression of *nif* as a guarantee of ‘personhood’ in the village community – as a gauge of ‘continued existence’. In many cases, the actions of the state in Kabylia were associated with prototypical images of intrusion, rape and violation of private property:

GM: What do you feel about the government’s...

Salas: It’s a violation. It’s as though someone came into your house, turned everything upside down, took your wife and children – everything that’s rightfully yours. How can we not respond to that?

GM: So you see Kabyle activism as a response to insult.

Salas: Absolutely. You know, during the war [of independence] the [French] used to daub crosses on houses where they’d had a woman, as a sign to other soldiers that they could do the same. There were some villages where the men let that happen, I don’t know, out of cowardice or because they had no morals; I think it was often maraboutic villages. And then they [the villagers] let it happen again and again. To me that’s unthinkable. If you’re insulted like that once how can you not respond? Well, that’s how we feel as Kabyles: even though most of the time it gets us nowhere, we have to respond when the state bulldozes us, continue to show that we’re here and we won’t give up the struggle. Otherwise we might as well cease to exist right now.

Similar rhetorical images of rape and cross-fertilization as pollution have long been used by dissident and especially anticolonial movements to invoke the need for defence of a ‘prostituted’ or ‘mutilated’ motherland (Delaney 1995, describing Mustafa Kemal’s appeals to the male sense of honour in Turkey), a theme that I discuss further below. In the Kabyle case, this imagery is intimately linked to other beliefs discussed in this section: that the region is a ‘private’ domain akin to the house in its connotations of inviolable integrity; that the defence of this private domain when required validates one’s membership of its community; and above all that the centralized state model and assimilative ideology flout the ideals of symbolic equality understood as identical rights and obligations.

It is the final criticism that emerged from my respondents' narratives, however, that in my view lies at the heart of Kabyle metaphors of honour in activist discourse. This is a belief that the regime's actions travesty the proper relationship – described in Bourdieu's passage on the positive correlation between vulnerability and moral worth above – between 'low' status and the capacity to attract consideration by honourable behaviour, in this case through the successful use of *nif* to resist aggression and ensure protection of *lherma*. Many of my respondents argued that the state denies them even this by refusing to acknowledge the worth of Kabyle honour (as allegedly evidenced by its ongoing contempt for claims issuing from the region), and therefore not merely violates *lherma* but incurs the opprobrium of bullying the defenceless.

Before elaborating on this suggestive connection between honour and response to threats as a protection of the integrity of the nation as a 'private' domain, we need to look briefly at how the family operates in a more general sense as metaphor for national community.

B) NATIONAL GENEALOGIES

i jeddi mangellat, qqaren-as jeddi mangellat. zik, ism-is kan mangellat

(As for Grandfather Menguellet, now [when his sons had each claimed a territory, corresponding to current tribal areas] they called him Grandfather[/Saint] Menguellet. Before that, his name had been just Menguellet.)

Henri Genevois, *Un village kabyle. Taourirt n at Mangellat.*
Notes d'histoire et de folklore, p. 378

As well as making use of the code of honour where necessary, Algerian nationalist discourses have borrowed heavily from the model of gerontocracy and deference that still dominates understandings of family life in Kabylia, along with much of rural Algeria (Roberts 2003). The idea of family and genealogy as a model for belonging has a long philosophical history, stretching back to the Aristotelian notion of the relationship between family and political community as authority structures.¹² This proved particularly useful as a model of legitimacy for newly decolonized states, and especially those that endeavoured to bring disparate ethnic, linguistic and identification groups into a single administrative unit (Yanagisako and Delaney 1995).

In Algeria, the symbolic associations of the family are above all those of what many describe in French as *ancienneté* and ‘roots’ in a particular place. The power of the family as a national reference, then, lies not just in its strong model of authority. It also comes from the implicit (and often explicit) understanding that wherever one may be geographically, one is tied by family roots to a place of origin. In much of rural Algeria,

¹² Cf. Aristotle, *Politics*, Bk. 1, 11/21 for comparison between authority structures within the family and different types of government (the model of husbands’ republican government over women and monarchical government over children). See Yanagisako and Delaney 1995 for elaboration on this context, and Roberts 2002b more generally for colonial uses of ancient comparisons to make sense of family structures.

these translate in practice as membership of a political community: the village council or *tajmaet*. Conversely, living elsewhere does not alter one's 'roots' as a member of an original normative community. Despite mass migration, most of my respondents in France maintained that membership of the 'historic families' of a particular village, and thus its *tajmaet*, determined their 'true origin'.¹³ One of Ferhat's brothers, who has lived in Paris since 1985, told me early on in my fieldwork that there were only six migrants from Ajmoun in Paris. I had already met more, and named them. Apparently surprised that I did not understand this, he replied that these people were not really 'from the village': there were only three historic families (including his own), and the village residents I had named had 'arrived later' and built in the upper village. They do not own land in *taddart*, and therefore 'still belong to their villages of origin; that's where they'll be buried, it's where they go to settle any disputes and take part in *tajmaet*' (Salim). When I arrived in Ajmoun itself, the mayor (who is not from one of the historic families) assured me that my host family was 'very ancient' and would take good care of me.

This notion of organic descent from place is also expressed in language. In Taqbaylit, a place (house, village, region etc.) 'begets' children, who are identified as its descendants. Thus relatives are sometimes referred to as *at-wexxam* (descendants of the house). Kabyles also frequently call each other by their village or regional names: *mmi-s n Graraj* (son of Graraj), *yelli-s n Gouraya* (daughter of Gouraya – patron saint of Béjaïa and name of the mountain that dominates the town). *Mmi-s n tmurt* (son of the

¹³ As several ethnographers in Kabylia and the migrant community have observed (Khellil 1979; Silverstein 2004; Goodman 2005), this continued binding membership of *tajmaet* often borders on the surreal in a context of mass emigration. Absent members may outnumber those in situ, and often remark on the absurdity of their family continuing to pay fines for their absence at collective labour calls, funerals and so on. This was the case for several of my male respondents in Paris, whose families still claimed to pay their *tajmaet* fines when they had been in France for a decade or more.

homeland) is a common form of address among migrant Kabyle men. Similarly, the epithets *imawlan n taddart* (relatives of the village) or simply *at-taddart* (descendants of the village) are commonly used to refer to fellow villagers (Lacoste-Dujardin 2005: 359).

This is more than a chance linguistic habit. Genealogy is understood to divide space in Kabylia, as the congruence of the dual connotation of the prefix *At* – descent and geographical area – demonstrates.¹⁴ In the foundation myth cited in the epigraph to this section, collected by Henri Genevois,¹⁵ different tribal areas are thus identified as the land of lineages that descend from different branches of a family. The names used to identify Kabyle regions – At Mangellat, Beni Yusef, At Yenni and so on – are also, by the same token, common surnames. Genealogy thus has a double function. It determines authenticity as a double rooting in lineal ancestry and place, hence the close connection between family names, locality, and ideas of moral community. As Geertz et al. (1979: 7) discuss this concept of ‘place as an index or source of social identity’ in Morocco: ‘the term *bled* [village/area] projects a deeper sense of place than the merely locational: it also conveys a sense of relation between men and the lands they inhabit ... To identify someone as being from *bled Sefrou* ... is to imply those characteristics of manner, knowledge, relationships and modes of interaction that have come to be associated with it, to connect a “who” with a “where”.’

¹⁴ Cf. Hart 1973: 31, who describes the system of land division both at the large (inter-tribal) and the small (intra-lineage) scale as ‘the segmentary system – which is genealogically conceived in terms of time – flopped down spatially onto the ground’.

¹⁵ Genevois (1913–78) lived in Kabylia from 1942–76 as a member of the Pères Blancs missionary order, and was one of the foremost contributors to the *Fichier de documentation berbère*, where he published several linguistic and local folklore studies.

The importance of founding a lineage in the Kabyle origin myth I cited is illustrated in the conferral of the title *jeddi* (literally paternal grandfather) on the founder. As the purest incarnation of *azar* and origin of *tajaddit* (patrilineal ascendance), it is no coincidence that *jeddi* comes to mean protective saint as well as ancestor (cf. Hadibi 1999). The family is also a useful model for cultural transmission. Family defines how the immediate markers of belonging – family names, inheritance and agnatic descent – are transmitted, either through patrilineal or matrilineal paths (or combinations of the two, as discussed by Sutton 1997). This articulation of transmission is a key reference for nation-building projects, concerned with maintaining a sense of belonging and entitlement, and sustaining various types of internal differentiation.

This confluence of ideas of protection, ancestry and patriarchal authority is clearly a useful one for legitimacy, and some have argued that nationalism is therefore especially likely to make use of the family metaphor in patriarchal societies. The patriarchal family has particularly clear criteria of age and gender as the basis for hierarchy, and naturalizes them as a means of ensuring that those most capable of rational decision-making do so in the best interests of the younger and ‘weaker’. Its stringent demands of deference and respect, meanwhile, make the patriarchal family the most immediate experience of service and loyalty for many. Joseph (1996: 132) argues in this vein that ‘since family [in the Middle East and North Africa] is patriarchal, politics also privileges patriarchy’. In adopting the language of the patriarchal family, nationalist actors aim to create resonance with an experience that is the most universally understandable language available. Reference to the patriarchal family evokes moral

duties of loyalty and the acceptance of authority based on hierarchies of age, generation and gender.¹⁶

In Algeria – lacking the obvious patriarchal comparisons provided elsewhere in the Maghrib and Middle East by either a monarchy or a theocracy – the regime after independence attempted to found a historically rooted family (Carlier 1991). This was based on legitimacy provided by the symbolic lineage of the revolutionary *mujahidin*. The foundation myth of this national family was the revolutionary struggle; its sacred ancestors were the *shuhada* (martyrs), and its living patriarchs the *mujahidin* and the FLN's surviving 'historic chiefs'. The stock image of the agnatic ancestor transmitting authority patrilineally became the image of the revolutionary Algerian nation as ancestor (Khellil 1984) – now personified in the figure of the martyr – and the *mujahidin* as its inheritors.

The openly genealogical character of Algeria's new revolutionary 'lineage' has become increasingly clear. The prominent organizations of the Children of Martyrs (Association des Enfants de Chouhada) and Children of Mujahidin (Organisation Nationale des Enfants de Mujahidin) have increasingly politicized the issue of who is an authentic descendant of one of these types of ancestor-patriarch, and who is claiming 'false *mujahid*' (or descendant) status for material gain (Vince 2009; Branche 2011). The legitimacy garnered by establishing descent from a *shahid* or *mujahid* demonstrates that genealogy is still treated as the key criterion of legitimacy in Algeria; as, indeed, does the 'resistance value' still attributed to those recognized as true descendants. The 'Children of Martyrs' label is therefore a site of intense competition, not only for the

¹⁶ Cf. Delaney 1995: 178 for argument that the family 'submerges asymmetries of age and gender as well as differing interests', in a useful comparison for what nations need to achieve with respect to subgroups.

personal legitimacy that the title confers but also in the struggle to control official history (Goodman 2010).

The Children of Martyrs committees set up in Kabylia in the wake of the Berber Spring of 1980, for instance, declared as their constitutional goals to ‘write the history of national liberation movements’ and ‘commemorate important events in national history’ (Mezhoud 1993). The claim to descent from the nation’s revolutionary ancestors and patriarchs also means a claim to represent the ‘true’ history of the revolution and the nation. Since so many different groups and individuals lay claim to this descent, these are clearly competitive claims on a contested arena of national history (McDougall 2006a). But it should now be clear that the state is only one competitor amongst many for this loyalty.

In the next section, before considering how Kabyles use gerontocratic family codes to explain the reality of state domination, I discuss patriarchal definitions of the mother figure as a representation of the ‘ideal nation’. These are particularly common in political song texts, usually (for reasons discussed further in Chapter 5) written and performed by men, and often reinforcing an ideal of feminine purity as the key to cultural transmission. Just as *taqbaylit* means both the essence of Kabyle morality and the Kabyle woman, so the personification of *Lezzayer* (Algeria) or *Tamurt* (the Homeland) as a female forebear in Matoub’s output is a clear example of this symbolic parallel between a real and a metaphorical figure of ideal integrity. In song, *tamurt* is repeatedly personified as one of three female characters: the pining mother of an exile, the bereaved widow or mother of a war martyr, and a siren-like lover calling the exile back home.

Algeria's feminine ideal

Tamurt:

I nek i-gyunfa uzar-iw

D acu i d asfel-iw ...

Mi zriy lgedra trekku

T-tiktiwin b-bou arraw-iw

I-n-yerwin allay-iw

Yal yiwen akken la ifettu

The Homeland:

And for me, tearing out my roots,

What will be the ultimate sacrifice?

I have seen corruption devour my soil.

It is the ideas of my offspring

That eat away at my brain:

Each according to his fancy.

Agrawliw:

Dlan i tmurt ddeewessu

A tneggi a tettru

Mi tezra ungif d amsewweq

Macci s qelhu u llahu

I ss ara tehlu

S legraya s tegmatt d lheq

The Revolutionary

They have brought the country to damnation

She agonizes in tears

Seeing the fools who control our destiny

It is not with godly sayings

That she will shake off suffering

But with knowledge, brotherhood and justice.

Tamurt:

W'ièddan ney wi d-yusan

D arumi ney d mmi-s n Crif

Di tayett acu i d-rnan

Siwa tteebga uyilif

Assa hedrey i yidan

eebboueln i wedrar n nif

The Homeland:

Past or future invader

French or Islamist [lit. 'the marabout's son']

What have they put on my shoulders

But a burden of rage?

Today, I see evil

Descending on the mountain of honour.

Lounès Matoub, 'Communion avec la Patrie' and 'A yemma amek' (1993)¹⁷

In this section, I examine how a metaphor of Algeria as mother, and the state regime (or Arabo-Islamic ideology) as her deformed offspring, has been used to articulate a Kabyle perception of post-independence 'history perverted'. This relies on two understandings: that women, in ways that overlap between the everyday and the symbolic, represent a conception of original purity; and that deviation from this implies moral decadence. I therefore outline some of the everyday ways in which women are described as representing roots and integrity in traditionalist discourses of Kabyle

¹⁷ Texts adapted from Matoub 2003: 126, 130.

morality and (to some extent) contemporary understandings. I then illustrate how metaphors of deviant genealogical transmission – mediated through the model of closeness to roots as morality – articulate a contemporary political claim to the gains of independence that Kabyles argue have been stolen by a corrupt regime.

The metaphor of Algeria's recent chaos as a perversion of family loyalties expresses the Kabyle narrative of lost origins and the 'buried history' of the Algerian ideal suppressed by Arabo-Islamic domination. In his song texts, Matoub translated this lineal conception of history as genealogical transmission – which like family inheritances can be 'stolen', 'corrupted' or unjustly divided between heirs – into the recurring theme of a dialogue in which a revolutionary *mujahid* 'interrogates history' on the source of his mother's ills:

<i>Wi steqsay a d-yini kfan</i>	Those whom I [the <i>mujahid</i>] interrogate tell me:
<i>Nfan ney fnan</i>	They are exiled or else dead,
<i>Widak yettmagaren lmut</i>	The brave who faced death.
<i>Wid d-igga ttrad ieddan</i>	Those who survived the founding war
<i>Zzayit rwan</i>	Have fattened themselves up
<i>Kkan deg imerga n tefsut</i>	Like swallows in springtime.
<i>Di lgefna abruy ur t-ggan</i>	They have had their fill, while we still go hungry;
<i>S umezruy i glan</i>	They have obscured history
<i>yer lkaf sehben tamurt</i> ¹⁸	And dragged the country into the abyss.

This 'dialogue with history', in which the relationship between a mother and her suffering son represents justice and the history that should have been, is also a recurring theme of political imagery and action in Algeria. The figure of the bereaved mother that runs through Matoub's portrayals of the homeland is also a prominent voice of real anti-government protest in Algeria, as well as a stock image of the country in Western media. Mothers of the war dead and missing have played a highly public role in the

¹⁸ 'Communion avec la Patrie' (Matoub 2003: 126).

quest for justice after the civil war,¹⁹ with mothers' groups such as the Collectif des Familles de Disparus en Algérie staging frequent protests against the immunity conferred on Islamist fighters active during the civil war and government measures for their 'reinsertion'.²⁰

Matoub's legacy after his assassination in 1998 similarly became the province of his mother Na Aldjia and his sister Malika, both of whom regularly take the stage at galas and political events to promote Matoub's image as a Kabyle martyr; Na Aldjia still presides more or less full-time over the entrance to the garage at Matoub's former home in Taourirt Moussa that houses the bullet-ridden car in which he was killed.²¹ As many have observed, media sources portrayed Algeria's civil war with recurring Madonna-like portraits of female suffering (Mortimer 1996); and images of funerals, as is frequently the case in journalism across the Middle East and North Africa, commonly present female bereavement as the archetypal image of raw grief, in contrast with political or honour-based responses to martyrdom in the male domain.²²

¹⁹ See Vince 2009 for the increased authority conferred on women's 'public' roles by connection to the war of independence, either directly (as a *mujahida* or female insurgent) or through family connection with a male *mujahid* or *shahid*.

²⁰ A general amnesty for Islamist insurgents was passed by the Bouteflika government in 1999 and approved by popular referendum. The 'Civil Concord' granted immunity from prosecution and from deprivation of civil rights, except for those who had committed 'blood crimes' or terrorist attacks, in return for rendition of arms. The lack of punitive justice is an ongoing source of bitterness for the families of those who died in the violence of the 1990s, or who remain unaccounted for.

²¹ The house in Taourirt has been converted by the Fondation Lounès Matoub into a shrine-like museum of photographs and artefacts; on its large terrace stands Matoub's tomb, decorated by the Algerian flag and bordered by the terrace walls inscribed with words from his song texts and reproductions of images by the renowned dissident cartoonist Ali Dilem, taken from the artwork of Matoub's final album.

²² The same contrast also emerged in my respondents' narratives of Matoub's death. Many of my male respondents had attended the huge gathering that accompanied Matoub's funeral in Taourirt, and remembered 'the raw fury'; 'the end of any respect for power'; 'starting a mass protest song myself'. Women, on the other hand, remembered 'seeing it on the television and weeping along with Malika [Matoub]' (Nouara); 'the panic of knowing that [my brother] was there in that crowd, and all I could do was sit and watch as Kabylia went up in flames' (Wardia).

The symbolism of the grieving mother representing national justice is ubiquitous in Algeria. In Kabylia and its diaspora, this is complemented by a widespread imagery of women representing a lost purity of ‘antebellum’ Kabyle society.²³ Images of Kabyle tradition popular among migrants often portray women going about ‘traditional’ activities; the absence of men from these images of tradition, indeed, is striking.²⁴ The ideal of the woman as representation of a cultural purity that is, by definition, sullied by ‘politics’ relies on a patriarchal commonplace that women are not actors in the struggles of nationalism but merely its observers.²⁵ This is reflected in song texts as a recurring theme of the son proffering futile remedies for the ills of his mother (the nation), who, though she knows ‘what history should have been’, is powerless to change its course:

Lezzayer:

Srewtey eebban wiyad
Gouri-y-d am weblad
S wallen ttawiy lewhi
yef wul-iw yenneyl ccyad
Iles-iw d asemmad
Ggummay a d-refdey timmi

...

Agrawliw:

A yemma sebr ur ttru
*Deg umezruy a kem-naru*²⁶

Algeria:

I weeded the field, now others are harvesting;
 I am motionless as a stone
 And with haggard eyes I watch
 My heart fills with burning oil
 My tongue is frozen
 I cannot bear to lift my eyes.

...

The Revolutionary:

Mother! Be patient and do not weep
 We will write you down in History.

²³ See Chapter 3 for discussion of the chronological ambiguity of this conception, which refers to a diffuse notion of imagined purity rather than any specific period. Many Kabyles refer to a ‘better’ state of affairs ‘before colonization’, or even argue that society was closer to this ideal before the civil war of the 1990s.

²⁴ ‘Heritage’ programmes on television tell a similar story. Several Kabyle families, understanding that I was interested in Kabyle culture, sat me down to watch one such documentary that is often shown on Algeria’s Berber-language channel (‘la 4’). In an ancient *taddart* of low stone houses set in a typical Jurjura mountainscape, the programme shows a day in the life of Tassadit, an aged woman going about her daily tasks: collecting wood, fetching water, preparing *ayrum aqoran* (an unleavened hard bread made with couscous and olive oil) in the embers of her hearth, telling folk stories to her young nieces and educating them in domestic tasks. The interior of Tassadit’s house has been recreated as a traditional *axxam* of the sort described by Bourdieu, with Berber pottery lining the walls and a *kanun* (hearth) in the centre. Her husband, as he may well have been, is thoroughly absent from the proceedings (except to eat the bread).

²⁵ A particularly specious view in light of the actual contribution of female *mujahidat* and others to the liberation struggle, a topic I cannot explore here: see *inter alia* Seferdjeli 2004 and Vince 2009.

²⁶ ‘A yemma amek’ (Matoub 2003: 130).

This reflects a belief that still persists strongly for many Kabyles: that women are responsible for cultural transmission and original purity; and that the vagaries of ‘history’ and politics interfere with this pure vision of the ‘feminine’ domain of nationalism as the handing down of an enduring cultural ‘spirit’ (cf. Chapter 3). Several of my respondents asserted the supposed progressiveness of Kabyle gender conceptions on these grounds, saying that they accorded ‘great importance’ to women because of their role in guarding Kabyle tradition; some, meanwhile, also recognized the irony of ‘thinking we emancipate women by making them guard the past’ (Belaid), to quote one Paris respondent highly critical of the self-congratulatory activist rhetoric on women’s rights. Much of the material published by Berber linguistic activists – folk tale collections for instance – also dwells on this feminine domain of cultural transmission. As studies of women and music in Kabylia have pointed out (Mahfoufi 2002; Goodman 2005), the use of women’s ‘situation song’ (see Chapter 5) by male activist singers often reflects the same belief in feminine cultural forms as a representation of pure authenticity. Matoub went one step further with the title track of his 1996 album ‘Tiyri g-gemma’ (‘Mother’s lament’), a song recorded by his mother and sung a cappella against the sound of a flowing stream: an aural metaphor for women’s song as a *retour à la source*.

Child-rearing and marriage: everyday perceptions of women as cultural bearers

This is not just an abstract conception. It is also reflected in widespread (though changing) understandings of women as a link to ‘origins’ in more concrete ways. Three of my respondents in Paris, men born in France to Kabyle parents, had each in their mid-twenties decided to marry a woman from Kabylia or a Kabyle family living in

Algiers. By the time I knew them, all had children, and told me that they had wanted them to grow up speaking Kabyle and ‘understanding Kabyle culture’ through their mothers:

It was very important to me to make sure my son didn’t grow up thinking of Kabyle culture as something that was there once but we’d lost long since. I wanted him to experience it first-hand, as a living culture and language. For me the only way to do that was to marry a woman from back home (*du bled*) because I’m already at one remove: I can speak Kabyle but it’s not the true Kabyle, it’s influenced by French and Arabic and the mixed influences I grew up around. You could say the same about my culture: sure, I play Matoub and eat *azbane* [a typically Kabyle dish of mint couscous dumplings], but I’m not really Kabyle in the pure sense, I’ve already lost most of that. Even if I had grown up there I wouldn’t be able to pass it on as a woman can. Only a woman can pass all of this directly to our children, and that’s why I had to marry back home. (Mourad)

Here we see the belief that women can transmit culture in ‘first-hand ... pure’ form in a way that men cannot. This is especially common among migrants, but it also applies in Algeria. Among Kabyles I knew in Algiers, several young men also returned to their parents’ villages or regions of origin when they wanted to marry. Some married cousins, others childhood acquaintances or daughters of parents’ contacts (often, of course, these categories overlap).²⁷ Cheraga, the suburb where I spent time in the Algiers household of my host family, is heavily Kabyle-dominated. Within a small sub-neighbourhood of Cheraga, we were able to visit a series of extended cousins and ‘village neighbours’ of my host family, many of whom I had also met in Ajmoun when they were on return visits. In several of these households, Ajmoun men who had grown up in Algiers had married women from the village or nearby, reinforcing the matrix of village and family connections in the city.

²⁷ The importance of father’s-brother’s-daughter marriage as a guarantee of overlapping family and local interests has been particularly important in Maghribi kinship analysis (Eickelman 1989): see Introduction, n. 40.

Because Kabylia is traditionally patrilocal – married couples usually settling in or near the man’s family home (Joseph 1996) – the density of Ajmoun households in a small area of Cheraga remains strong. This is supported by patterns of land rights and purchase: several Ajmoun families bought plots in Cheraga during the 1980s when prices were low, leaving them undeveloped for some years. More recently, they have either used these pockets to build houses for the next generation, or sold them to other Ajmoun families migrating to Algiers. In this way, village ties of family and neighbourhood map onto another ‘village’ in Cheraga,²⁸ which maintains geographical proximity nested in marriage patterns (usually of Algiers men marrying Ajmoun women, occasionally vice versa). Women, then, are seen to transmit and maintain ‘Kabyle culture’ not just in an abstract or symbolic way. The patterns of migration and settlement that often result, and the way they reinforce intersecting networks of village and family connections in places outside Ajmoun – most importantly Algiers and Paris – make women a direct link to ‘origins’ in a geographical sense too. These connections then also take on physical shapes: routes, visiting patterns, exchange of objects and so on (Scheele 2009).

Given this gendered conception of cultural essence – the notion of women as the representation of *azar* and bearers of a part of Kabyleness that is timeless but transmissible – it is unsurprising to find that women are also potent symbols for an ideal essence of *algérianité*. These everyday metaphors express an ongoing concern of Kabyle and Algerian identity projects with the quest for an original, lost national ‘personality’ able to preserve authenticity and closeness to original sources without interference. As we saw in Chapter 3, this nationalist conception also reflects deeply

²⁸ See Khellil 1979 and Goodman 2005 on the mapping of village or regional connections in Kabylia onto ‘urban villages’ in Algiers, Paris and elsewhere.

entrenched Islamic paradigms of scriptural authenticity as original wholeness, and divergence from the root as necessarily implying moral decadence. In the recurring theme of Matoub's political song texts that I have examined here – 'perversion of the course of history' expressed as a failed chain of genealogical and cultural transmission – Kabyles express their claim to define the history of post-independence Algeria in a narrative that fuses everyday conceptions of gender roles, discourses of 'national spirit', broader cultural understandings of authenticity in Islamic context, and indeed Westernized discourses of indigenous rights as pure tradition (Malkki 1992).

Gerontocratic authority as an explanation of domination

In the first part of this chapter, I examined how metaphors of honour worked to reject the perceived exploitation by the Algerian regime of a discursive register of family gerontocracy to justify aggression against the population, including that of Kabylia. The view that respondents expressed was that the state had adopted the 'wrong' code of social relations with Kabyles in its unwarranted use of quasi-gerontocratic authority, that relations should be conducted instead as an exchange based on the honour system between 'equals', and that the state's breach of this contract exempted Kabyles from the duty of obedience and instead imposed on them the duty to resist the state.

However, the vernacular narrative faces the concurrent problem of explaining the gap between ideal and reality. The failure of Kabyle 'self-regulation' to meet the ideal of compensation for the shortcomings of state infrastructural provision, the fact that Kabyle expressions of *nif* as resistance have done very little to improve the material predicament of the region in any practical way, and the fact that many Kabyles appear

to defer to ‘state’ authorities on a daily basis rather than resist their influence (cf. Chapter 2): all of these demand explanation.

To provide it, several of my respondents expressed a view that moved away from the ideal of absolute resistance outlined in the first part of the chapter: the view that Kabyles are so conditioned by the moral weight of behavioural norms within the family that the state has only to use this language, even wrongfully, and Kabyles lose all capacity to resist. The vernacular narrative thus explains submission to state dominance by comparison with the tension which many also articulate in respect of family relations: the idea of gerontocratic authority as an absolute form of power which may be undesirable, but is quite simply incontrovertible. This is the register in which my respondents explained the actual dominance of a nationalist conception and practice of a regime antagonistic to Kabyle ideals.

In contrast with the village code of honour among equals, internal family hierarchy, as we have seen, is based on acceptance of higher authority rather than resistance to it as the normal mode of social relations. The gerontocratic system within families imposes ‘respect’ and deference to those classed as *imqor* (lit. ‘big’). The obligation holds between related men according to age, and particularly within a direct descent order – more strictly therefore towards elder brothers than elder cousins – and for women towards related adult men,²⁹ regardless of age but differentiated according to proximity.

Between women, it also operates by proxy through the age and hierarchical family status of their spouses, so that mothers-in-law traditionally exercise authority over

²⁹ On marrying, a woman generally assumes the same obligations to her husband’s family, with the same internal criteria of hierarchy, that previously obtained (and continue to) towards men directly related to her.

daughters-in-law, and the wives of elder brothers over those of younger (regardless of the women's relative ages) within the same household. This hierarchy, indeed, is a feature of patrilocality that many Kabyle women fear, and from which many suffer because of the still common (though changing, as independent living has become more viable) practice of pooling labour through large households, in which several brothers and their families often share the same villa. Though each (in theory, and space permitting) has a separate flat or set of rooms, labour-intensive parts of family life – and mainly those managed by women, such as food preparation – are usually shared. This means that younger women, or the spouses of younger brothers, are doubly subject to this type of absolute authority throughout the household: in relation to men, but also to other women. One of the six sisters in my host family, Dalila, had until recently lived in her husband's home village and as part of his extended family:

I'm generally quite tough, but this was just unbearable. Amirouche's [her husband's] mother and one of his elder brothers' wives made my life misery, I had no privacy and they watched and found fault with every little thing I did in the kitchen and around the house. Imagine living with that for almost twenty years! Amirouche is great but there was nothing he could do, because of *lmuqadra* towards his brothers and father – and he couldn't criticize their wives without passing through them. Eventually we had enough money to move, and now I'm in heaven – I can close my door and do whatever I want, no more meddling.³⁰ (Dalila)

The absolutism of the gerontocratic system enables Kabyles to justify a radical distinction between the two opposed codes of *nif* and family 'respect'. To illustrate the comparative metaphor between these codes and conceptions of the relationship between Kabyles and the state, I now give extended quotes from two interviews in which

³⁰ *Lmuqadra* between men is not the only explanation. The feeling of duty to obey a male spouse, infamously set down as a legal obligation by Algeria's Family Code of 1984 (clause removed in the new Code of 2005), remains strong among the majority of my female respondents; in Ajmoun, several observed that this makes it difficult for them to resolve disputes with others in any material way without their husband's support.

respondents spontaneously used elaborate descriptions of family life to explain their conception of this relationship. First:

Massi: In the 1970s, things were very different from now. At that time my father's elder brother, T., was living in Algiers, but he needed to come back to the village for business. At first it was just for days at a time, then it became more permanent and he brought his family to live in our house. T. was a tyrant, and he took it into his head that my mother [rather than his own wife] should do all the chores for him and his family – cooking, laundry, everything. She was essentially a slave to another woman's husband for five years.

GM: Did your father try to do something about that?

Massi: I told you, things were different back then. We still have absolute respect towards our elder brothers but maybe if the same happened now there would be more awareness of the woman's rights, I'm not sure. Anyway, my father loved his wife but he couldn't fight back because of respect: T. was his elder brother. You could say that it was my father's fault for letting it happen, but he simply had no choice, and no one who knew in the village thought the worse of him for it, he didn't lose any honour, because they all know too how it works in families.

Well, that's how it is with us [Kabyles] now. Since it became obvious that all the militancy [referring to *Tafsut*, 1998 and the Black Spring] wasn't going to achieve anything real, we've just acted like the little ones in the family and done what we can to gain acceptance within the system, rather than fighting against it as we used to; like my father, who fought inside himself against the injustice of his situation, but had to submit on the outside because his brother's authority was just something he couldn't resist [*c'était plus fort que lui*]. Sometimes you resist and resist, and one day that's it, if X has told you again and again that he has power over you, you start to believe it.

This respondent, then, explained the continued subjugation of Kabyle interests as an outcome of incontrovertible gerontocratic power over the weaker, in which yielding becomes 'normal' rather than dishonourable as it would be in an exchange governed by *nif*. The second respondent who drew a comparison with moral codes to explain Kabyle relations with the state did so in reference to the concept of *leib*, or a failure to observe codes of respect in the family context. More precisely than 'shame', *leib* is occasioned by situations that fall outside the normal order of social interaction, and simply does not exist where this order does not. Thus, in the midst of a description of state mistreatment in Kabylia, this respondent invoked the concept to argue that the regime had attempted to instil a false sense of *leib* in Kabyles for the purposes of domination:

Belaid: With the government, it's not the same as among Kabyles, there shouldn't be any limits. But the regime has treated us for so long like nephews [ie. lowest in the gerontocratic hierarchy] that we've started to feel out of place, ashamed of who we are ... not proper Algerians. You know the word *leib*, shame?

GM: What sort of shame?

Belaid: You know when we say *yεab*? [meaning 'he is handicapped'] It's the same thing.

GM: The words for shame and handicap come from the same root...

Belaid: Yes, but it's not that being handicapped is shameful. The word 'shame' doesn't really exist in Taqbaylit; it just means that the person in some way doesn't fit, that he's different from the norm and can't be expected to behave in the same way as others.

GM: So *leib* happens when...

Belaid: Well, I suppose you could say it's like a social handicap. It's when something doesn't have its place in the way people deal with each other.

GM: People...

Belaid: The ones you know the limits with, your family. Obviously *leib* can't happen with others, because you don't know who you're supposed to 'respect', it's even. Even if I did something awful, I would never experience *leib* with you, for instance. But you know, if someone constantly makes you feel *leib* by acting *as if* they're an elder, if they do it convincingly, that instinct is so deep that you start to feel out of place. That's exactly what we think *le Pouvoir* has done to us: building a so-called family [*fonder un foyer, za'ama*³¹] only to keep the younger ones quiet and avoid dealing with us on an equal footing. We fought against it for a long time, but we're running out of strength.

In this description of the Kabyle predicament, the regime's assumption of the language of gerontocracy to govern becomes an explanation as well as a criticism. Situating governmental actions in a register of non-negotiable authority comparable to that which holds within the family allows Kabyles to rationalize the frequent need for co-operation with state authorities in order to accomplish the needs of everyday living, and further explains why their attempts to respond to the regime's alleged oppression and violence in the register of *nif* have done little to achieve real improvement in Kabylia's material situation or political status: in the context of family relations this form of defensive response is entirely 'out of place', incurring *leib* rather than attracting moral approval as it would in an exchange governed by the parallel code of *nif*.

³¹ 'Za'ama' (Ar.): 'supposedly', 'soi-disant'.

* * *

I have explained in this chapter how my respondents describe and enact the transmission of various social principles in everyday Kabyle life, each associated with a different context, and compare this with processes that they believe should also be part of national life properly conceived.

Firstly, they contend, a ‘good’ society should involve the transmission, between members of a given group (in this case modelled on conceptions of the Kabyle village), of certain material and symbolic goods. There should be a measure of material redistribution, achieved through collective labour and hardship funds, and in theory voluntary generosity from the rich to the poor. More importantly, the remaining discrepancies should be ‘corrected’ through a system of equal access to symbolic moral status achieved through the mechanisms of the code of honour, with no regard (in theory) to wealth. My respondents find the state guilty, on this count, not only of deliberately ‘mismanaging’ material distribution, but also of failing to respect the rights of the weak and the supposed primacy of symbolic over material capital in determining an individual or group’s moral worth. The state, they argue, makes a mockery of this principle of ‘equality’, thereby divesting the Algerian ‘nation’ (conceived as a co-operative community built on such principles) of any meaning.

Secondly, my respondents mirror the regime’s habit of using genealogical models as a metaphor for the perpetuation of national heritage. Kabyle rhetoric focuses on a ‘feminine’ domain of regional cultural transmission suffering oppression from a

coercive and patriarchalist state, and (in the narratives both of men and women) draws parallels with the perceived importance of women as cultural bearers in daily life.

Lastly, many Kabyles draw on the model of gerontocracy and ‘respect’ within families both to criticize the existing model of relations between a state regime and its populace – the state’s alleged use of arbitrary power, rather than putative equality, as a foundation for ‘governance’ – and to explain instances of perceived Kabyle co-operation and ‘yielding’ to state aggression. As with the criticism of *Kabyles de service* in Chapter 2, this invocation of the power of the gerontocratic model serves to account for the discrepancy between the Kabyle tenet of resistance and a reality that often cannot sustain the principle. The metaphor of submission to state power as involuntary yielding to gerontocratic authority thus enables Kabyles to continue to ‘live with’ the idea of absolute resistance demanded by *taqbaylit*, accounting for anomalies by invoking the only other principle imperative enough to neutralize it: the alternative model of family authority.

Chapter 5

‘Lettre ouverte’: truth and experience in Kabyle song

Agraw:

Nqesd-ik-id ad ay-temled

Amek akka i teddunt temsal

...

Agrawliw:

Zriy legraya teɣram

Teyram ark^oel tilufa

Teyram-tent ur sent-thulfam

Fell-awen ur æddant ara

Asm' aa k^oen-id-qesden leewam

S cittuh b-b^oayen ak^o nesædda

A s-tinim ziy d asemmam

Useqqi n tegrawla

Society:

We come to you, teach us:

Where do our troubles come from?

...

The Revolutionary:

I know: you are erudite and have read;

You have read of our sufferings

Without experiencing them in the flesh

Without enduring them.

When times descend upon you

With a fraction of what we suffered

You will know that it is a bitter thing,

The broth of revolution.

Lounès Matoub, ‘Communion avec la Patrie’ (1993)

This chapter explores how men’s political song expresses an ideal of Kabyle nationalism as a common good, and contrasts this with a critique of Arabo-Islamic state identity as founded on elite institutional knowledge. Crucial as it has been to the Kabyle cause, music is not a cultural form apart but part of the way in which Kabyle activism has imagined and constructed categories of knowledge: popular versus elite, lived versus learned, oral versus textual. The contrast lives not only in texts but also in the social context of music as a community activity, above all in the café; and in popular narratives of the singer as a channel for hidden knowledge, which shape a notion of music as shared cultural heritage.

The singer’s role is ambiguous, however: if he is an opinion leader and a privileged representative of latent popular feeling, this is because he is thought to hold a level of *tamusni* (wisdom) that places him beyond the constraints of societal (village) norms.

Popular singers must therefore fulfil two roles at once, embodying ideals of the ‘man of the people’ while cultivating the exceptional status of the visionary, willing and able to challenge the social and especially political order. Singers themselves play a crucial part in maintaining these conflicting narratives of a ‘people’s music’ that has universal value only because carried by an exceptional individual. The singer, in other words, is an idealized resistance figure.

Singers and their audiences often cast the *chanteur engagé* today as a descendant of a similarly liminal figure – the *amusnaw* or sage-poet – extensively discussed by the prominent linguist and novelist Mouloud Mammeri as a carrier of Kabyle values, reinforcing the importance of the role in popular understandings of ‘traditional’ Kabyle society. In this vein, several respondents described political song as perpetuating a tradition of Kabyle oral poetry whose purveyors were seen both as stewards of arcane knowledge and as embodiments of *taqbaylit*, or everyday Kabyle morality, in its most accomplished form. The prestige of the Kabyle oral poet therefore lay in his ability to draw universal themes out of commonplace situations (Yacine 2011); and the successful singer is similarly valued for his ability to present Kabyle realities in the most universally accessible way possible. This is the basis of a conception of the singer as popular representative.

In this context, song texts are not enough by themselves. The singer himself must also personify these values for his work to carry the prestige associated with oral poetry. This means that where a singer goes, where and for whom he performs, how he manages social and political connections, how he transmits his skill – in short, his moral worth as a member of Kabyle society, and above all as a bearer of Kabyle culture –

define his legitimacy as a popular representative. Rather than either text or music in isolation, it is then largely the social context of music that is understood to make Kabyle song radically different from other Algerian styles. This, rather than song texts themselves, is the aspect that I focus on here.

During my fieldwork, I played regularly in two situations: firstly musical *soirées* at café-restaurants, and secondly festive galas staged by Kabyle cultural associations in and around Paris. Each of these spaces played host to a different ‘performance’ of what it meant to be Kabyle, both within the community – to what extent was diversity tolerated and how was difference dealt with? – and in relation to those perceived as outside it (French clients, ‘Arab’ Algerian and other North African migrants, and to a lesser extent second-generation or non-Taqbaylit-speaking children of Kabyle parents). The café and association are strongly opposed in this regard. Whereas diaspora association events typically attempt to depict a Kabyle tradition of universal public equality, the café is often a space where intra-Kabyle boundaries are drawn and discussed. Both appear to present a strong model of Kabyle ‘community’, yet the boundaries of this community are very differently drawn in different places.

Accordingly, I discuss both the ideal of the singer as a universal popular representative and how this breaks down in the face of debates over subregional loyalties. This happens especially often in Kabyle-owned Paris cafés, many of which remain bases for a sense of ‘village’ identity transplanted into a diaspora setting. In the first half of the chapter, I discuss how an idealized opposition between ‘formal’ (often institutional) and ‘informal’ knowledge is used to depict the political singer as a modern-day sage-poet and carrier of universal values, and thence as a charismatic

representative of Kabyle nationalism. In the second half, I narrow the focus to participant observation of café musical events, explaining how and why cafés play host to debates over the nature of Kabyle community and its boundaries. I then explore how questions of authorship and cultural borrowing inform judgements of singers' success or failure in transmitting Kabyle heritage.

Kabyle song: a brief overview

Song has played a key role in Kabyle activism for several reasons. It is sung in Taqbaylit, first of all, and often appeals in large part to explicitly 'local' knowledge – place names, characters, idioms – that provide an attractive alternative to state discourses of unitary national identity.¹ Since Taqbaylit is still predominantly (though by no means exclusively) an oral language, song is among the surest ways of spreading ideas. It was an especially powerful medium for diffusing ideology in a semi-literate population and amidst state repression of written Berberist material in Algeria in the 1960s, '70s and '80s (Goodman 2005). The rise of recording and communications technology has also enabled these ideas to flow from one side of the Mediterranean to another, with albums frequently recorded and produced in France, where migrants bought the uncensored version to take back to Algeria.

Two broad genres run through contemporary Kabyle song.² The first is the *chanson de l'exil* or immigration song. The musicologist Mehenna Mahfoufi dates the first Kabyle

¹ Cf. Miliani 2002: 'The language [of song texts] ... is of course that of everyday exchange, but also that of the discursive fragments that carry the greatest symbolic charge: religious formulas, adages and proverbs, local place and family names, idioms.'

² Some identify the festive song generically referred to by the French term 'le folklore', composed for dancing and usually making no claim to musical or textual innovation, as another genre. In the years

music recorded in France to 1910, but the genre became more popular in the 1930s and 1940s as the number of Kabyle immigrants grew; its notable exponents included Sheikh El Hesnaoui, Sliman Azem and Sheikh Arab Bouizgaren, all of whom arrived in France at this time. With the possible exception of El Hesnaoui, these early singers were labour migrants who played for music evenings in cafés at weekends and were only later signed to French recording labels. The *chanson de l'exil* is a clearly communal genre, structured around call and response motifs and revolving around themes of nostalgia, fidelity and betrayal of family and waiting fiancées, the hardships of immigration, racism and male solitude. Many contemporary singers still compose songs in this vein, taking up recurring textual themes and language that sometimes jar with the altered circumstances of family migration.

The other important fact about *chanson de l'exil*, often forgotten in the contemporary context of a heavily male-dominated contemporary Kabyle music, is that it emerged from forms of 'situation song' that were the preserve of women in Kabyle village life (Yacine 2006: xiv).³ Ironically, given the current bias, the taboo in the early days of migration was that of *men* adapting this essentially feminine form – which often took as its subject the lament for a departed husband or lover – to the new circumstances of life

following 1980 several exponents of 'New Kabyle Song', above all Lounès Matoub and Lounis Aït Menguellet, adapted the genre for their mobilization songs, with texts on political identity accompanied by a *folklore* rhythm and musical style (eg. Matoub, 'Slaëvits ayavahri' or 'Wind of Freedom'). However, the genre is usually accompanied by loud percussion and built around repeated rhythmic motifs that make it difficult to develop a narrative text, and its context is usually as festive entertainment. Since I am discussing here song texts explicitly understood to be vehicles of *tamusni*, the essence of which is meaning concentrated in the virtuoso rhetoric of 'right speaking', I will not deal further with the *folklore* genre further here.

³ Aside from rite of passage songs (those traditionally sung as lullabies, at circumcision ceremonies, henna ceremonies and so on), the first of the main forms here is the *izli* (pl. *izlan*), a form of love poetry sung among women about men. *Izli*, often used to accompany activities such as weaving or preparing food, found a more formal context in large women's singing sessions known as *urar-s*, or 'games'. The other key genre is the *adekker*, or saint-veneration song, intoned by women on the pilgrimages to saints' tombs that represent one of the rare occasions for women to gather in large numbers outside the home. See 'Genres poétiques: Kabyle' at <http://centrederechercheberbere.fr/genres-poetiques-kabyle.html> (accessed 15 February 2013).

in France (Miliani 2002). Several prominent female Kabyle singers have since emerged, but with a curious common anomaly. With some recent exceptions (notably Malika Domrane), all have gone by their first name only: hence Nouara, Cherifa, Hnifa, Djura, to name only the most prominent female artists of the post-independence years. This is indicative of the fact that although singing is one rare context in which women may, in certain circumstances and places, appear in an explicitly public role, they (still, in many cases) do so in semi-anonymity and above all avoid situating themselves in the context of a family line. Today, female singers perform regularly at cultural association galas, in concerts at major venues, or as chorus members accompanying a male soloist. They rarely if ever, however, perform in cafés; indeed, this was one of the reasons why I did not succeed in playing with or getting to know more female singers. Women are also very rarely instrumentalists; in more than two years of performing with Kabyle musicians I encountered only one other, a *bendir* (frame-drum) player.⁴

Men's *chanson de l'exil* is founded on notions of the singer as righteous sufferer and his prerogative to speak of grief in a public way denied to others – much as the former *mujahid* or prisoner may. This is premised in turn on the assumption that his words express an experience common to others and that he is in part a conduit for popular feeling. While *chanson de l'exil* texts are often on intimate subjects of love and loss, they talk in terms generalized enough to represent a broader experience of these emotions than the singer's personal grief. The language and subject matter of songs, including recurring metaphors and images, thus provide a collective narrative that in turn shapes the way in which individuals construe and describe their own experiences.

⁴ Percussion is something of a special case, as women traditionally used frame drums to accompany their group songs during *urar-s* or at festivities. It is unclear why the *de facto* taboo, or simply the lack of habit, appears to apply specifically to melody instruments.

Song texts therefore come to be an important vehicle for shared understanding of emotions and concepts.

The second textual genre is the tradition of *chanson engagée* or political song. We can distinguish several phases of this tradition. During the independence struggle, singers composed songs attacking colonial power, often using the metaphor of the devouring locust inherited from Ibn Khaldun and, ironically, colonial ethnography; Sliman Azem's text *Ffey ay ajrad tamurt-iw* (1955, 'Leave my land, cricket!') is a notable example.⁵ The recently deceased singer Cherif Kheddami was the other prolific composer of Taqbaylit-language texts carrying the message of pre-independence Algerian nationalism.

In the 1970s, after independence, as repression grew and the opposition between state ideology and the 'Berberist' cause hardened, Kabyle singers sought a new form of expression. One aim was to move away from the Egyptian musical style that had become popular in the 1950s and 1960s with Kabyle singers performing with cabaret and backing orchestras of 'Arabic' instruments (oud, nay flute and so on; see Mahfoufi 1994). The genre known as New Kabyle Song, pioneered by iconic figures including Idir (b. 1949) and the poet Ben Mohamed (see Goodman 2005), Lounis Aït Menguellet (b. 1950) and Ferhat Mehenni (b. 1951), therefore adapted the melodies of traditional women's song to 'Western' metres, instrumentation and above all textual themes that

⁵ 'I had a garden; it was a work of art, all was in order, from peach to pomegranate ... I had laboured the land in the blazing summer heat ... / The cricket arrived in swarms and gorged himself until he could eat no more; he even attacked the roots! / Cricket, leave my land! What you found there is gone forever. If a *qadi* had given you the rights, show me the deeds, if they are genuine. / Cricket, you have eaten up the country, and I still wonder why? You have destroyed everything, right up to the door. You have devoured the heritage of my father, and my trust in you is no more / ... Seeking to found a lineage you bred copiously. But it is too late: the judgement is already made, and my healed consciousness awakens.' Translation adapted from Azem n.d.

expressed a fusion of cultural tradition with liberal Berber modernism against a repressive state. Many New Song texts, as well as foregrounding a domain of village heritage and traditional practices,⁶ therefore centred around themes of secularism, denunciations of the exploitative aspect of saint veneration practices (Mahfoufi 1994 and Goodman 2002)⁷ and resistance to arbitrary state persecution.⁸

My discussion of respondents' reactions to political song focuses on a third phase of political song that evolved around the figure of Lounès Matoub, the dissident singer assassinated in 1998 (see Fig. 4 below). Matoub came to prominence in the late 1970s shortly before the Berber Spring, and his texts following the Spring were perhaps the single most influential vehicle for the new sense of regional ferment and in particular the association of Kabyle identity with the fight for human rights in the face of state oppression. Matoub's texts moved from the defence of Berber identity under threat to an explicit and thoroughgoing critique of Algerian governance as a political, economic and social system, of Arabism as unitary national identity, and of Islam as a threat to individual liberty and political transparency.

Matoub's struggle for Kabyle rights was punctuated with violent encounters with state security and then, during the civil war, armed rebels. In 1988 *gendarmes* shot at him during a demonstration, and in 1994 he was kidnapped for fifteen days by the Armed Islamic Group (GIA). This added to his already legendary reputation as a political singer the authority conferred by undeserved suffering, key to the concept of martyrdom in Algeria (Martinez 2004; McDougall 2006b). He was therefore able to claim that his

⁶ For instance Idir and Ben Mohamed's 'A vava inouva' describing the weaving loom, or 'Assendu' the ritual of butter churning.

⁷ Idir/Ben Mohamed, 'Muhend-nney'.

⁸ Ferhat Imazighen Imula [Ferhat Mehenni], 'Berraghoulia', a text on the notorious Algerian prison of the same name.

own embodied knowledge of resistance made him the most legitimate and universal representative of the Kabyle cause of resistance to state hegemony. The manner of Matoub's death, discussed in the Introduction, set the seal on his reputation as a Kabyle martyr, already cultivated in life with his predictions of his own assassination and wilful provocations of state power.



Fig. 4. Replica street signs at the Fondation Lounès Matoub museum, Taourirt Moussa. Note different wording compromises between local Berber associations and French municipal authorities: 'Algerian singer and poet of Berber expression, assassinated in Kabylia on 25 June 1998' (rue Lounès Matoub, Paris); 'Algerian poet of Berber expression. Victim of intolerance' (Esplanade Lounès Matoub, Chasse-sur-Rhône). Photograph by author, with permission.

A) IDEALS: THE SINGER AS POPULAR REPRESENTATIVE

Privileged or popular knowledge?

Political song, I argue, resolves the tension between an ideology of Kabyle identity premised on the rejection of authority and actual attachment to the tradition of charismatic leadership. The *chanteur engagé* presents a face of authority and privileged knowledge – usually a problematic concept for the ‘official’ egalitarian conception of Kabyle identity (cf. Chapter 4) – that is legitimated by his popular credentials of oral transmission and music-making ‘for the community’. Singers thus fulfil the desire for a Kabyle incarnation of the ‘National Man’ who embodies the moral values of the polity, but couch this image in a cultural form widely understood to carry a type of popular knowledge grounded in common Kabyle experience, which they contrast with the ‘empty learning’ of institutional education.

Here, the image of Kabyle song as a ‘people’s music’ (see Fig. 5 below) rests on a comparison with other Algerian genres. Many describe *rai*,⁹ firstly, as the commercialist antithesis of an ideal of Kabyle song as a communal form sung by members for the benefit of other members:

I’m not only against *rai* because it’s sung in Arabic. The singers don’t get involved, they’re not among their own: if they ever come into the cafés you can be sure there’s money changing hands. Look at [Cheb] Khaled or Mami [iconic figures of *rai* who have been successful on the ‘world music’ market]; that’s it, now they’re successful you’d only ever see them on big stages and acting like kings. Then compare that with [well-known Kabyle singers] Amirouche or Chérif Hamani who own cafés in Paris and don’t think twice about singing for small associations or *soirées*. Their power is that they stay close to what’s really going on, so their texts mean something. (Hakim)

⁹ *Rai* refers to a genre usually sung in Arabic and associated with political expression or protest (the term originally means ‘opinion’ or ‘point of view’). Unlike Kabyle music, *rai* has been widely exported to world music markets.

If *rai* is a rival genre of popular oppositional song, Arabo-Andalus music¹⁰ is a prime target of Kabyle criticism as an elite form and a vehicle for state conceptions of monocultural, urban Algerian identity.¹¹ Many Kabyle musicians contrast their own role with that of the *sheikh* (musical master) of the Arabo-Andalus tradition. As suggested by the use of the same title given to Sufi masters and tribal leaders, the musical *sheikh* derives his authority from (perceived) stewardship and transmission of ‘lost or exceedingly rare musical knowledge’ (Glasser 2008: 22). This control in turn gives rise to frequent accusations that instead of transmitting this knowledge, *shuyukh* extend their power by withholding it from their disciples. Kabyle singers frequently describe a contrast in their own advocacy and practice of music as a common good:

Like most of us I learned my art in the village, in the café, not in lessons but by being around people who shared theirs. Now I do my best to pass it on in the same way. What we know isn’t sacred, we just express it in a way [ie. poetry, song] that others can’t. I learned how to do this from others, and I want to make it available to everyone. Otherwise it just becomes another thing controlled by a mafia, like the regime [*les hommes du Pouvoir*] who rule by controlling what others know and don’t. (Kacem)

But this advocacy of a ‘village’ music, freely shared, stands alongside another popular perception: that of singers as bearers of a type of knowledge hidden to others, known as *tamusni*. This complex idea denotes a type of oral knowledge understood as privileged and accessible only to the initiate yet – unlike the knowledge thought to be the basis of Arabo-Andalus music – at the same time relevant to all members of the community (Kabyles, in this case). Let us now look in more detail at ideals of *tamusni* and how they inform perceptions of the political singer.

¹⁰ This broad generic term refers to a range of styles originating in the classical music of the Muslim Iberian peninsula (al-Andalus) in the early middle ages. Today, variants of Arabo-Andalus are found across North Africa; in Algeria, they fall into three main ‘schools’ or traditions centred in the cities of Tlemcen, Algiers and Constantine.

¹¹ Arabo-Andalus music is also associated with the elite social status of patrons with the means to hire large orchestras, and practitioners with the means – and usually the urban, educated background – to study with a *sheikh*. As a genre extensively appropriated as an object of Algerian patrimony by nationalist elites, it also carries strong connotations of state-controlled heritage. See Glasser 2008.



Fig. 5. Matoub as an emblem of popular Kabyle resistance: Ferhat's collage of photos and cassette sleeves from the 1990s. Frame inscribed with epithet 'Le Rebelle', Matoub's name in Tifinagh script, and the Imazighen symbol. Photograph by author, with permission.

The singer as sage: tamusni, language and the art of being Kabyle

Political singers are frequently described as the 'modern-day sages' of the activist cause. But we must bear in mind that the *amusnaw*, as well as a real figure in traditional Kabyle society, is also an ideal constructed by modern activists to legitimate their own role as carriers of cultural heritage. The most prominent example of this process is that of Mouloud Mammeri, who described the legacy of the *amusnaw* as the foundation for a new type of textual Kabyle knowledge that would retain the essence of the oral tradition, yet also validate the status of Tamazight as an inscribed modern language. In his interview article with Pierre Bourdieu – who also famously treated Kabyle oral tradition as the repository of a latent cultural essence – Mammeri situates this description of the *amusnaw* in the context of his own family's place in the tradition. Claiming that his father was the penultimate in the 'lineage of *tamusni*' before it 'died with him', Mammeri cursorily accounts for his own literacy as a generational shift but

stresses his own place, above and beyond his university education, as an heir to the genealogy of *tamusni*. He thus suggests that his own work can be seen as a continuation of the oral tradition by literary means:

Bourdieu: So in this way [by listening to debates between your father and other *imusnawen* while also attending university] you combined the training of a ‘man of letters’ with the systematic invisible training that constitutes that of the *amusnaw*?

Mammeri: I started transcribing Kabyle poems very early on. (Bourdieu and Mammeri 1978)

Such activist formulations of ‘traditional’ roles have undoubtedly influenced popular understandings, and my respondents’ descriptions of the importance of political singers often echoed Mammeri’s analysis of *tamusni* as privileged oral knowledge. In cases like these, the interesting question is not what is constructed and what ‘genuine’, but rather how implicit cultural understandings and conscious formulations weave indistinguishably into contemporary rearticulations of new roles. This is in large part how the political singer has come to represent a new ideal of ‘innate’ Kabyle moral knowledge, contrasted with the state’s use of language and textual religious authority as built on arid erudition.

In my respondents’ descriptions of this ideal, the essential feature of *tamusni* is therefore that it is applied rather than abstract: practical knowledge for commonplace situations, not theoretical learning. Like most forms of ‘protected’ knowledge, however, it is nonetheless inherent in the very concept of *tamusni* that no one (except initiates, perhaps) can say exactly what constitutes it. Its value lies not in factual knowledge but in guidance on everyday matters:

Tamusni isn’t really about facts, although the *imusnawen* did hold vast amounts of knowledge in their heads about local history and families, the natural world, agrarian calendars and so on. But it’s more than that – it’s a way of speaking, and especially being able to answer questions about

what to do in difficult situations. The *amusnaw*'s words mean something to everyone who hears them, but everyone will interpret them differently depending on ability and experience. It's the art of *tamusni* to have that value that stretches beyond your own experience. (Belaid)

In particular, *tamusni* is often described as the ability to comment on moral debates by re-interpreting previous customary norms in new situations and bringing principles up to date with practice. It is therefore a powerful concept for the activist discourse diffused above all by political song that attempts to reconcile the idealized Kabyle narrative of secularism, gender equality and democracy with conflicting practical realities. Because *tamusni* is concerned with re-interpreting principles of 'Kabyleness' in changing circumstances, many see singers not only as the architects of popular political consciousness but also as moral guides through everyday dilemmas, particularly those seen to arise from a conflict between 'tradition and modernity':

Whenever I have a problem or don't know what to do, Matoub and Aït Menguellet are the first people I turn to, before I ask anyone's advice. Matoub alone talked about everything, not just love and exile and politics but the whole range of emotions. Even if the emotion in a song isn't directly relevant to what I'm feeling, he says it with such *tamusni* that I can always draw something bigger out of it, and get an idea of what is the right course of action. I call Matoub the psychologist of the Kabyles: he knew his own so well that he developed a way of speaking so that everyone, whatever their differences, would understand in their way. (Salas)

In short, *tamusni* is a sort of knowledge about how to *be* Kabyle through actions, articulated through 'right speaking'. It is akin to the marriage of language, embodied knowledge and morality as action explored earlier in the concept of *taqbaylit*, but now taken to a higher level of meaning conveyed through sophisticated wordplay and rhetoric. This corresponds to Mammeri's definition of the *amusnaw* as someone who can translate 'tacit knowledge' of how to be Kabyle into language:

The unique characteristic of the *amusnaw* is that he knows how to make innate values explicit. He is an expert in *taqbaylit*, or Kabyleness. (Bourdieu and Mammeri 1978).

This in turn recalls a distinction that Mammeri (1980) drew between three different roles in Kabyle society, determined by the level of ‘innate knowledge’ one demonstrates and how one uses it. The first type, the *argaz leali* (lit. ‘good man’),¹² lives according to the basic requirements of *taqbaylit* and communal codes of morality, and thereby exists as a full member of village society.¹³ Then comes the *argaz* (‘man’), who is more than this: an especially accomplished performer of *taqbaylit* who demonstrates this by his ability to speak wisely and take decisions that demonstrate *sswab*, or ‘good sense’. *Sswab* is another complex and largely untranslatable concept. It encompasses ideas of rationality, equity, detached wisdom (as opposed to the mere social conformity of the first type) and balance: that which is founded not just on ‘sense’ as good judgement, but on knowledge that is sensed rather than known in the abstract. This is a distinction sometimes rendered in French by the distinction between *sage* and *savant* (Yacine 2011). Francophone Kabyles commonly describe *sswab* as the defining characteristic of the *homme de confiance*, a concept that roughly translates Mammeri’s category of the *argaz*. Political leaders frequently therefore invoke the concept to assert their trustworthiness.

The final category is that of the *amusnaw*, who has mastered not just the lived Kabyle wisdom of *sswab* but the more universal vision of *tamusni*, and most importantly the ability to make use of it in the form of persuasive rhetoric. According to Mammeri, the *amusnaw* was judged by his ability to deploy language and meaning polyphonically, with a range of possible interpretations as obvious or as hidden as the listener was able

¹² *Leali* as used by Taqbaylit-speakers, in my experience, does not mean ‘good’ as an abstract or relative ethical judgement so much as ‘in conformity with norms’, ‘classable according to known categories’. (The interesting question then arises of whether a notion of ‘goodness’ *ever* exists in a truly abstract sense, or whether it always ultimately means merely conformity with societal norms. This is clearly beyond the scope of this study!)

¹³ For a fuller discussion of this relationship between fulfilment of the *taqbaylit* code and moral personhood, see my Introduction and Scheele 2008.

to grasp. The other distinctive characteristic of the *amusnaw* is that, more than the other two types, the status was genealogically determined: not necessarily by blood descent, but a symbolic lineage of *tamusni* passed on to successors by informal apprenticeship. The *amusnaw* thus retained both his ‘popular’ credentials and his role in guarding and transmitting arcane knowledge; he was expected to mediate popular feeling, but in normative terms was an exception to the usual constraints on expression in village society.¹⁴

Mammeri’s categories provide a useful framework for thinking about popular conceptions of the role of the political singer. The singer is expected to have elements of all three of these roles: firstly the ability to live as an ‘average’ member of village society by participating in the moral economy of *taqbaylit*; secondly the ability to act as a representative, speaking on behalf of those who cannot by virtue of the detached wisdom of *sswab*; and finally, in some cases, the mastery of poetic language and metaphor that define the *amusnaw*, legitimating the singer as carrier of a more universal message relevant beyond the specific moral context of Kabyle social norms:

The achievement of our best political singers has been to save what would have been lost and bring it to our [ie. mass Kabyle] attention. They can do this because they are Kabyle themselves, and have the same concerns as everyone; but they also see problems we can’t, and express them better than anyone else, in a way that everyone can understand. Matoub is the best example: he was one of us [*ney*, ‘ours’] but also had the vision of a poet and did research, and so he was able to uncover Kabyle history and to make us aware of things that were happening but that we had no idea of because education and the media hid them from us. To give you an example, I had never heard of Bouyali¹⁵ until I heard Matoub’s last album. On [the 1991 album] *Regard sur l’histoire d’un pays damné*, he told us the whole history of the Berber movement; or the song

¹⁴ In this sense, Mammeri suggests that the *amusnaw* was a secular equivalent of the marabout: a guardian of knowledge (religious for the marabout, secular for the *amusnaw*), treated as a partial outsider and therefore called upon to mediate disputes.

¹⁵ Mustapha Bouyali (1940–87) was the founder of the Algerian Islamic Armed Movement (MAIA, the group subsequently reconstituted by Abdelkader Chebouti, after Bouyali’s death in an ambush, as the Islamic Armed Movement [MIA] in 1991). This respondent referred to him as ‘Algeria’s first terrorist’ in reference to his role in orchestrating a series of notorious attacks on commercial interests and police barracks in the Algiers region in 1985.

Tirgin [‘Embers’], where he talks about how the Abane [Ramdane] and Krim [Belkacem] were assassinated by the Arabs [*sic*] in the FLN. But he didn’t just talk about things to do with Kabylia: look at his songs about freedom or religion, or his love songs, and you’ll see what I mean. He was a Kabyle of course, but his greatest wisdom [*tamusni*] is about human nature, not just Kabyle problems. (Brahim)

Who can speak?

The modern *chanteur engagé*, like the *amusnaw*, thus embodies an idealized connection between guardianship of privileged knowledge, wordsmith’s virtuosity and moral wisdom. This status also grants him the right, in popular perceptions, to do and say what would constitute loss of dignity for others:

I never met Matoub, but you should speak to Ourida [a mutual acquaintance who knew him well]. People say he was impossible, a madman often, and obviously he went all out for his beliefs which made him impossible to live with. Several times he got himself into awful situations on stage, brawls with other singers and so on, but people listened to him as much as ever. When someone’s got that vision, we’ll forgive him anything and we’ll carry on listening to his words no matter what. How can you judge someone who has that wisdom? There has to be a dark side, it’s the price for the rest, but no one thought any the worse of him for it. (Rachida)

One such prerogative of expressing what would impinge on honour codes for others, crucial to my argument about the role of political song in Kabyle nationalism, is that of making intimate details of private emotional life public. We saw in the ethnographic chapters how *lherma* or the moral integrity of a bounded social unit, described by Bourdieu as a ‘passive’ face of the honour economy of *nif*) works as a metaphor for regional autonomy, or the right to protection from violation. *Lherma* is protected by a measure of ‘inwardness’: a unit protects its integrity by ensuring that non-members do not have access to information about its internal processes. Correspondingly, *lherma* as an individual or family attribute requires a certain emotional reserve: discussing domestic or private emotional life in public is largely taboo between men, a fortiori

between men and unrelated women; several female respondents in Ajmoun, meanwhile, expressed the importance of maintaining silence on emotional problems in a marriage, even with close female relatives, so that ‘facts could not be turned against you or your family’.

More broadly, the public airing of private emotion is a privilege restricted to a few specific situations and roles in Algerian society. These are usually related to martyrdom or ‘righteous suffering’, making exceptions of classes of people whose private emotional life is seen as emblematic of national values of resistance: former *mujahidin*, mothers and family members of war martyrs, former state prisoners or torture victims, persecuted dissidents, exiles and their family members. Making the private public in other situations is usually interpreted as a violation of *lherma*, and widely seen as particularly transgressive for women (cf. Vince 2009, however, on the notable exception made for those who occupy the roles above).

The *chanteur engagé* is another of the notable exceptions: a figure perceived as emblematic of Kabyle or Algerian moral values, and whose life stories therefore convey private emotion that is not merely legitimately expressed but is seen to mirror ‘national’ virtues and dilemmas:

You only have to look at Matoub’s life to see the history of Algeria in miniature: his shooting [in 1988] and what he did afterwards [the album *El-Amriw*, with texts celebrating his recovery] reflects exactly how we felt about the October [1988] riots and then the opening up [the advent of multi-partism in 1989]. When we were first able to watch TV channels that weren’t the state channel, and for the first time saw the outside world as it really was, we were so excited about satellite TV we’d watch anything, we even loved watching programmes about the Gulf War! That excitement about a new Algeria was the same sense of recovery we got from Matoub’s songs. Then his kidnapping [in 1994] and of course his death for us meant the death of Algeria as we knew it. (Mourad)

We can best understand the singer's role in this regard as part of a broader tradition of didactic (auto)biography in Algeria, and a corresponding image of the 'Great Man' or charismatic individual as an embodiment of national values. This tradition is evident in several biographies of war martyrs and memoirs of former *mujahidin* (cf. Aït Ahmed 1983; Zamoum 1996); didactic biographies of *shuhada* also commonly depict their subject as the (good qualities of the) nation made man, and their authors therefore as agents of revelation (cf. Chapter 3 on Sadi 2010).¹⁶

A pervasive narrative of cultural and political decline also ran through my interviews with Kabyle singers who associated the alleged dearth of musical creativity since Matoub's death with the exhaustion of possibilities after the non-resolution of the civil war. Several thus described contemporary Kabyle politics as being in an epilogue phase to the popular narrative of key activist moments since independence:

There's nothing more to compose for now. In the '70s and '80s we really had something to believe in and fight for, and singers had a cause; in the '90s most of them gave up, except Matoub who carried on right to the end even though he knew it would be the death of him. But now it's all over (*dayen*); you've seen, all they're interested in even at Berbère TV is 'non-stop' [commercial dance music for festivities, not 'text song'], and the singers who *are* still composing texts have gone back to the same old things: boats, exile, empty stuff about nostalgia and freedom. Even Aït Menguellet hasn't written anything truly political since Matoub died, and Ferhat [Mehenni] is in politics now, not music. That's it, they've got nothing more to say, or else no faith left that anything they do say will make a difference. The golden age [referring to a 1970s series of albums by Aït Menguellet known as *Les années d'or*] is a thing of the past now. (Salas)

So far, then, we have seen the idealized face of the political singer: as the representative par excellence of a certain liminal status in Kabyle society, a sort of *primus inter pares* who stewards a certain type of knowledge encompassing both the

¹⁶ See Khilnani 1997: 7 on this tradition among sparring Indian political leaders, whose autobiographies 'conveniently fused picaresque personal adventures with the odyssey of the nation'.

innate morality of *taqbaylit* and the hidden sacra of the initiate, and who therefore has a certain prerogative to speak of matters that others cannot and to represent individual life stories of resistance and suffering as allegories of national history.

But how do these ideals fare in context, when political song is performed by living singers, in real spaces rather than on recordings? Singers may be idealized as popular representatives, but of whom? Co-villagers, Kabyles, Berbers, Algerians? In order to answer these questions we need to look in detail at the sites where music is performed, and how political song acts in these spaces as a cultural vehicle for conflicting conceptions of Kabyle identity.

B) PRACTICES: BOUNDARIES, FRAGMENTATION, TRANSMISSION

‘Community’ in different places: the café and the diaspora cultural association

In Paris, Kabyle-owned cafés have been and remain crucially important as a centre of social and cultural life. Many of the first Kabyle migrants who invested their earnings in France in the early twentieth century did so in the form of café-hotels (Khellil 1979), which served as the social and economic centre for others from their village in the days of early labour migration from colonial Algeria.¹⁷ Seasonal migrant workers replaced each other in the hotel lodgings, encouraging continued human and economic flows (Silverstein 2004). As early successes who had earned enough capital to invest in

¹⁷ Khellil explains the concentration of Kabyles in the café-hotel industry as a result of their early employment as carriage drivers, and suggests that the still extant tradition of the Kabyle taxi driver followed on from this. A more concrete reason is that of Tunisian, Moroccan and Algerian migrants, only Algerians were in the early days of migration permitted to ‘exercise the profession of selling drinks for on-premises consumption [ie. in a café licensed to sell alcohol but not serving food]’ (Raulin 2000).

France, café-hotel owners enjoyed prestige both among newer migrants and in Kabylia. They therefore frequently acted as ‘emigration brokers’ (Scheele 2009) for new migrants who would be lodged and fed at the cafe-hotel in return for a share of their earnings. The hotel manager also often operated a banking service for wage labourers, many of whom were illiterate.

The café, already important in Kabyle village life, therefore became a central meeting place for early labour migrants to France, acting as a substitute space for the Kabyle village assembly (*tajmaet*) and the collection centre for payments made to cover public village expenses (repairs, repatriation of deceased migrants’ bodies and so on). Though village assemblies held in Paris cafés are far fewer today,¹⁸ the café has kept its importance as a meeting place, and in particular as a forum for observing and commenting on other migrants’ behaviour. The connection between the Paris café and the conduct of the migrant *jemœa* in particular makes this a space where boundaries and membership of the Kabyle community are constant subjects of debate.

Though the hotel part is now in most cases defunct, there is still a heavy concentration of Kabyle owners and staff in the Paris café industry. Kabyle cafés are often recognizable by a set of symbols on display: Berber pottery and utensils, portraits of celebrated singers, Imazighen sign memorabilia. In certain areas of Paris, clusters of cafés owned by migrants from a particular village or region still exist; a string owned by families originally from Akbou runs along the rue de Paris in Montreuil, for example, and in Charenton-le-Pont on the south-eastern edge of Paris several neighbouring cafés

¹⁸ The practice is not completely extinct: I know of (though was not admitted to) still active *tajmaet* meetings in the clusters of cafés around the rue de Montreuil, Aubervilliers and the Stalingrad area of northeast Paris. Younger respondents, however, were near unanimous in their belief that this was the province of an ‘out-of-date gang of cronies’, to quote one.

are run by migrants from the Tichy region.¹⁹ While naturally much looser than earlier in the twentieth century, the mapping of Kabyle geography onto Parisian *quartiers* and onto French regions more broadly (Khellil 1979) thus persists through café networks, which also serve as a focal point for continued contact between clients from the owner's village, town or region.²⁰ Though the days of formal emigration brokering and proxy banking are past, cafés remain an important meeting point for exchanges of information, money or material goods and business negotiations. Their owners and staff are therefore in many cases still considered privileged mediators.²¹

In Kabyle villages, the café is a centre of men's social life. After several months of fieldwork in Paris, where women regularly attended café music events (though not without controversy, as I discuss below) and migrants typically told a story of rapid progression from the 'backwards mentalities' long prevalent in 'village attitudes' to women's rights, I was unprepared for the continued strength of the taboo in Ajmoun and other Kabyle villages I visited. Though as an outsider I was considered generally exempt from the code of 'respect' (see Chapter 4) that binds Kabyle women, and was

¹⁹ This is also seen as affecting the landscape in Kabylia: 'the people from B. have more than three hundred cafés in Paris, they all have luxurious villas in the village, if you go there in the summer you wouldn't recognize it as the same place [because of all the affluent returning migrants]'.

²⁰ Cf. Mokhtari 2001: 157: 'North African cafés in the Paris region have served first and foremost as a reconstitution of the native village, and socially speaking they reproduce the microcosm of the native tribe.'

²¹ This is particularly so in the business of currency exchange. Extremely low exchange rates offered by banks on the Algerian dinar, and the volume of conversion generated by remittances, migrants' building projects in Algeria and frequent trans-Mediterranean travel (with semi-obligatory cash gifts in the direction of Algeria) have led to a thriving market for private exchange on commission. This is a business that demands a large supply of readily available liquid capital; those who run exchange outfits are usually therefore already successful entrepreneurs or family members enlisted for the new line of business. Two such families that I knew in Paris subsequently opened cafés to serve as a base for the exchange trade. While it is tempting to interpret these long-term borrowing and lending cycles as representations of the Kabyle ideal of solidarity, Khellil (1979) points out that what may appear as abstract habits in fact have concrete origins. He gives the example of visitors being unavoidably dependent on established migrants in France in the days of the *autorisation de sortie* (before 1979, when no visa was needed to travel from Algeria to France), since they could take only 350 French francs out of Algeria with them and the dinar was non-convertible abroad. The established migrant would therefore pay during the visitor's stay, and would get the money back from the visitor or a family member when he in turn returned to Algeria for holidays.

made welcome in several situations usually the preserve of men,²² the café was the one place where no male respondent would take me (on the grounds that it would affect the reputation of my host family), and where the family asked me not to go.

The café also represents a certain domain of male sociability radically opposed to the code of respect (*Imuqadra*) which prevails in private spaces between family members. The taboos of respect, which obtain towards older family members and a fortiori in the presence of women – drinking alcohol, smoking or using *chemea*, gaming – have their place in the café, and several Kabyle men told me that they will usually leave a café if an elder brother arrives. It is therefore the only acceptable space for what one respondent called ‘raw’ male sociability; and as a result, many men assume that women who frequent cafés in Kabylia are ‘outside the laws of respect’, or simply according to another male respondent ‘prostitutes’.

In Paris, the taboo is markedly weaker but by no means absent. Several Kabyle women attend music events in Kabyle-owned Paris cafés, and indeed their presence attracts less censorship in this context than on regular evenings. However, *soirées* still attract a mainly male clientele; women are not unanimously welcomed, and those who go to café events (especially if they drink alcohol) usually have to face periodic derogatory comments about their morality and ‘respectability’ – though with vocal support from other male café-goers who condemn this type of censorship as a ‘hang-over from backwards village mentalities’.

²² These included men’s congregations at weddings and *fatih*a ceremonies, and more prosaically – but with more misgivings, largely because cigarettes and alcohol were commonly part of the proceedings here – after-dinner gatherings outside the family house.

Association events,²³ on the other hand, are presented as *familial*: shorthand for a place where no alcohol is served, and food traditionally associated with village festivities often is (couscous, *wehjej* pancakes and other Kabyle patisseries), and where women can go without censorship.²⁴ At galas and concerts staged by Berber associations in and around Paris, mixed dancing is the norm and while many women (especially older ones) wear traditional Kabyle dress to these events, others come in evening wear that would be considered compromising in the café context. In the diaspora, association events and large concert galas have become a prime site for the recreation of an idealized communal village: not the restricted ‘community’ of the café but a truly ‘public’, universal domain that foregrounds gender- and intergenerational exchange. This apparent sublimation of hierarchy occurs in the village itself only during festivities, and it is this atmosphere that association events typically seize on to promote a vision of Kabyle ‘equality’ irrespective of age and gender.

The association event thus mixes a symbolic domain of Kabyle cultural distinctiveness and tradition with the performance of a political narrative of tolerance and pluralism, both intra- Kabyle and in relation to French culture. Galas, usually organized around traditional festivals (Yennayer or Berber New Year) or commemorative events (the Berber Spring in April, the anniversary of Matoub’s

²³ I conducted the participant observation on which the following paragraphs are based while accompanying singers at cultural association galas in and around Paris. These included events hosted by the Association de culture berbère (20th arrondissement); Association franco-berbère d’Epinay-sur-Seine (93); Association franco-berbère du Val-de-Marne (94); and Berbère Télévision in Montreuil (93).

²⁴ The label also frequently appears on restaurant or *salon de thé* signs in Algeria to distinguish them from alcohol-serving cafés. In Kabylia, even this concession was a long time in the making. On the RN 12, the main through-road from Tizi Ouzou to Azazga near the town of Freha, there is a café and outdoor restaurant advertised as *familial* that serves as a half-way break on the way from Algiers to eastern Kabylia. Ferhat described how this had come into being: ‘While I was growing up in the 1980s, every time we drove back from Algiers we’d stop at that café. At that time my mother and sisters wouldn’t go in, and if they needed the loo they’d hold it in. But the café owner was intelligent: he was the first one to put an outside loo there, so that women could go without coming into the café itself. Then gradually, as more people stopped there because of it, he decided to make the restaurant *familial* too; in the 1990s it went backwards because he was afraid of attacks by Islamists, but now it’s very popular again.’

assassination in June), are often also used to showcase the integration of Kabyle associations into ‘mainstream’ French civil society. Associations routinely invite the mayor of the *arrondissement* or town to these events, and there are often eulogies from both parties on the ‘respect for diversity’ shown by this co-operation. Association leaders, audience members and musicians who perform at galas make much of these tolerant values as the keystone of Kabyle social life at gala events.

Café evenings: boundaries, unity and localism

One of the café-restaurants where I played, near Stalingrad in the 19th arrondissement and now under new ownership, is a typical example of the fusion of Kabyle visual symbolism with the décor of the Parisian café. The interior has kept its original Belle Epoque décor, but the owner has overlaid the walls with *fodar* material (the red and orange woven fabric worn by women over traditional Kabyle dress); portraits of Lounès Matoub, Sheikh El Hesnaoui and Sliman Azem are displayed alongside photographs of Serge Gainsbourg and Jacques Brel, and Kabyle landscape shots amongst historic photographs of the 19th arrondissement. Many of the neighbouring cafés and other businesses (a petrol station, a *pâtisserie orientale*) are also Kabyle-owned. This, and the fact that its erstwhile owner is the son of a chef who runs a well-known restaurant near Azazga in Kabylia, means that it has a large Kabyle clientele base.

At weekends, the owners hosted an event they advertised as *variétés nord-africaines*, bringing together Kabyle performers with Algerian *rai* singers and occasionally Moroccan and Tunisian musicians. These evenings were without exception tense affairs. The presence of commercial Arabophone *rai* singers and their audience, for the most

part migrants from other regions of Algeria and North Africa, elicited repeated protests from Kabyle clients who criticized the behaviour of these ‘others’ as breaches of Kabyle codes of respect.²⁵ On several occasions, when a *rai* singer took the stage, a group of the café’s Kabyle regulars ostentatiously walked out of the café *en masse*, remaining outside (though not out of earshot) until the performance was over. Respondents involved in these ‘performances’ of anti-Arabism told me that they acted deliberately, for display purposes, less because they disliked the music than to make an everyday point of resistance reflecting their political criticism of power relations:

When have you ever seen Arabs come and listen to our music in good faith, I mean out of real interest? It hardly ever happens; but to make money our cafés have to cater to their tastes, and pay the singers more too. Well, let them come, the café needs the money, but I don’t like staying in there while they do that. I want them to see that we can also make the choice not to listen to their music and their language. (Yazid)

The desire to make a public show of anti-Arabism, according to several of my respondents, came from a feeling that ‘Arab’ Algerians criticize Kabyle culture on moral premises which they themselves cannot honour:

You know Nacera, that [female, non-Kabyle] dancer who often comes in with the *rai* musicians? The other day she was criticizing the Kabyles for not being devout enough and not being Algerian enough and whatever else. Afterwards, Samira [the Kabyle café owner’s wife] was dancing with her to *rai* music. If the dancer girl hadn’t been there I wouldn’t have turned a hair – when you’re the owner of a business it’s normal to try and please everyone – but since she was, I wanted to show that I could criticize her culture too. Arabs haven’t got the right to criticize us on those grounds when they have such an unhealthy relationship with religion too. So I went and told Samira, in her hearing, to stop dancing to Arabic music and get off the dancefloor. (Massi)

Unsurprisingly, this critique also operates in reverse. Many non-Kabyle Algerians observe, for instance, that Kabyle cultural isolationists reject the artificiality of the

²⁵ These criticisms were less of social interaction with Kabyles than, for instance, ways of dancing, choice of drinks, or dress.

Arabo-Islamist cultural vision, yet themselves rely on just as constructed a notion of 'Berberism' (for support of this argument see Roberts 2003). These two views are opposed only in their terms, identical in their reasoning, and so arguably irreconcilable except by a show of relative strength. In social contexts where they are pitted against each other, the standoff therefore takes place as a public display, a 'performance' of Kabyle social relations with significant others.

In another café-restaurant where I played regularly, on the other hand, the focus shifted to the terms of *intra*-Kabyle unity and fragmentation. This is interesting given that the café, in itself, is deliberately (according to its owner) far more 'cosmopolitan' than the first one described above, and all but devoid of Kabyle symbolism. This second café belongs to a successful Kabyle entrepreneur who runs several others across the east of Paris; near the Jaurès interchange, it is strategically placed as a lunch spot for office-workers from the regenerated areas along the Canal de l'Ourcq. There are both French and Kabyle waiting staff, and the owner serves 'European' and French cuisine (with couscous unobtrusively on the menu one evening a week, and otherwise only for private occasions) in order to maintain it as a 'neutral space for French people during the day'. In the evenings, the café puts on jazz concerts and French and Breton folk bands.

Within the 'neutral space' of the daytime restaurant, Kabyle regulars use the space as a centre of exchange. Because of the owner's connections in the business and diplomatic world, staff from the consulate and visitors from Algeria often pass through. Using the owner as a mediator, several Paris-based Kabyle entrepreneurs therefore make the café their base for initiating and negotiating trans-Mediterranean business contracts, especially in construction (the owner's domain) and currency exchange deals.

In these cases, without exception, respondents applied to an official of Kabyle origin, whose presence in the café they interpreted as a sign of willingness to help fellow Kabyles in difficulty:

When it's a question of a building permit or pulling strings, there's no way I'd wait for it to happen naturally – it never would. I trust Majid [the café owner] and ask someone who goes to the café. If a consulate man is there, it usually means you can ask him and he'll be helpful. The ones who don't care don't go to Kabyle cafés, where they know full well the 'small ones' [ie. those in a less privileged position] are waiting to ask for their services. (Ferhat)

The café also serves as a focal point for smaller exchanges: money left with the bar staff for payment to creditors, medicines left for 'airport exchange'²⁶ or gifts for someone returning to Algeria to take to a friend's family.²⁷ Several respondents identified this café as a more 'anonymous' place to do business because 'it isn't like being back home [*au bled*]'; one, a local resident and regular of both the cafés discussed, told me that he preferred to hold business meetings here because

It's neutral territory, not 'Kabylo-Kabyle' like [the other café]. During the day here you can blend into the background, with French people going about their business and having lunch; you can do things in peace, discreetly, without being watched and judged the whole time as you would be in the other place. (Ilyès)

²⁶ Many migrants in France send medication to family members unable to procure it in Algeria, and where this is urgent it is common practice to go to one of the Paris airports and ask passengers in the check-in queue for flights to Béjaïa or Algiers to convey packages to their destination. Because Kabylia itself is relatively small and the Kabyle community in Algiers still concentrated in certain areas, it is usually possible to find a volunteer.

²⁷ As the café's regular clientele and staff includes Kabyles, other migrants and French nationals, it is also a focal point for the arrangement of *mariages blancs* (marriages of convenience to a French national), a common way for undocumented Kabyles to obtain legal residence. During the time I was doing fieldwork three male respondents (two from the same family, an uncle and nephew) made this arrangement through a male contact at the café who knew of and introduced a woman holding French nationality. In one case this was a so-called *kabyle française* (a daughter born in France to Kabyle parents); in the two others, a woman of West African parentage with French nationality. In each case, the agreement was negotiated as a lump sum to be paid to the woman in instalments coinciding with the phases of the *régularisation* (legalisation of residence). This is a process that can, as one of my respondents found out to his cost, be fraught with difficulty if the paid partner is untrustworthy or uncooperative during the legalisation process, or indeed vice versa if the paying partner fails to honour the agreement after the marriage is registered. Checks on cohabitation are increasingly frequent, and if either of the partners is clearly not living at the registered address residence rights can be denied or annulled. Finding a trustworthy partner for a *mariage blanc* is therefore crucial, and the owner's role as a trusted mediator in these arrangements makes the café a key point of contact.

After hours, however, the owner hosts musical lock-ins for family and close friends or associates. At these gatherings, the company was usually exclusively Kabyle, and the café became an arena for debate about the nature of Kabyle community. These debates were often ignited by song texts, and the theme that most reliably set off discussion was the tension between Kabyle unity and subregional, village or what some called ‘feudal’ loyalties.²⁸ Here, the ideal of the political singer as a carrier of universal Kabyle or Berber interests was weighed in the balance. In the context of the café, it gave way to another perception: that of singers as carriers of village-based heritage, which may then ‘expand’ into an expression of regional identity but ultimately remains strictly local. In some contexts this has been used as a positive argument for legitimacy through local rooting; thus for Matoub:

When I write my texts, I don’t use any books. I draw my rich lexicon from my parents. My texts are born from this verbal accumulation; old terms can be recovered naturally by listening to everyday happenings in the village ... The greatest artists and the most celebrated writers are always those strongly rooted in their native soil.²⁹

But localism is also a source of controversy, as many see singers’ own allegiances as reflecting divisive village or subregional loyalties:

You remember the first group of musicians I saw you playing with at [the Stalingrad café]? They’re from the village of Sliman Azem, and all the Kabyle music they play is his repertoire – the rest is *chaabi* from Algiers. I could see they were trying to co-opt you to that village mentality and all you would have done was play Sliman songs with them, at their cafés and associations. I respect Sliman a lot, but there’s more to Kabyle music than that; that’s why I did what I could to introduce you to Matoub, so that you would get a more universal view of things. Matoub spoke for everyone, and those who sing his songs today should do the same. (Salas)

Contemporary political singers, much of whose repertoire consists of canonical singers’ output rather than new compositions, are thus faced with a no-win situation. On

²⁸ An instance of the selective echoing of French revolutionary concepts in Kabyle progressivist rhetoric.

²⁹ Interview cited by Medjeber 2006: 208–9.

the one hand, they are expected (above all by their co-villagers) to ‘remain connected with [their] roots’, either in terms of social loyalties or by foregrounding local interests and figures in their song texts; on the other, they are heavily criticized (usually by others) for putting parochial loyalties before their allegiance to Kabyle universalism.

Most of the arguments that broke out at café lock-ins, sparked by political song performances, were about this problem. When I discussed these arguments with respondents who had been present, the topic therefore rarely remained restricted to political song, but quickly broadened to more general questions of nationhood and unity. On one occasion, a dispute had broken out about the long-running political opposition between Matoub and Ferhat Mehenni, a rivalry that produced several ugly stage brawls and escalated into both-ways conspiracy theories about the singers’ mutually suspected involvement with Islamist groups during the civil war.³⁰ Subsequently, I asked a succession of respondents for their reading of the incident. Each interpreted it as the result of a broader pathology of intra-Kabyle divisions. The first focused on the ‘tribal’ aspect of Kabyle politics:

This [the rivalry between singers and their partisans] is a particularly Kabyle thing, it doesn’t happen anywhere else. It’s because we don’t trust anyone and we’re always on the look-out for signs of betrayal; I suppose it’s the old tribal mentality. If someone speaks against you today, he may well act against you tomorrow; words are never just words. Well, it’s the same with singers: if they reprise the songs of another political singer, it’s not just because they happen to like the music. It also means money, publicity, maybe promoting a political party or a village. You’re naïve if you think that they want you just for your musicianship. They’re hoping to co-opt you too, because a foreigner playing Kabyle music can bring in audiences and money. That’s why they fight over who ‘discovered’ you. It does a lot of damage, all of this, to Kabyle unity. The regime co-opts our singers with just that aim, to divide us, and we resisted once, twice, three times, but when someone stronger than you attacks you again and again... Because since time immemorial (*zik*) we’ve had this constant threat from outside, each colonial power in turn trying to divide us up, our nerves are in shreds and we see betrayal everywhere. (Belaid)

³⁰ The politics of this dispute and others like it are too long-winded for analysis here; for further analysis see Silverstein 2003b.

This highlights another contested facet of the *chanteur engagé*: the tension between the popular ideal and a series of political machinations in which Kabyle leaders and regime figures, well aware of singers' influence in Kabylia, have attempted and often succeeded in co-opting them to party political agendas or in silencing dissidence with pay-offs. Because the ideal of the popular resistance figure is so strong, singers are easily branded as *Kabyles de service* if they are suspected of having been 'bought' by such tactics; and the accusations of regime puppetry that have flown back and forth between singers are a sign that the conflictual nature of legitimacy discussed earlier as a facet of political legitimacy applies equally strongly in the cultural domain. Another respondent, commenting on the same incident in the café, thus also stressed the mistrust born of injustice but this time in the context of a failed Algerian nationhood:

Mourad: We [the Kabyles] are hardened from constantly struggling and never reaping the rewards. Look at the war of independence, it was the Kabyles who did most of the fighting, we fought to create Algeria, yet we never saw the fruits of it all, and that goes on ... we sow, they reap ... when you go to Oran they're friendly and welcoming, but it's because they've never had to fight for recognition like that so they're not mistrustful like us.

GM: Mistrustful of the regime?

Mourad: Not just the regime, it's far broader than that; it also makes us mistrust fellow Kabyles and that's partly why we're always fighting each other. The Algerian regime makes sure that any rewards are effectively siphoned off from where they came from, and so the Kabyles now are like the Algerians under French colonial rule, second-class citizens. We come from a state where everyone is flailing about in all directions fighting for the same thing, the Islamists and the Berbers and the army all trying to grab at scant rewards. There's no neat and tidy right and left or ready-made democracy like in Europe – Algeria is still in the making.

A third respondent, meanwhile, explained the dispute as a result of 'parochial' loyalties comparable to the problem of regional dialectal differences within a national linguistic group and Kabyle failure to constitute a valid 'nation' as a common frame of identification, as the respondent argued European states had done:

Kacem: The real problem is that we fall into the trap and let them [the regime] divide us, which of course is their aim. You've heard people criticizing Singer X for using the regional dialect of Y. But these divisions are a load of old cobbles: we're all Kabyles and we all speak the same language, even if there are local variations.

GM: Local variations between...?

Kacem: Within a single group. It's as though a crowd from Marseille started throwing stones at another one from Lyon, as they used to back in the old days ... but they're all French now, so there's no problem anymore! Why should we fight over little problems of a vowel there, a different word usage here? We all understand each other!

These commentaries all rely on a discourse of national construction as the explanation for divisions in Kabyle society, explaining a dispute over the merits of two political singers as the failure of Kabyle nation-building in comparison with the supposed 'ready-made democracy', prosperity or linguistic unity of European countries. Here, the activist narrative of Kabylia as a 'nation' united by language, political practices and values breaks down into a criticism of subregional local loyalties (allegedly induced by a concerted state attempt to divide) as thwarting Kabyle attempts to fulfil the promise of nationhood.

These criticisms of political parochialism and factionalism, however, all rest on the assumption that a unified Kabyle whole does exist in theory, or once did. This also applies to an idealized notion of Kabyle heritage as popular knowledge, as an original whole which can either be preserved by 'good' transmission or squandered by bad. The other key criticism of singers is therefore that they fail to transmit this heritage faithfully through artistic choices about musical and textual composition as well as social context (venues, audience and so on). Let us now see how debates in the café dissected the idealized unity of Kabyle community through talk of 'stolen heritage' and failed cultural transmission.

‘What will his children get from that?’ Recycling and failed transmission

The majority of singers who perform at café evenings and association galas play a repertoire largely made up of reprises of New Song (Matoub, Ferhat, Aït Menguellet), mixed with exile song, some Kabyle *chaabi*³¹ and some modern dance music (‘non-stop’). Some compose their own music and texts, or set newly composed texts to existing music; but new composition generally takes second place to reproduction. These genres are themselves based on adaptations of so-called ‘traditional’ material, a process that has proved controversial in itself for transforming a collective heritage into the commercial property of individuals (Goodman 2005). In this context, the singer’s honesty or otherwise in acknowledging the use of established material, and choices about how to present it, take on the character of a moral test. There is a particular onus on singers seen as privileged carriers of tradition, for instance through family connection to a celebrated figure, to innovate rather than ‘live from a piece of luck [they have] not earned’ (Tassadit).

In this final section, I examine how this debate played out around four different singers or groups. The first is the nephew of an iconic *chanteur de l’exil*; the second a group that promotes a concerted agenda of Kabyle modernism and cultural ‘openness’ through adaptation of French songs with Taqbaylit texts. Thirdly, I contrast criticisms of these adaptations with praise for Matoub’s use of French as a means of diffusing his political message. To conclude, I offer a reflexive portrait based on my own place in café evenings compared with that of another ‘foreign’ musician playing Kabyle music in Paris: a man of mixed French and West African parentage who speaks no Taqbaylit

³¹ Lit. ‘popular’ music, Algerian *chaabi* developed as a more accessible variant of Arabo-Andalus music in the early twentieth century. It remains a popular urban style, often heard in bars and at festivities. Though it is most often sung in Arabic, several Kabyle singers marry *chaabi* style with Taqbaylit texts.

but has learned to reproduce Matoub's songs phonetically, accompanying himself on the *mandole*. Here, I weave together strands from the chapter to show how foreign categories, or people, can paradoxically best embody the Kabyle ideal of innate knowledge and 'pure' transmission without agency.

i. Rabah

Rabah, whose uncle was a prolific composer of patriotic song in the early phase of independent Algerian nationalism, came to France with his mother at the age of four, joining his father who had already been working in the Paris region for several years. Now in his mid-twenties, he returns regularly to Kabylia, often to perform, and is fully bilingual in French and Taqbaylit. His uncle lived close by in the Paris suburbs until his recent death, and taught Rabah to sing. Rabah does not play in cafés, and only occasionally at association events; most of his time goes into studio production, composition and making commercial videos for his songs, and his support base consists mainly of professional and often party political Kabyles in France rather than café-goers. His mentor, a Kabyle oud player and a successful architect with extensive connections in Algerian diplomatic circles, writes Rabah's programme notes (in French) for concerts and album sleeve covers. Here, he describes Rabah as

A ray of hope who draws his strength and artistic values from the high musical and poetic tradition of Algeria, of Kabylia, influenced notably by the musical style of Sheikh X [named here not as Rabah's uncle but 'a close family friend'].³²

I worked with Rabah on the string parts for his first album, which juxtaposes reprises of his uncle's songs with new compositions in the same style. In keeping with the

³² From the CD sleeve notes to Rabah's first album (2012).

profile of Rabah's audience and his self-identification as a carrier of 'high musical tradition', the album was launched at Paris' Centre Culturel Algérien (CCA), in a major public concert with accompaniment from an 'orchestra' similar to those used to back singers in the 1950s and '60s before the advent of New Song: oud, nay flute, tambourine, and in this case a string quartet of non-Kabyle classical players provided with written instrumental scores. In this Rabah followed in the footsteps of his uncle, whose large concerts were usually accompanied by a symphony orchestra joined by a group of elite Algerian traditional musicians; the same faces, indeed, were on stage for the CCA concert. Rabah's choice of venue for the concert met with extensive criticism from supporters of 'café singers', who argued that the CCA is a cultural 'arm of the state', on the basis that it tends to showcase either Arabo-Andalus music or uncontroversial 'folk' presentations of minority culture, and does not host dissident singers:

Rabah won't go anywhere with the Kabyles if he plays in that place. Everyone knows it's just about money and string-pulling. He's not passing on his uncle's heritage. Those songs [his uncle's] were solid texts about Algerian identity before it went wrong, but if he plays at the CCA, unless he wants to reproduce state politics today the only thing Rabah can do is sing 'sweetened' texts about harmless things – family, migration and all that. That's all very well, but it's not continuing his uncle's work. (Hakim)

Rabah's new compositions are exile songs with a difference. As a successful 'second-generation' Kabyle in France, he takes inspiration from his father's experience of solitary labour migration – the running theme of Kabyle *chanson de l'exil* – now seen from the standpoint of the next generation that has enjoyed the advantages it brings. While Rabah's musical style positions him clearly as heir to his uncle's legacy, his texts attempt to adapt this tradition to the circumstances of what he calls his 'double culture'. His mentor describes Rabah in these terms:

Having grown up in a world of shocks, cultural struggles and denials of identity – the Parisian *banlieue* – from very early on he was forced, in order to exist and preserve his identity, to take refuge in his ultimate inner sanctum: the family ... Like the Kabyle households and families that he left so young, at home in the Paris suburbs [Kabyles] accompany every little gesture and action of daily life with a tune or a song that codifies every situation in life, every mood.³³

Rabah's own commentary in an interview similarly foregrounded the iconic theme of the immigration journey, which he made when he was four years old but claims is 'imprinted in his memory', as a turning point, a cultural rupture, a loss of purity: 'I was leaving that little Kabyle country house, its fields, its cows and its sheep...'. But this aspect of his song texts also elicited scathing comments from first-generation respondents: 'What can he know about that? He didn't grow up there! Of course he's going to say that but it's just hot air, not experience. He's posturing as an exile singer but there's no real involvement there.' (Mourad) These criticisms of Rabah's work explained his perceived failure to transmit a past heritage faithfully, or to innovate on it, as a result of his 'claim[ing] a legacy that he has not earned'. What, then, of those who shun the weight of canonical legacies?

ii. Afus

Rabah's work met with particularly strong criticism among another collective of singers I played with, a band I call 'Afus' (a pseudonym) made up of three singers, a French percussionist and guitarist, and myself. Where Rabah bases his legitimacy on heritage, Afus consciously attempt to break with 'outdated tradition' and 'Kabylo-Kabyle mentalities' by setting newly composed dissident texts in Taqbaylit to adaptations of popular French songs. Afus write some of their own words but above all

³³ CD sleeve notes.

set to music the texts of Ameziane Kezzar, the playwright whose work I cited in Chapter 3. Kezzar's work promotes an aggressive brand of secularism and resistance to Arabization through espousal of liberal European values and Greco-Roman heritage as an alternative to 'Oriental' culture. Afus express this musically by adapting songs by composers such as Jacques Brel and Hugues Aufray to Kabyle style and instrumentation, and socially by making a conscious effort to include non-Kabyles in the group. Though their audience often asks them to sing reprises of the core political singers, they are extremely reluctant to do so as they say that this is 'old material' and represents a 'closed version' of Kabyle culture, which they want to 'renew' by marrying Kabyle texts with French compositions.

Afus perform almost exclusively in caf  s, and their supporters are predominantly from their own social milieu: first-generation migrants and caf  -goers. This produces a curious dislocation: their audience enjoys the texts but is generally sceptical of this attempt to marry them with French music – a style that would in fact appeal more to Rabah's audience of association-based or party political Kabyles – and criticize their refusal to sing the music of the core political singers as a 'denial of heritage':

Ameziane's texts are strong, but the music is empty: it's just recycling, and not of something that's really ours. I know what they want to do with it, make Kabyle culture seem more open and cosmopolitan, but that's no good if in fact they're turning their back on their own culture in the process. I'm not saying that it's bad to use non-Kabyle words or music – look at what Matoub did in 'Monsieur le Pr  sident' [a song with a famous passage in French], or A  t Menguellet's version of the Bob Dylan song [Blowing in the Wind]. But then you have to back it up with something really strong of your own, otherwise it'll get lost. What will Hakim's [one of the singers] children get from his music? They were born in France, and because they don't have first-hand knowledge of the Kabyle style they'll just hear French music that happens to have words in Taqbaylit on top. That's a loss. (Brahim)

The main criticism of Afus, then, was that in trying to innovate they made Kabyle song, and by extension (as another respondent said) Kabyle culture more broadly, a mere ‘ventriloquism’ of Western traditions. Here again, the texts were praised as relevant, but because they were presented in the context of a musical and social effort at modernism the respondent memorably described the performance as ‘watery oil’ (Massi).

iii. Alternative uses of French language in song: Matoub’s solution

Singers derive much of their prestige from diffusing and rejuvenating the everyday language available to Taqbaylit-speakers. Many of my respondents credited Matoub in particular with ‘researching’ and ‘reviving’ defunct or rarefied words in Taqbaylit – which following their appearance in his song texts re-entered popular everyday language:

Matoub put words into our mouths ... He was always going round trying to pick up old words from different villages. Half the words I use now I didn’t know before, then because we were all listening to Matoub we started to use them, like a new word that’s made popular on the internet today. He reinvented the language, basically. (Ilyès)

Also important, however, was Matoub’s use of French in his song texts. Brahim, for instance, cited the French-language passages of Matoub’s output as a contrast to his criticism of Afus cited in the previous section, on the grounds that they ‘do not try to be culturally French; they just use the French language for practical purposes’. By practical purposes he meant communication with non-Taqbaylit-speakers. In the song ‘Monsieur le Président’ (1984), Matoub makes this explicit, declaiming ‘in a borrowed language’ in order to deliver a message to the Arabic-speaking Algerian head of state with ‘a few phrases from a condemned man, which may quench the thirst of certain oppressed

individuals'. In 'A mes frères' (1986), meanwhile, Matoub uses French to proclaim a message of popular Algerian unity against the regime, worth citing in the original for its poetic effect:

Montrons que nous nous aimons, mais sans porter atteinte aux consciences... Mais porter un coup fatal, décisif, à ces soi-disant opposants ; à ces fainéants de la Nation qui se pavanent dans les salons de l'Occident et qui nous embourbent de boue de désillusion. Et à ces gens sans entente qui sèment le trouble et la honte sur cette terre prospère, très chère, où beaucoup de mères ont souffert. Qu'ils se taisent ! Qu'ils se taisent ! Et qu'ils se taisent !

In the prelude to the epic song 'Regard sur l'histoire d'un pays damné' (1991), the declamation is made by the female voice of a native French-speaker: a eulogy of Matoub as a 'balm for wronged hearts' and an exhortation to 'sing to them [unspecified] that democracy was the first taste in our mouths: we drank it in with our mothers' milk. Tell them of our thirst for justice and restoration.'

These passages all stand out for another reason: they are spoken, not sung. The first is declaimed over the rhythm of a funeral march for orchestral instruments heard nowhere else in Matoub's output; the second two are voice alone, or punctuated with *mandole* interjections. The only other passage with extended spoken declamation that Matoub produced is in the title song of his two-volume final album, the content of which many believe precipitated his assassination: 'Lettre ouverte aux...' (1998). In this passage, Matoub delivers his most brutal attack on the regime, the prelude to his parody of the Algerian national anthem with a text in Taqbaylit:

*I lasel ssamsen udem
Yeyma yejjunjer
Jeggren s ddin t-teerabt
Tamurt n Lezzayer
D uyurru, d uyurru, d uyurru*

They have sullied the face of our ancestors;
It is destroyed. They have painted
The grimace of religion and Arabism
On the land of Algeria.
Imposture! Imposture! Imposture!

Many interpret Matoub's French-language passages as a simply rhetorical device for talking about 'Western' concepts – democracy, human rights, third worldism – in a Western language. But there is another important dimension, given the use of spoken text and its recurrence on the final album. Song in Kabyle culture, as opposed to everyday speech, means above all in Tassadit Yacine's (2011) terms a form of 'indirect address' that enables the singer to operate in a domain of metaphor and symbolism to articulate ideas that would otherwise be socially taboo (cf. Introduction): for instance, to talk about sexual matters or challenge everyday hierarchies. Likewise, Yacine argues, Taqbaylit (the language) is indelibly associated with *taqbaylit* (the moral code); and this means that using French often enables native Taqbaylit-speakers to deliver messages that they cannot deliver in their mother tongue.

Matoub mixes together these registers and connotations: he gives his most controversial messages, devoid of all metaphor and symbolism, in the medium of the spoken word, usually associated *between Kabyles* with conformity and adherence to shared social codes. In articulating criticisms of the regime in this medium, rather than through the metaphorical domain of sung text, Matoub brought these accusations into a discursive realm of accepted fact about Kabyle relations with the Algerian state. At the same time, however, the use of French steers a third way between the singer's two roles, enabling Matoub to speak in a register of charismatic authority that would be difficult to square with the ideal of the political singer as a social equal if spoken in Taqbaylit.³⁴ Whereas Afus integrate French cultural references – original music, interspersed verses and words – into the fabric of their songs to promote liberal values, Matoub uses French as a structural 'graft' on Kabyle song: a block passage of spoken text, clearly standing

³⁴ In this sense, the final spoken passage of 'Lettre ouverte aux...', in Taqbaylit, broke several taboos at once.

out from the sung text in Taqbaylit. In this way, he manages to preserve the idealized conception of a ‘pure’ domain of poetic communication and transmission *between Kabyles* in the vernacular language. In these texts, relations with Arabist ideology are simply excluded, by way of language, from the moral domain of Taqbaylit.

Bringing outsiders into the fold: a reflexive analysis

Abder Kheloui, singer
Rachid Tigzirt, Professor of Music
Gabrielle, a Welsh girl (violin)
Sébastien, a postman (percussion)
Benoît, an ex-railway worker (guitar)

Credits from a Kabyle song album produced in Paris, 2011. Pseudonyms except mine.

The final example of how political song acts as a vessel for Kabyle ideas about unity and diversity comes from my own presence and that of another ‘foreigner’ performing Kabyle song in cafés, and above all from the different ways in which we were received. The other musician, Ali (a pseudonym), is a man in his early twenties of mixed French and West African parentage, and has grown up in France. His mother has a love of Kabyle music, which she got to know during a previous relationship with an Algerian partner, and Ali grew up listening to political song, above all the output of Matoub. As a teenager, Ali took up the *mandole* and taught himself to reproduce Matoub’s texts phonetically, although he speaks no Taqbaylit. He can now reproduce the greater part of Matoub’s output, and some from other singers, with uncanny accuracy; he frequently appears on Berbère TV, the Paris-based channel that broadcasts both to France and Algeria, and is in much demand from cafés and associations, especially for events commemorating Matoub’s death.

When Ali and I performed together, concerts started to take on the colours of a curiosity show: two non-Kabyles playing Kabyle music, in my case able to speak some Taqbaylit, and in Ali's case (as organizers and promoters tirelessly reiterated) to communicate meaning in a language that he himself hardly understands. However, beyond our obvious kinship as the two foreigners on the circuit, Kabyles made sense of our temporary 'integration' and what it meant for Kabyle identity in radically different ways.

As a woman and a foreigner, my presence in the café was valuable as a token of the acceptance of difference on two counts. Because of the moral dualism that usually makes foreigners largely exempt from Kabyle social codes, I could usually appear as an instrumentalist in all-male groups and in cafés without contestation. This was not taken for granted, however: some still objected to my presence as a musician in cafés, especially once I became more closely involved with the community, and those who endorsed it repeated that this was a gauge of their relative progressivism:

It's lucky you stumbled on Kabyle musicians rather than other [North African] ones, because you would have had a far harder time being accepted there. We love having you around: it's a breath of fresh air and you can do things a Kabyle woman wouldn't, and it's such a change to have someone who isn't Kabyle anyway. But if you'd got involved with Arab musicians instead, you'd soon have been caught up in their moral taboos. We let you be who you are because we value your difference. (Ilyès)

Correspondingly, in musical terms singers repeatedly asked me not to 'be too Kabyle' or adopt a North African style. Instead, they urged me to retain my 'Celtic touch'. On various recordings I made for Kabyle singers, other audibly foreign musicians were enlisted too, with the instruments chosen often associated with other minority ethnolinguistic groups: panpipes, uilleann pipes, bodhran and so on. This follows in a

long tradition of collaborations between Berber and Breton musicians.³⁵ New Song exponents, led by Idir, fused the two styles not only as a musical experiment but also to demonstrate the supposed kinship between cultural or linguistic minorities in France and Algeria.³⁶ In their desire to cast me as part of this tradition, several musicians and audience members insisted on the importance of my own Welsh origins and assumed (until contradicted: I am not in fact a Welsh-speaker) that I felt solidarity with them because I had myself experienced linguistic ‘oppression’.

Although there were the inevitable attempts to put me in traditional dress for gala concerts, give me a Kabyle stage name and other rites of acceptance hardly unusual during this kind of fieldwork, all the emphasis, both socially and musically, was on maintaining my difference and describing my acceptance into the community not as assimilation but rather as a token of Kabyle openness to others. My affinity with ‘Kabyleness’ was subsequently explained by comparison with my own cultural background, not as an *intégration réussie*.

Ali, meanwhile, was dealt with very differently. It was harder to class him as an outsider in the context of café music: he is male, seen as ‘culturally French’ (and therefore less radically different), and a singer rather than an accompanying instrumentalist. Because of the intimate connection discussed earlier between song, language, the morality of *taqbaylit* and the singer’s role as a purveyor of privileged

³⁵ This musical project was born of a broader political attempt to instigate collaborative initiatives with other linguistic or cultural minority groups in the main diaspora countries – thus Catalans in Spain, Bretons in France, French-speakers in Canada. See Maddy-Weitzman 2006 for discussion of this.

³⁶ This enterprise had a strange echo from the unlikely quarters of the Irish filmmaker Bob Quinn, whose documentary ‘Atlanteans’ (1981–4) propounded the theory of an Atlantic seafaring people whose movements had favoured cultural exchange between North Africa, the Iberian peninsula, Brittany and Ireland. Quinn used the similarity of instrumental combinations and the tradition of Irish *Sean Nós* (‘old style’) song to promote the theory of a Berber–Irish connection. Several of my respondents knew of and cited the film in support of their assertions of similarity.

knowledge, many found it impossible to dissociate Ali's performance from the notion of the singer as carrier of *tamusni*, concluding that he 'must be somehow Kabyle'. As a result, Ali's conduct was often judged according to Kabyle standards of morality, a highly unusual situation for an outsider.

This was particularly true of the expectations placed on him as a 'community musician' rather than a commercial performer, and of attempts to co-opt him to party political and association agendas. Whereas I was generally treated as a session musician, on several occasions when we performed together café owners exerted substantial moral pressure on Ali to play without fee, reminding him that he would be 'giving pleasure to a lot of people', 'doing a favour', and 'bringing fresh life to the Kabyles'. The other side of these claims was that when he did not comply, Ali was readily denounced (as a Kabyle singer usually would be) as ungrateful, 'not good', or even 'treacherous'. What is more, those who made such accusations almost invariably explained Ali's behaviour not as that of an outsider unfamiliar with Kabyle expectations, but instead as a failure to comply with Kabyle codes of solidarity and reciprocal obligation:

Like any Kabyle singer, Ali relies on us, the public, for his success. There's not much of a commercial market for Kabyle music anywhere else [ie. in the 'world music' industry] so any money there is in it, and any glory, comes from how singers manage to make a reputation with their supporters. Matoub would have been nothing without the Kabyles.

That's why I don't like it when I feel that I've helped Ali to get where he is and then he doesn't return the favour. That's how all the singers made it: someone helped them, gave them a spot on stage or whatever, and then when their moment came they paid back the favour. If Ali thinks that because he's foreign he can get away with taking and not giving back, he's wrong. If he doesn't respect his audience, his audience won't respect him forever. (Kacem)

This tendency to judge Ali as an assimilated Kabyle was reinforced by a common view of him as the heir to Matoub's legacy or even, by those of a more mystical

inclination, a reincarnation. To make matters worse, Ali even looks uncannily like Matoub, and he himself narrates his involvement with Kabyle music as having started when at the age of twelve he heard the news of Matoub's assassination on the French news and was, in his own words, 'inexplicably fascinated'.

Yet the fact that he does not speak Kabyle or understand the texts word for word only serves to intensify Ali's reputation as a vehicle for an 'essence' or spirit of Kabyle identity. In this respect, many described him as a prototype of the 'wise madman', another recurring figure in Kabyle song and poetry who is often identified with the person of the poet himself. Ali was thus described not only in comparison with Matoub but as part of a broader, intertextual tradition of the truth-telling lunatic:³⁷

You know the video for Majid Soula's tribute song to Mouloud Mammeri? If you remember, there's a real person in it from near Azazga, we call him Lounès le fou, and everyone in the area knows him. He's not right in the head, but that means he speaks the truth where others wouldn't dare. That's how Ali is too: he doesn't know what he's saying, yet that only makes what he says more powerful. I know he's upset people and he's got problems, but that's the result of his involvement with Matoub who was also mad. Matoub's darkness has got into him too. But that's exactly why he can keep this alive better than anyone else, as well as the fact he's so talented: he's not doing it by choice but because he *has* to, it comes from something stronger than himself. (Ferhat)

Ali's foreignness paradoxically makes it possible to depict him as a pure vehicle for tradition and as the embodiment of a tacit ideal of cultural transmission without agency: someone who merely carries a voice and bears no responsibility for invention, thereby circumventing the twin traps of 'diverted heritage', either through inaccurate transmission or through failed innovation, that we saw in the criticisms of Rabah and

³⁷ On this tradition and its relevance today see Lazreg 2000: 147, who uses contemporary examples of the truth-telling lunatic as an allegory for the breakdown of the Algerian nation in the 1990s: 'he [an apparently deranged man visiting a shrine in Algiers] spoke to the few visitors about injustices perpetrated by an unspecified "them", of history that will be remade ... In many ways, he was a throwback to *the North African tradition of the illuminated man who speaks his mind about that powers that be in a more or less metaphorical fashion*' (emphasis mine).

Afus. Furthermore, he is apparently unswayed by the political co-optation seen to compromise the integrity of several Kabyle singers, and thus seems to offer a solution to the tension between popular ideals and the reality of divided loyalties.

Where I was encouraged to innovate, introducing my own musical background to accompaniments of Kabyle song, Ali was praised for his literal fidelity to originals, and criticized when he diverged from them; and where respondents used my participation in musical and social events to assert their own attachment to diversity and cosmopolitan cultural identity, Ali's presence consistently elicited discussions of intangible Kabyle essence, 'spirit' and the meaning of membership.

Ali, in short, is in many ways the ideal representative of a form of heritage that stresses the importance of oral tradition as a guarantee of cultural purity, and the importance of innate over formal or learned knowledge. Through his phonetic reproductions of song texts without understanding, he appears to represent an ultimate form of the embodied knowledge of *tamusni*. His ability to reproduce hours' worth of texts in a language that he does not speak also places him between the extremes of truth-telling and unawareness usually invested in the figure of the enlightened madman. Like the *amusnaw*, meanwhile, he straddles the usual normative divide between those considered as insiders and outsiders of Kabyle society, and is therefore perceived as able to sustain the legacy of a form – political song – widely regarded as an art on the brink of extinction.

* * *

Kabyle conceptions of political song and its artists can be seen to express, in miniature, the broader paradoxes of Kabyle nationalism and regional identity: the desire for something shared by all yet led by an individual who can ‘see further’ than others, and speak on their behalf; the desire for a type of embodied wisdom that expresses a middle way between popular oral heritage and arcane knowledge, and thus resolves the tension between ‘folklore’ and official history; and the desire for an expression of values that are at once local, regional and Algerian in their scope.

Above all, the context and performance of song occasionally fulfil the ultimate ‘nationalist’ quest for a form of pure transmission in which the actor merely transmits an already existing cultural essence without altering it or even being conscious of its content. In the light of my discussions throughout this study of the tensions between discourse and practice, different languages and forms of knowledge, charismatic authority and popular decision-making, conscious and visionary ‘truth-telling’, it is perhaps unsurprising that (aside from those granted near-unanimous legitimacy by martyrdom) this consensus around the unquestionable success of cultural transmission rarely gathers around any Kabyle artist. Instead, as we saw in the final example, it is only a singer who stands outside these debates who can carry the imagined purity of ‘tradition without invention’.

Narratives of identity – regional, national or otherwise, and in Algeria and beyond – must present themselves as natural and unconstructed if they are to appeal to the human desire for incontrovertible truth. As we have seen, advocates of competing ideologies in Algeria correspondingly attack others by attempting to demonstrate the ‘artificiality’ or incoherence of a rival cultural narrative of national identity. Amongst its many other

criticisms of the regime, the Kabyle vernacular narrative thus attacks Arabo-Islamic ideology (to return to my epigraph to the Introduction) for mistranslating an instinctive patriotic emotion into an ideology, for transforming the natural homeland into a constructed state. Song, when it ‘succeeds’ in the way discussed here, acts for many Kabyles as evidence that they have no such need for construction; that in the right hands, a particularly Kabyle tradition of visionary truth-telling can still embody innate cultural ‘essence’, and give voice to the relationship between language, knowledge and morality that constitutes *taqbaylit*.

Conclusion

‘What do you want?’ asks the state administrator, without introduction. He attempts to adopt the stern pose of a father who wishes to scold, but has no real intention of reaching for the cane for fear of an unexpected reaction ... ‘I am here to deal with some pre-formalities for a patent application. I have already explained this once at reception.’ ... ‘Sir, it is not every day we deal with inventors. You must therefore understand our reactions. You cannot be unaware that in our sacred religion the words *creation* and *invention* are deplored by some as a heresy and a devaluation of what already exists. Our religion condemns creators for their ambition and lack of humility; yes, it condemns them in order to protect society from the torments brought about by innovation ... You are a blot on our familiar landscape of men who aspire to war pensions, businesses, taxi licences, plots of land, building materials; who exhaust their energies in hunting down unlocatable products such as butter, pineapples, pulses or tyres. How, may I ask you, am I supposed to class your invention in this œsophageal universe?’

Tahar Djaout, *Les Vigiles*, pp. 41–2

Les Vigiles, the last novel published by the intellectual Tahar Djaout before his assassination by the GIA in 1993, paints a scathing portrait of the boredom and moral decadence of a group of ex-FLN men, and the arbitrary mechanisms instituted by Algeria’s ‘men of power’ to sap public energy and perpetuate their own rule. Left with little to do except take care of their already affluent material interests, the group in Djaout’s novel fill their days by seeking counter-revolutionary conspiracy where none exists. Their choice of target, however, turns out to be unlucky: the inventor whose path they have tried to block wins first prize in a prestigious European competition, and is fêted as a national emblem of Algerian modernity and progress.

To cover up the mistake, they look for an alternative scapegoat and settle on an old pacifist leading a harmless life in the suburbs of the capital, whom they persuade to act as their sacrificial victim. *Les Vigiles* is a book in which nothing happens except for a needless death: the invention is insignificant, the inventor unsubversive, the old man

who becomes the novel's tragic hero more interested in finding a cure for his insomnia than leading counter-revolutionary actions. The only force that makes anything in the novel – and, by extension, in Algerian political life as seen by the author – happen at all lies in the machinations and then frenzied reverse machinations of the FLN vigilantes, whose place in society depends on having counter-revolutionary subversion to report – and inventing it if it does not exist.

Born in the Tizi Ouzou region of Kabylia, and later a leading dissident journalist in Algiers, Djaout (though he wrote little on Kabylia or the Kabyle cause specifically) frequently figures in Kabyle 'martyrs' pantheons', and it is easy to see why. His biting satire on the state as a structure that exists only to reproduce and serve its own interests is a concise statement of what the vernacular narrative of Kabyle identity also depicts as an empty governmental shell of corruption, foreign rhetoric with no 'truly Algerian' substance, and the failure of independence. But beyond this, Djaout's criticism is of a dualist, Manichaean world: one is either revolutionary or counter-revolutionary, favoured or opposed by 'the state', and those who do not fit into one of these pre-ordained categories do not, so to speak, really 'exist' in the minds of their fellow Algerians.

The half-centenary of Algerian independence in 2012 provoked a flurry of analyses and retrospectives, from Algerian and international commentators, on the development of state and nation since 1962. Several attacks from Algerian journalists and writers closely echoed Djaout's prophecy of twenty years before, arguing that Algeria as it stands today is not only fundamentally unable to construct either a functioning institutional state or an effective, loyalty-attracting nation, but actively turns its energies

to the destruction of society from within. The dissident journalist Kamel Daoud commented on the anniversary on these lines, arguing that anything constructive in Algeria always comes from the outside:

Today, Algerians no longer build anything except for their private interests, at the family level. Anything else is the job of the State, which means no-one ... we subcontract our independence: the Americans manage our oil, the French our water, the Chinese construction and footwear, the Turks cement, the Spanish transport and roadworks, etc ... We are a people of war veterans ... So much so that after driving out the last colonizer we couldn't resist the temptation to kill each other. 200,000 dead in one decade – nearly 55 deaths per day. Algerians have never built 55 houses per day, or 55 dams, or 55 metres of road.¹

Like Djaout's 'œsophageal universe' of a reality fragmented into false categories, national history, in Daoud's commentary, is 'a meal supposedly for all, served up after independence but in uneven portions'; corruption, factionalism, terrorism are representative of a common 'devouring instinct' among Algerians who have a 'carnivorous relationship with their territory'; and so, Daoud asks, 'what sense does nationality have when the only national thing it eats is itself?'

This study has been principally one of how a particular narrative and 'mental image' of the nation attempts to replace this sense of emptiness with a newly defined national essence. It imbues this with the substance of Kabyle moral codes, incorporating a basic ambiguity in which communities of different sizes can embody the values of 'national' coherence. But as theorists of anticolonial movements have often observed, a perception of radical absence or emptiness frequently goes hand in hand with the desire for a radical absolute or essence to fill it.

¹ Kamel Daoud, 'Algérie: stade oral collectif', *Libération*. Available at <http://laseptiemewilaya.wordpress.com/2012/03/18/algerie-50-ans-dindependance>, accessed 22 March 2012.

The Kabyle identity narrative that I have examined exemplifies this theory, embodying a moralized conception which sets the ideals of a ‘good society’ – principally social unity and equity – in opposition to such practices of bad governance, which it alleges were introduced by enduring foreign rule in Algeria and are perpetuated by the contemporary Arabo-Islamic state. Whatever the practical conflicts such ideals encounter, it is above all in terms of the moral absolutes which underlie them that many Kabyles conceive not just the state tradition or the national vision, but also the nature of cohesion and community on a smaller scale.

This has two effects. First, it demands that the concept of a ‘good society’ must be preserved as an ideal, and that practical contradictions must be explained as falling *ipso facto* outside the ideal. Secondly, the foundation of these absolute values in an Islamic epistemology of revealed knowledge restricts what George Joffé (2007) calls ‘speculative reasoning without restraint’, and more specifically without the external restraints of doctrine and the principle of absolute revealed truth. Joffé further argues that this restriction promotes an all-pervading view of the world through familiar categories of thought, in faith, ‘social’ or ‘political’ organization (a dubious distinction in this context, as we saw in the Introduction):

For most Muslims, the linkage between religious doctrine and social order, epitomized in the adage, *din wa dunya* – ‘faith and society’ (the secular word) – carries an echo of ‘*dawla*’ – state – as well. It stems from the implicit contract at the base of Islamic constitutional theory which has been absorbed into the general political culture of the Islamic world. It stimulates an instinctive preference for familiar archetypes in the resolution of conflict and the imposition of socio-political order. (Joffé 2007: 135)

The socio-political concepts that I have discussed as the threads running through the vernacular narrative of Kabyle identity are instances of such ‘archetypes’, in the sense

that they all pursue an overarching concern with how to create a ‘smooth’ narrative of society, which subsumes conflict and discrepancy in a broader underlying consensus about the moral nature of Kabyle interaction. This desire for ‘smoothness’ and idealized unity takes various forms: the rejection of institutional politics in order to portray ideal self-sufficiency (discussed in Chapter 2); the desire for a coherent Berber history, written or oral, as an expression of truly ‘Algerian’ morality (Chapter 3); for a society that reflects ideals of moral unity as expressed in village and family models of equity and controlled authority (Chapter 4); and for a transmission of ‘pure truth’ through oral poetry and song, which are understood to carry an alternative type of (secular) revealed knowledge (Chapter 5).

Each of these – though many of my respondents claimed that it was the outcome of circumstances particular to Kabylia – arises not merely from Kabyle specifics but from the more deeply entrenched cultural assumptions discussed above, which characterize the nature of truth and meaning, as well as social relations, as premised on the internal coherence of ideas. This is a notable feature of state nationalist discourses, which attempt to create Algerian unity in a monolithic conception of ‘the nation’, not only culturally but as an object of loyalty too: nationalism not as an ‘à la carte’ menu but rather as a watertight complex of ideas with little room for dissent. While it is little surprise to find these same concerns with coherence running through the narratives of dissident groups in Algeria, the difficulty, as I discussed in the Introduction, lies in finding a way of moving beyond narrative consensus without dismissing it as a meaningless, or only superficially meaningful, part of discourse. Like my respondents, I had to find ways of doing this, and of understanding the uses and limits of discursive agreement, as I went along. Often, possible answers came from humour, Kabyle

literature, or accounts of how very different communities maintain ‘smooth’ narratives of their values.

Respondents often joked with me that if I let them, they and other Kabyles would talk about what it meant to be Kabyle until one of us fell asleep; and that they would have a grandiose vision of world peace set down on tape for me before they realized that they had given no thought to how to achieve it. Wardia, the psychotherapist from my Kabyle host family in Algiers with whom I had shared many such jokes (usually at the expense of masculine *nif*), even gave me as a parting gift a copy of Mammeri’s *Isefra de Si-Mohand-ou-Mhand* in which, on the inside front cover, she had inscribed a long excerpt from Mouloud Feraoun’s satire on *tajmaat* democracy which we had once laughed over, with a note ‘to remind you of “the good, the bad and the ugly” of Kabyle culture’:

[After the meeting] everyone returned home, the patriarchs with a paternal smile, the others pink with fury but proud that they had dared to speak up, and repeating on the walk home their forceful refrain that echoed one last time in the ears of their bemused wives: ‘*I am a man: whatever I think, I shout it out for all to hear.*’

The next meeting started the same way. The *amin* declared the assembly open, and immediately the cries started up from every quarter.

‘Let us speak in the name of the Prophet !’

‘No, Ahmed, wait, let us speak in the name of the Prophet !’

‘Right, listen up, I say first of all: let us speak in the name of the...’²

While it gave vent to her irreverent humour, Wardia’s gift was also a more serious reminder of several aspects of Kabyle *mentalités* that we had often discussed. Beyond the mischievous reference to the moral dualism of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ in our shared love of Westerns, Wardia – who as one of the most highly educated members of my host family had been at pains throughout to provide me with both books and intellectual companionship – also drew attention to the ironic contrast between the oral poems of Si

² Feraoun, *La Terre et le sang*, pp. 164–5.

Mohand (whose transcription by Mammeri is widely regarded as a high point of Kabyle linguistic activism) and Feraoun's cutting comment on the false pride of 'speaking out' as a guarantee of existence in Kabyle political life.

This in turn brought me back to some of the questions that had driven my interest in Kabylia from the outset. Two books that I had read long before I started work on this study – Bennett Berger's *The Survival of a Counterculture: Ideological Work and Everyday Life among Rural Communards* and Tobias Jones' *Utopian Dreams* – shaped my interest in why and how people understand themselves to be part of a community, and how they set out to define that community and to imagine it beyond the bounds of those immediately known. Both were based on the authors' own ambiguous feelings about and experiences of living as part of such deliberately constructed human groups, and both ultimately ask the same question: one about how community is structured not only around actions but, perhaps more importantly, around 'words as deeds'; about the role of speech and discourse itself in creating coherence.

To live as 'part of' a group, as I also found, one is usually expected to some extent to espouse collective views that may not always sit easily with individual beliefs or with everyday practice; to use certain words rather than others, as well as performing certain actions, to express them; to privilege certain criteria over others in dividing the world into groups of people (Arab and Berber, Maghribi and European, Algerian and Kabyle), categories of action (resistance, statehood and so on) and moral values. The words we use to describe such divisions are usually (a more thoroughgoing deconstructivist might say always) in some measure a matter of chance, social convention and intention. They rarely carry the 'absolute meaning' which a surprising number of studies of Algeria still

appear to expect of these descriptive terms, and conclude when they cannot find it that these terms are simply ‘fuzzy’ and confused instruments of material power struggles.

As I have demonstrated, the words my respondents frequently use to describe their experience as Kabyles and their relationship to the Algerian state – *taqbaylit*, resistance, (anti-)politics, region, nation, state, Arab, Berber, and above all ‘Kabyle’ itself – are all invested with contingent meanings influenced by historical and social context, as well as contemporary interests. I have aimed to illustrate how, in the broader context of the Algerian and French political, cultural and social landscapes of which they are a part, my respondents learn to ‘live with’ these ideas and adapt them to changing circumstances.

As Algeria enters its sixth independent decade and the ubiquitous anniversary *bilans* proclaim a *retour au point de départ* (the subject of a cartoon for the occasion by Ali Dilem, showing circular footsteps from and to a ‘1962’ placard with the legend ‘How far we’ve come!’) or worse, indeed, many Kabyles feel that ideas, words, and the capacity to ‘invent’ with them are all of value that is left. In a basic sense, as discussed above, these words are both necessarily subjective and influenced by the desire (conscious or not) to align with certain interests over others. Rather than dismiss these out of hand, what has interested me has been to explore how my respondents negotiated all of these elements – words, interests, practice – to produce a narrative of ‘Kabyleness’ fashioned (to return to a phrase I cited in the Introduction) out of the ‘interaction or dialectic between ideas and circumstances’ (Berger 1981: 14); the process, in other words, of explaining how ideas, even where they appear to be threatened by the inconsistency of practice, can continue to accommodate reality.

Appendix: List of Respondents

NB. Pseudonyms except where indicated; real names used at respondents' request.

Ameziane, 43 (real name): an activist playwright, currently working on a Tamazight translation (via French) of excerpts from ancient Greek texts. He is a radical critic of Arabo-Islamic ideology, and also writes song lyrics for prominent commercial and political singers.

Amin, 63: second eldest brother in my host family in Kabylia. Alone among the six brothers, he has remained in Ajmoun, where he lives in the house built by his father, along with his wife and children, mother and one unmarried sister. He is the treasurer of the village *tajmaet*.

Belaid, 48: a professor of Tamazight at the INALCO (Paris' main centre for Berber studies) and prominent linguistic activist.

Brahim, 28: after studying economics at graduate level in Béjaïa, he came to France on an educational visa. Since it expired he has been largely unemployed or doing occasional work in removals. Passionate about Kabyle poetry and political song, he helped me translate several texts.

Dalila, 43: third sister in my Kabyle host family. She lived until recently in her husband's large family home in an isolated village; they and their two sons have now moved into an independent flat in Béjaïa, an instance of the gradual move away from extended households.

Ferhat, 36: youngest sibling in my host family, recently married. He left Ajmoun for Paris in 2000, after Islamist control of the Akfadou forest crippled his family's wood supply business. Though not a musician himself, he is knowledgeable about political song, and particularly the texts of Matoub, which he helped me to translate. After a decade of living undocumented in France, he gained legal residence and was able to return to Algeria for the first time in 2011.

Hakim, 41: an activist singer from the Azazga region, he came to Paris in the early 2000s and recently married a woman born in France to Kabyle parents. He is a member of Ferhat Mehenni's Movement for the Autonomy of Kabylia, and articulates a radical critique of Arabo-Islamic hegemony in a mixture of self-penned texts and Kabyle adaptations of classic French songs. Heavily involved in a group of artists interested in finding evidence of Berber tradition in Greek mythology and classical sources.

Hocine, 37: a migrant to Paris from Algiers. Identifies himself as an ‘Arabized Berber’: recognizes that his family was ‘probably Kabyle at some point’, but does not claim affiliation with the Kabyle cause himself.

Ilyès, 42: arrived in France a decade ago after a period living in Spain. He is active in mediating money exchange deals, false papers networks and unofficial marriage brokering in the Paris migrant community and on return trips to Kabylia.

Kacem, 44: an activist singer from the Tizi Ouzou region of Kabylia. He came to France in the late 1990s, and (like many musicians in the Paris migrant community) runs a café-bar, where he hosts regular music evenings.

Massi, 37: a native of Ajmoun, he ran a café in northeast Paris which, until its closure in 2011, hosted frequent music evenings and was a focal point for the surrounding Kabyle community.

Mohand, deceased (real name): from the Dellys region, he was active in the MCB, local citizen initiatives during the civil war, and the Mouvement des Aarchs. He worked as a *lycée* maths teacher in Kabylia, and in 2010 was diagnosed with terminal cancer caused by unremoved asbestos in the school building.

Mourad, 29: born to Kabyle parents in France, he plays *derbouka* (North African drum) with Kabyle activist singers and is a vocal advocate of anti-Arabization. Married a Kabyle woman from Algiers in his mid-twenties.

Nouara, 31: born in France to Kabyle parents. Heavily secularist, sporadically involved in Kabyle associations but defines herself as a ‘libertarian’ who prefers the utopian dimension of cultural activism to institutional politics.

Rachida, 38: born in France to Kabyle parents, she has returned to Algeria regularly, is a vocal advocate of Kabyle resistance to Arabization, and though she regularly goes to Kabyle cafés in Paris pronounces herself ‘disgusted’ with the constant censorship on women’s behaviour from male customers.

Salas, 36: an activist singer and composer from the Tizi Ouzou region, living undocumented in France since 2006.

‘Sheikh’, 84: a member of one of Ajmoun’s two other ‘historic families’ besides my hosts, he has lived in Paris for several decades and enjoys regaling younger migrants with village anecdotes. Generally known as ‘Sheikh’ in reference to his age.

Tahar, 65: eldest brother of my host family. He has always lived in Algiers but returns regularly to the village. Works as a civil engineer.

Tassadit, 31: came to France aged five with her parents. ‘Rediscovered’ her Kabyle origins in her twenties and returned on her own to the village in the Barbasha region where she was born. Proud of the maraboutic descent of her family; an observant Muslim, she is active in Salafi organizations and religious activism in deprived suburbs of Paris, and close to the controversial Muslim intellectual Tariq Ramadan.

Wardia, 37: Tahar’s eldest daughter and the eldest of the family’s ‘grandchildren’. She is university-educated and works as a psychotherapist in Algiers, but is fiercely attached to the family’s ‘historic tradition’ and roots in the old village of Ajmoun.

Yazid, 43: from the Barbasha region of eastern Kabylia, he was a journalist and member of the RCD party before migrating to France in the early 2000s. Married to a French woman, who according to him ‘has a lot of Kabyle in her’; they have a young daughter, whom he is taking great care to educate in ‘Kabyle language and customs’.

Bibliography

- Abbas, Ferhat (1981), *Le Jeune Algérien*, Paris: Editions Garnier Frères.
- Abdelfettah Lalmi, Nedjma (2004), 'Du mythe de l'isolat kabyle', *Cahiers d'Etudes africaines*, 44/3, 507–31.
- Abi-Mershed, Osama (2010), *Apostles of Modernity: Saint-Simonians and the Civilizing Mission in Algeria*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Abou-Zeid, A. (1965), 'Honour and shame among the Bedouins of Egypt', in J. G. Peristiany, ed., *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society*, pp. 243–61.
- Abrahams, Roger D. (1993), 'Phantoms of Romantic nationalism in folkloristics', *Journal of American Folklore*, 106 (419), 3–37.
- Abrous, Nacira (2010), 'L'Enseignement du Tamazight en Algérie. Genèse et contexte du lancement des classes pilotes dans les régions berbérophones', *Langues et linguistique*, 25–6 (special issue: 'L'Enseignement de la langue amazighe au Maghreb'), 11–28.
- Abu-Lughod, Lila (1985), 'Honour and the sentiments of loss in a Bedouin society', *American Ethnologist*, 12/2 (May), 245–61.
- Abu-Lughod, Lila (1990), 'The romance of resistance: tracing transformations of power through Bedouin women', *American Ethnologist*, 17, 41–55.
- Abun-Nasr, Jamil (1987), *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Addi, Lahouari (2002), *Sociologie et anthropologie chez Pierre Bourdieu*, Paris: La Découverte.
- Ageron, Charles-Robert (1960), 'La France a-t-elle une politique kabyle?', *Revue historique*, 223–4 (April), 311–52.
- Ageron, Charles-Robert (1979), *Histoire de l'Algérie contemporaine*, 2 vols, Paris: PUF.
- Ahmida, Ali Abdullatif (2000), *Beyond Colonialism and Nationalism in the Maghrib: History, Culture and Politics*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Amrouche, Taos (1966), *Le Grain magique. Contes, poèmes et proverbes berbères de Kabylie*, Paris: Editions Maspéro.
- Anderson, Benedict (1983), *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso.
- Anderson, Lisa (1991), 'Legitimacy, identity and the writing of history', in E. Davis and N. Gavrieldis, eds, *Statecraft in the Middle East*, Miami: Florida International University Press, pp. 71–91.
- Asad, Talal (2004), 'Where are the margins of the State?', in V. Das and D. Poole, eds, *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*, Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Aucapitaine, Henri (1863), 'Kanoun du village de Taourirt Amokran, chez les Ait Iraten', *Revue Africaine*, 7, 279–85.
- Audisio, Gabriel (1936), *Jeunesse de la Méditerranée, II: Le Sel de la mer*, Paris: Gallimard.
- Azem, Sliman (no date), *Izlan. Textes berbères et français*, Paris: Editions Music-Paris.

- Barkey, Karen (1996), *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Baycroft, Timothy and David Hopkin (2012), *Folklore and Nationalism in Europe during the Long Nineteenth Century*, Leiden: Brill.
- Becker, Howard (1998), *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think about your Research while you're Doing It*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ben Boulifa, Si Ammar (1925), *Le Djurdjura à travers l'histoire*, Algiers: Bringau.
- Benbrahim, M. and N. Mecheri-Saada (1981), 'Chants nationalistes algériens d'expression kabyle, 1945–1953. Etude ethno-historique et musicale', *Libyca*, 32–4, 297–316.
- Berger, Anne-Emmanuelle, ed. (2002), *Algeria in Others' Languages*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Berger, Bennett M. (1981), *The Survival of a Counterculture: Ideological Work and Everyday Life among Rural Communards*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bernard, Augustin, II: *L'Algérie*, in Hanotaux, Gabriel and Alfred Martineau (1929–34), *Histoire de la colonisation française et de l'expansion de la France dans le monde*, 6 vols, Paris: Société de l'Histoire Nationale.
- Berque, Jacques (1974 [1954]), 'Qu'est-ce qu'une "tribu" nord-africaine?', in Jacques Berque, *Maghreb, histoire et sociétés*, Algiers: SNED.
- Berque, Jacques (1979 [1962]), *Le Maghreb entre deux guerres*, 3rd edn, Paris: Editions du Seuil.
- Bertrand, Louis (1936), *Une destinée, IV: Sur les routes du Sud*, Paris: Fayard.
- Bertrand, Romain (2006), 'Les Sciences sociales et le "moment colonial". De la problématique de la domination coloniale à celle de l'hégémonie impériale', *Questions de recherches du CERI*, 18.
- Bessaoud, Mohand Arab (1963), *Heureux les martyrs qui n'ont rien vu. La vérité sur la mort du colonel Amirouche et de Abane Ramdane*, Paris: Imperimerie Cary.
- Betts, Raymond (2005), *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890–1914*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Blok, Anton (1981), 'Rams and billy-goats: a key to the Mediterranean code of honour', *Man*, 16/3 (September), 427–40.
- Bosniak, Linda (2006), *The Citizen and the Alien: Dilemmas of Contemporary Membership*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Boumedini, Belkacem and Nebia Dadoua Hadria (2012), 'Les Noms des quartiers dans la ville d'Oran. Entre changement officiel et nostalgie populaire', *Onomastique, droit et politique*, 64, 149–60.
- Bourdieu, Pierre (1970), 'The Kabyle house or the world reversed', *Social Science Information*, 9/2, 151–70.
- Bourdieu, Pierre (1977), *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. R. Nice, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre (1979), 'The sense of honour', in Bourdieu, *Algeria 1960*, trans. R. Nice, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre (2008), *Esquisses algériennes*, Paris: Editions du Seuil.

- Bourdieu, Pierre and Mouloud Mammeri (1978), 'Dialogue sur la poésie orale en Kabylie (entretien avec Mouloud Mammeri)', *Actes de recherche en sciences sociales*, 23, 51–66.
- Branche, Raphaëlle (2011), 'The martyr's torch: memory and power in Algeria', *The Journal of North African Studies*, 16/3, 431–43.
- Braudel, Fernand (1990 [1949]), *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen, I: La part du milieu*, Paris: Armand Colin.
- Brett, Michael (1972), 'Problems in the interpretation of the history of the Maghrib in the light of some recent publications', *Journal of African History*, 12/3, 489–506.
- Brett, Michael (1980), 'Mufti, murabit, marabout and mahdi: four types in the Islamic history of North Africa', *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 29, 5–15.
- Brett, Michael and Elizabeth Fentress (1997), *The Berbers: The Peoples of Africa*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Brögger, J. (1968), 'Conflict resolution and the role of the bandit in peasant society', *Anthropological Quarterly*, 41, 228–40.
- Brower, Benjamin C. (2011), *A Desert Named Peace: The Violence of France's Empire in the Algerian Sahara, 1844–1902*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Brown, Leon Carl (1964), 'The Islamic Reformist Movement in North Africa', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 2/1 (March), 55–63.
- Brubaker, Rogers (1996), *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brubaker, Rogers (2004), *Ethnicity without Groups*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bugeaud de la Piconnerie, Thomas R. (1948), 'De la stratégie, de la tactique des retraites et du passage des défilés dans les montagnes des Kabyles', in *Par l'épée et par la charrue. Ecrits et discours*, ed. P. Azan, Paris: PUF, pp. 110–11.
- Campbell, J. K. (1964), *Honour, Family and Patronage: A Study of Institutions and Moral Values in a Greek Mountain Community*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Camps, Gabriel (1980), *Berbères. Aux marges de l'histoire*, Paris: Editions de l'Hespérides.
- Camps, Gabriel et al. (1985–2002), *Encyclopédie berbère*, Paris: Edisud.
- Carlier, Omar (1991), 'Mémoire, mythe et doxa de l'état en Algérie. L'Etoile Nord-Africaine et la religion du *watan*', *Vingtième siècle, revue d'histoire*, 30 (April–June), 82–92.
- Carlier, Omar (1995), *Entre nation et jihad. Histoire sociale des radicalismes algériens*, Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques.
- Carrey, Emile (1858), *Récits de Kabylie. Campagne de 1857, avec une carte*, Paris: Michel Lévy.
- Caton, Steven (1990), *Peaks of Yemen I Summon: Poetry as Cultural Practice in a North Yemeni Tribe*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Chabane, Rachid (2011), 'Le Printemps des homo kabilis', <http://www.kabyleuniversel.com/?p=882#comment-9314> (accessed 11 December 2011).

- Chachoua, Kamel (2001), *L'Islam kabyle*, Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose.
- Chaker, Salem (1989), 'Une tradition de résistance et de lutte. La poésie berbère kabyle. Un parcours poétique', *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 51, 11–31.
- Chaker, Salem (1994), 'Quelques évidences sur la question berbère en Algérie', *Confluences Méditerranée*, 11 ('Comprendre l'Algérie'), 103–11.
- Chaker, Salem (1998), *Berbères aujourd'hui*, Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Chatterjee, Partha (1986), *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* London: Zed Books.
- Cheriguen, Foudil (1998), 'Nommer pour exister. De l'ethnonyme comme enjeu politique', *Mots*, 57 (December), 29–37.
- Christelow, Allan (1987), 'Ritual, culture and the politics of Islamic reformism in Algeria', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 23/3, 255–73.
- Clancy-Smith, Julia (2011), *Mediterraneans: North Africa and Europe in an Age of Migration, c. 1800–1900*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Claval, P. (1994), *Géopolitique et géostratégie. La pensée politique, l'espace et le territoire au XX^e siècles*, Paris: Editions Nathan.
- Colonna, Fanny (1975), *Instituteurs algériens*, Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques.
- Colonna, Fanny (1995), *Les Versets de l'invincibilité. Permanence et changements religieux dans l'Algérie contemporaine*, Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques.
- Colonna, Fanny (2003), 'The nation's "unknowing other": three intellectuals and the culture(s) of being Algerian, or the impossibility of subaltern studies in Algeria', *The Journal of North African Studies*, 8/1, 155–70.
- Comaroff, J. (1985), *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Crawford, David (2008), *Moroccan Households in a World Economy: Labor and Inequality in a Berber Village*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.
- Daoud, Kamel (2012), 'Algérie: stade oral collectif', *Libération*. Available at <http://laseptiemewilaya.wordpress.com/2012/03/18/algerie-50-ans-dindependance>, accessed 22 March 2012.
- Daumas, Eugène (1864), *Mœurs et coutumes de l'Algérie. Tell, Kabylie, Sahara*, Paris: Hachette.
- Daumas, Eugène and Capitaine Fabar (1847), *La Grande Kabylie. Etudes historiques*, Paris: Hachette.
- Davis, Diana K. (2007), *Resurrecting the Granary of Rome: Environmental History and French Colonial Expansion in North Africa*, Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.
- Davis, Diana K. (2011), 'Introduction: Imperialism, Orientalism and the environment in the Middle East', in Davis and Edmund Burke III, eds, *Environmental Imaginaries of the Middle East and North Africa*, Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.
- Delaney, Carol (1995), 'Father state, motherland and the birth of modern Turkey', in Sylvia Yanagisako and Carol Delaney, eds, *Naturalizing Power: Essays in Feminist Cultural Analysis*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 177–99.

- Dick, Ernst (1989), 'The folk and their culture: the formative concepts and the beginnings of culture', in Robert J. Smith and Jerry Stannard (eds), *The Folk: Identity, Landscapes and Lores*, Lawrence: University of Kansas, pp. 11–28.
- Dirèche-Slimani, Karima (1997), *Histoire de l'émigration kabyle en France au XX^e siècle*, Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Djaout, Tahar (1991), *Les Vigiles*, Paris: Editions du Seuil.
- Dorson, Richard M. (1972), *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Dresch, Paul (1984), *Tribal Relations and Political History in Upper Yemen*, London: Croom Helm.
- Dundes, Alan (1980), *The Study of Folklore*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Durkheim, Emile (1964 [1893]), *The Division of Labor in Society*, trans. G. Simpson, New York: Free Press.
- Eickelman, Dale F. (1989), *The Middle East: An Anthropological Approach* (2nd edn), Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Encarnacion, Omar Guillermo (2004), 'Democracy and federalism in Spain', *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 15/1, 58–74.
- Ennaji, Moha (1991), 'Aspects of multilingualism in the Maghreb', *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 87, 7–25.
- Evans-Pritchard, E. E. (1940), *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Fanon, Frantz (2002 [1961]), *Les Damnés de la terre*, Paris: La Découverte.
- Favret-Saada, Jeanne (1968), 'Relations de dépendance et manipulation de la violence en Kabylie', *L'Homme*, 8/4, 18–44.
- Feraoun, Mouloud (1953), *La Terre et le sang*, Paris: Editions du Seuil.
- Feraoun, Mouloud (1962), *Journal, 1955–1962*, Paris: Editions du Seuil.
- Ferguson, Charles A. (1959), 'Diglossia', *Word*, 15, 325–40.
- Ferne, Robert A. and James M. Malarkey (1975), 'Anthropology of the Middle East and North Africa: a critical assessment', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 4, 183–206.
- Finnegan, Ruth (1977), *Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance and Social Context*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Freitag, Ulrike (1994), 'Writing Arab history: the search for the nation', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 21, 19–37.
- Frémeaux, Jacques (2002), *Les Empires coloniaux dans le processus de mondialisation*, Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose.
- Frémeaux, Jacques and Gabrielle Maas (forthcoming 2015), 'Colonisation and globalization', in Kalypso Nicolaïdis, Berny Sèbe and Gabrielle Maas, eds, *Echoes of Empire: Memory, Identity and the Legacy of Imperialism*, London: I. B. Tauris.
- Fromherz, Allen (2010), *Ibn Khaldun: Life and Times*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Gautier, Emile-Félix (1952 [1927]), *Les Siècles obscurs du Maghreb*, Paris: Payot.

- Geertz, Clifford, Hildred Geertz and Lawrence Rosen (1979), *Meaning and Order in Moroccan Society: Three Essays in Cultural Analysis*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gellner, David, ed. (2003), *Resistance and the State: Nepalese Experiences*, Delhi: Social Science Press.
- Gellner, Ernest (1969), *Saints of the Atlas*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gellner, Ernest (1985), 'The roots of cohesion', *Man*, 20/1, 140–55.
- Gellner, Ernest and Charles Micaud (1973), *Arabs and Berbers*, London: Duckworth.
- Gellner, Ernest and John Waterbury, eds (1977), *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Societies*, London: Duckworth.
- Genevois, Henri (1962), *Un village kabyle. Taourirt n At Mangellat. Notes d'histoire et de folklore*, Paris: Fichier de documentation berbère.
- Genevois, Henri (1969), *La Femme kabyle. Les travaux et les jours*, Paris: Fichier de documentation berbère.
- Ghambou, Mokhtar (2010), 'The "Numidian" origins of North Africa', in Katherine Hoffman and Susan Gilson Miller, *Berbers and Others*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 153–70.
- Gildea, Robert (1994), *The Past in French History*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Glasser, Jonathan (2008), *Genealogies of Al-Andalus: Music and Patrimony in the Modern Maghreb*, Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest.
- Glick Schiller, Nina (2008), *Beyond Methodological Ethnicity: Local and Transnational Pathways of Immigrant Incorporation*, Malmö: Malmö University Press.
- Gluckman, Max (1969), *Custom and Conflict in Africa*, London: Barnes and Noble.
- Goodman, Jane (2002), 'Writing empire, underwriting nation: discursive histories of Kabyle Berber oral texts', *American Ethnologist*, 29/1, 86–122.
- Goodman, Jane (2003), 'The proverbial Bourdieu: habitus and the politics of representation in the ethnography of Kabylia', *American Anthropologist*, 105/4, 782–93.
- Goodman, Jane (2004), 'Reinterpreting the Berber Spring: from rite of reversal to site of convergence', *The Journal of North African Studies*, 9/3, 60–82.
- Goodman, Jane (2005), *Berber Culture on the World Stage: From Village to Video*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Goodman, Jane (2010), 'Imazighen on trial: human rights and Berber identity in Algeria, 1985', in Hoffman and Gilson Miller, *Berbers and Others*, pp. 103–26.
- Goody, Jack (1986), *The Logic of Writing and the Organisation of Society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Grandguillaume, Gilbert (1983), *Arabisation et politique linguistique au Maghreb*, Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose.
- Grandguillaume, Gilbert (2004), 'L'Arabisation au Maghreb', *Revue d'aménagement linguistique*, 107 (special issue: 'Aménagement linguistique au Maghreb'), 15–40.

- Guha, R. (1989), 'Dominance without hegemony and its historiography', in *Subaltern Studies, VI: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, ed. R. Guha, Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Gupta, Akhil (1995), 'Blurred boundaries: the discourse of corruption, the culture of politics, and the imagined state', *American Ethnologist*, 22/2 (May), 375–402.
- Hadibi, Mohand Akli (1998), 'Sainteté, autorité et rivalité. Le cas de Sidi Ahmed Wedris en Kabylie', in Mohamed Kerrou, ed., *L'Autorité des saints. Perspectives socio-anthropologiques en Méditerranée*, Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, pp. 273–86.
- Hall, Stuart and T. Jefferson (1976), *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain*, London: Hutchinson.
- Hammoudi, Abdellah (1980), 'Segmentarity, social stratification, political power, and sainthood: reflections on Gellner's thesis', *Economy and Society*, 9/3, 279–303.
- Hanotaux, Gabriel and Alfred Martineau (1929–34), *Histoire de la colonisation française et de l'expansion de la France dans le monde*, 6 vols, Paris: Société de l'Histoire Nationale.
- Hanoteau, Adolphe (1858), *Essai de grammaire kabyle. Renfermant les principes du langage parlé par les populations du versant nord du Jurjura et spécialement par les Igaouaouen ou Zouaoua*, Algiers: Bastide.
- Hanoteau, Adolphe (1867), *Poésies populaires de la Kabylie du Jurjura*, Paris: L'Imprimerie Impériale.
- Hanoteau, Adolphe and Aristide Letourneux (1893 [1872–3]), *La Kabylie et les coutumes kabyles*, 3 vols, 2nd edn, Paris: Challamel.
- Hart, David (1996), 'Berber tribal alliance networks in pre-colonial North Africa: the Algerian *saff*, the Moroccan *liff* and the chessboard model of Robert Montagne', *Journal of North African Studies*, 2, 192–205.
- Hart, David (2001), *Qabila: Tribal Profiles and Tribe–State Relations in Morocco and on the Afghanistan–Pakistan Frontier*, Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis.
- Hermassi, Elbaki (1973), 'Political traditions of the Maghrib', *Daedalus*, 102/1 (special issue: 'Post-Traditional Societies'), 207–24.
- Herzfeld, Michael (1980), 'Honour and shame: problems in the comparative analysis of moral systems', *Man*, 15/2, 339–51.
- Herzfeld, Michael (1982), *Ours Once More: Folklore, Ideology, and the Making of Modern Greece*, Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Herzfeld, Michael (1997), *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation-State*, London: Routledge.
- Hobsbawm, Eric and T. O. Ranger (1983), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hoffman, Katherine E. and Susan Gilson Miller (2010), *Berbers and Others: Beyond Tribe and Nation in the Maghrib*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- House, Jim (2006), 'The colonial and post-colonial dimensions of Algerian migration to France', *History in Focus*, 11 (Autumn 2006), www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/Migrations/articles/house.html.

- Ibn Khaldun (1969), *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Joffé, George, ed. (1993), *North Africa: Nation, State and Region*, London: Routledge.
- Joffé, George (1997), 'Democracy, Islam, and the culture of modernism', *Democratization*, 4/3 (Autumn), 133–51.
- Jones, Tobias (2007), *Utopian Dreams: In Search of a Good Life*, London: Faber and Faber.
- Joseph, Suad (1996), 'Gender and family in the Arab world', in Suha Sabbagh, ed., *Arab Women: Between Defiance and Restraint*, New York: Olive Branch Press, pp. 194–202.
- Julien, Charles-André (1931), *Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord. Tunisie, Algérie, Maroc*, Paris: Payot.
- Kaufmann, Eric and O. Zimmer (1998), 'In search of the authentic nation: landscape and national identity in Canada and Switzerland', *Nations and Nationalism*, 4/4, 483–510.
- Kedward, Rod (2005), *La Vie en bleu: France and the French since 1900*, London: Allen Lane.
- Kershaw, Liz (2003), *The Nomad: The Diaries of Isabelle Eberhardt*, Interlink Books.
- Kezzar, Ameziane (2001), *La Fuite en avant*, Paris: Editions Berbères.
- Khalidi, Rachid (1993), *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Khellil, Mohand (1979), *L'Exil kabyle*, Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Khellil, Mohand (1984), *La Kabylie, ou l'ancêtre sacrifié*, Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Khilnani, Sunil (1997), *The Idea of India*, London: Hamish Hamilton.
- Kraus, Wolfgang (1998), 'Contestable identities: tribal structures in the Moroccan High Atlas', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 4/1, 1–22.
- Kropotkin, P. (1902), *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*, London: Heinemann.
- Lacheraf, Mostefa (1965), *L'Algérie. Nation et société*, Paris: Maspéro.
- Lacoste-Dujardin, Camille (1970), *Le Conte kabyle. Etude ethnologique*, Paris: Editions Maspéro.
- Lacoste-Dujardin, Camille (2005), *Dictionnaire de la culture berbère en Kabylie*, Paris: La Découverte.
- Lazreg, M. (1983), 'The reproduction of colonial ideology: the case of the Kabyle Berbers', *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 5, 380–95.
- Lazreg, M. (2000), 'Islamism and the recolonization of Algeria', in Ahmida, *Beyond Colonialism and Nationalism in the Maghrib*.
- Leach, E. R. (1954), *Political Systems of Highland Burma: A Study of Kachin Social Structure*, London: Athlone.
- Leveau, Philippe (1977), 'L'Opposition de la montagne et de la plaine dans l'historiographie de l'Afrique du Nord antique', *Annales de Géographie*, 86/474, 201–5.
- Light, Nathan (2011), 'Genealogy, history, nation', *Nationalities Papers*, 39/1, 33–53.
- Linz, Juan J. (1997), 'Democracy, multinationalism and federalism', working paper, Juan March Institute, Madrid.

- Lorcin, Patricia (1995), *Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, Prejudice and Race in Colonial Algeria*, London and New York: I. B. Tauris.
- Lydon, Ghislaine (2005), 'Writing trans-Saharan history: methods, sources and interpretations across the African divide', *The Journal of North African Studies*, 10/3–4 (September–December), 293–324.
- Lydon, Ghislaine (2009), *On Trans-Saharan Trails: Islamic Law, Trade Networks, and Cross-Cultural Exchange in Nineteenth-Century Western Africa*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MacMaster, Neil (2013), 'The roots of insurrection: the role of the Algerian village assembly (*djemâa*) in peasant resistance, 1863–1962', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 55/2, 419–37.
- Maddy-Weitzman, Bruce (2006), 'Ethno-politics and globalisation in North Africa: the Berber culture movement', *Journal of North African Studies*, 11/1 (March), 71–83.
- Maddy-Weitzman, Bruce (2011), *The Berber Identity Movement and the Challenge to North African States*, Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Mahé, Alain (1998), 'Violence et médiation. Théorie de la segmentarité ou pratiques juridiques en Kabylie', *Genèses*, 32, 51–65.
- Mahé, Alain (2006), *Histoire de la Grande Kabylie, XIXe–XXe siècles. Anthropologie historique du lien social dans les communautés villageoises*, Paris: Editions Bouchène.
- Mahfoufi, Mehenna, ed. (2002), *Chants kabyles de la guerre d'indépendance. Algérie 1954–62*, Paris: Editions Séguier.
- Maine, H. S. (1861), *Ancient Law: Its Connection with the Early History of Society and its Relation to Modern Ideas*, London: John Murray.
- Malkki, Liisa (1992), 'National Geographic: the rooting of peoples and the territorialization of national identity among scholars and refugees', *Cultural Anthropology*, 7/1, 24–44.
- Mammeri, Mouloud (1969), *Les Isefra de Si-Mohand-ou-Mhand*, Paris: Editions Maspéro.
- Mammeri, Mouloud (1976), *Tajerrumt n Tmaziyt (Tantala Taqbaylit)*, Algiers: University of Algiers.
- Mammeri, Mouloud (1980), *Poèmes kabyles anciens*, Paris: Editions Maspéro.
- Mammeri, Mouloud (1985), 'Du bon usage de l'ethnologie. Entretien avec Pierre Bourdieu, par Mouloud Mammeri', *Awal, Cahiers d'études berbères*, 1.
- Mammeri, Mouloud (1986), *Précis de grammaire berbère (kabyle)*, Paris: Editions Maspéro.
- Martin, Jean (1990), *L'Aventure coloniale de la France, II: L'Empire triomphant, 1871–1936. Maghreb, Indochine, Madagascar, îles et comptoirs*, Paris: Denoël.
- Martinez, Luis (1998), *La Guerre civile en Algérie*, Paris: Karthala.
- Martinez, Luis (2004), 'Why the violence in Algeria?', *The Journal of North African Studies*, 9/2, 14–27.
- Masqueray, Emile (1886), *Formation des cités chez les populations sédentaires de l'Algérie. Kabyles du Djurdjura, Chaouïa de l'Aurès, Beni Mzab*, Paris: Leroux.

- Matoub, Lounès (2003), *Mon nom est combat. Chants amazighs d'Algérie*, ed. and trans. Yalla Seddiki, Paris: La Découverte.
- McDougall, James, ed. (2003), *Nation, Society and Culture in North Africa*, London: Frank Cass.
- McDougall, James (2005), 'Savage wars? Codes of violence in Algeria, 1830s–1990s', *Third World Quarterly*, 26/1, 117–31.
- McDougall, James (2006a), *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McDougall, James (2006b), 'Martyrdom and destiny: the inscription and imagination of Algerian history', in Ussama Makdisi and Paul Silverstein, eds, *Memory and Violence in the Middle East and North Africa*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 50–72.
- Meadwell, Hudson (1993), 'The politics of nationalism in Quebec', *World Politics*, 45/2, 203–41.
- Medjeber, Smaïl (2006), *ABC Amazigh. Une expérience éditoriale en Algérie, 1996–2001*, Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Mehenni, Ferhat (2004), *Algérie. La question kabyle*, Paris: Michalon.
- Merad, Ali (1967), *Le Réformisme musulman en Algérie de 1925 à 1940*, Paris and The Hague: Mouton.
- Mezhoud, Salem (1993), 'Glasnost the Algerian way: the role of Berber nationalists in political reform', in Joffé, *North Africa: Nation, State and Region*, pp. 159–61.
- Miliani, Hadj (2002), 'De la nostalgie du local aux mythologies de l'exil. Chanteurs et chansons dans l'émigration algérienne en France (des années 1920 au début des années 80)', *Insaniyat / إنسانيات*, 16, 209–28.
- Miller, William H. (2007), 'Insurgency theory and the conflict in Algeria: a theoretical analysis', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 12/1, 60–78.
- Mirza, Naeem, Adda Hocine and Abu Helaleh Riad (2012), 'The emergence of transnational terrorist safe havens: a comparative analysis of the federally administered tribal areas in Pakistan and Kabylia in Algeria', unpublished thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, <http://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=732155> (accessed 13 May 2013).
- Mitchell, T. (1991), 'The limits of the state: beyond statist approaches and their critics', *American Political Science Review*, 85, 77–96.
- Mokhtari, Rachid (2001), 'La Chanson de l'exil. Les voix natales (1939–1969)', Algiers: Casbah Editions.
- Montagne, Robert (1930), *Les Berbères et le Makhzen dans le sud du Maroc. Essai sur la transformation politique des Berbères sédentaires*, Paris: Alcan.
- Morizot, Jean (1962), *L'Algérie kabylisée*, Paris: Peyronnet.
- Mortimer, Robert (1996), 'Islamists, soldiers, and democrats: the second Algerian war', *Middle East Journal*, 50/1 (Winter), 18–39.
- Mostari, Hind Amel (2004), 'A sociolinguistic perspective on Arabization and language use in Algeria', *Language Problems and Language Planning*, 28/1, 25–43.
- Niox, Gustave Léon (1890 [1884]), *Géographie militaire. Algérie et Tunisie*, 2nd edn, Paris: Librairie Militaire Baudouin.

- Oinas, Felix (1978), *Folklore, Nationalism and Politics*, Columbus, OH: Slavica.
- Ouerdane, Amar (1987), 'La "Crise berbériste" de 1949. Un conflit à plusieurs faces', *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 44, 35–47.
- Ould-Braham, O. (1989), 'Proverbes et dictons kabyles d'après une collecte personnelle', *Etudes et documents berbères*, 6, 94–119.
- Ozouf, Mona (1991), *Festivals and the French Revolution*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Parkes, Peter (2010), 'Canonical ethnography: Hanoteau and Letourneux on Kabyle communal law', in Robert Parkin and Anne de Salès, eds, *Out of the Study and into the Field: Ethnographic Theory and Practice in French Anthropology*, London: Berghahn Books, pp. 45–74.
- Peristiany, J. G., ed. (1965), *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society*, London.
- Peyssonnel, Jean-André (1987 [1724–5]), *Voyages dans les régences de Tunis et d'Alger*, Paris: La Découverte.
- Pierre, Andrew J. and William B. Quandt (1995), 'Algeria's war on itself', *Foreign Policy*, 99 (Summer), 131–48.
- Porter, Roy and Mikulas Teich (1988), *Romanticism in Context*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Provost, Lucile (1996), *La Seconde Guerre d'Algérie. Le quiproquo franco-algérien*, Paris: Flammarion.
- Raulin, Anne (2000), *L'Ethnique est quotidien : diasporas, marchés et cultures métropolitaines*, Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Renan, Ernest (1873), 'La Société berbère', *Revue des deux mondes*, 107, 138–57.
- Renan, Ernest (1882), 'Qu'est-ce qu'une nation, conférence faite en Sorbonne, le 11 mars 1882', <http://www.bmlisieux.com/archives/nation01.htm>.
- Roberts, Hugh (2001), 'Co-opting identity: the manipulation of Berberism, the frustration of democratisation, and the generation of violence in Algeria', LSE Crisis States Programme Working Papers Series, 7.
- Roberts, Hugh (2002a), 'Moral economy or moral polity? The political anthropology of Algerian riots', LSE Crisis States Programme Working Papers Series, 17.
- Roberts, Hugh (2002b), 'Perspectives on Berber politics: on Gellner and Masqueray, or Durkheim's mistake', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 8/1 (March), 107–26.
- Roberts, Hugh (2002c), 'From segmentarity to opacity: on Gellner and Bourdieu, or why Algerian politics have eluded theoretical analysis and vice versa', LSE Crisis States Programme Working Papers Series, 19.
- Roberts, Hugh (2003), *The Battlefield, Algeria 1980–2002: Studies in a Broken Polity*, London: Verso.
- Rocher, François (2002), 'The evolving parameters of Québec nationalism', *International Journal on Multicultural Societies* (UNESCO), 4/1.
- Ruedy, John (2005), *Modern Algeria: A History from 1830 to the Present*, 2nd edn, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

- Saaïdia, Oissila and Laurent Zerbini (2009), *La Construction du discours colonial. L'Empire français au XIX^e et XX^e siècles*, Paris: Karthala.
- Sadi, Saïd (2010), *Amirouche. Une vie, deux morts et un testament. Une histoire algérienne*, Algiers: Les Oliviers.
- Sayad, Abdelmalek (1994), 'Aux origines de l'émigration kabyle ou montagnarde. Les Kabyles, de l'Algérie à la France', *Hommes et Migrations*, 1179 (September), 6–11.
- Sayad, Abdelmalek (1999), *La double absence. Des illusions de l'émigré aux souffrances de l'immigré*, Paris: Editions du Seuil.
- Schatzberg, Michael G. (2001), *Political Legitimacy in Middle Africa: Father, Family, Food*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Scheele, Judith (2007), 'Revolution as a political convention: rebellion and political change in Kabylia', in Elizabeth Hallam and Tim Ingold, eds, *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation*, Oxford: Berg.
- Scheele, Judith (2008), 'A taste for law: rule-making in Kabylia (Algeria)', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 50/4 (October), 895–919.
- Scheele, Judith (2009), *Village Matters: Knowledge, Politics and Community in Kabylia, Algeria*, London: James Currey.
- Schneider, J. (1971), 'Of vigilance and virgins: honour, shame and access to resources in Mediterranean societies', *Ethnology*, 10/1, 1–24.
- Schneider, P. (1969), 'Honor and conflict in a Sicilian town', *Anthropological Quarterly*, 42, 130–55.
- Scott, James C. (1998), *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Seferdjeli, Ryne (2004), 'Fight with us, women, and we will emancipate you: France, the FLN and the Struggle over Women in the Algerian War of National Liberation 1954–1962', PhD thesis, London School of Economics.
- Shatzmiller, Maya (1983), 'Le Mythe d'origine berbère. Aspects historiographiques et sociaux', *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 35, 145–6.
- Shryock, Andrew (1997), *Nationalism and the Genealogical Imagination: Oral History and Textual Authority in Tribal Jordan*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Silverstein, Paul (2002a), 'An excess of truth: violence, conspiracy theorizing and the Algerian civil war', *Anthropological Quarterly*, 75/4 (Autumn), 643–74.
- Silverstein, Paul (2002b), 'France's *mare nostrum*: colonial and post-colonial constructions of the French Mediterranean', *The Journal of North African Studies*, 7/4 (Winter), 1–22.
- Silverstein, Paul (2003a) 'De l'enracinement et du déracinement. Habitus, domesticité et nostalgie structurelle kabyles', *Actes de recherche en sciences sociales*, 150, 27–42.
- Silverstein, Paul (2003b), 'Martyrs and patriots: ethnic, national and transnational dimensions of Kabyle politics', in McDougall, *Nation, Society and Culture*, pp. 87–111.
- Silverstein, Paul (2004), *Algeria in France: Transpolitics, Race and Nation*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

- Skinner, Quentin (2002), *Visions of Politics, I: Regarding Method*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, Anthony D. (1999), *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Spencer, Jonathan (2007), *Anthropology, Politics and the State: Democracy and Violence in South Asia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty (2002), *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, 2nd edn, Routledge Classics.
- Sutton, David E. (1997) 'Foreign claims: family inheritance and national heritage on a Greek island', *American Ethnologist*, 24/2, 415–37.
- Taleb Ibrahimi, Ahmed (1973), *De la décolonisation à la révolution culturelle*, Algiers: SNED.
- Thesiger, Wilfred (2008 [1964]), *The Marsh Arabs*, London: Penguin.
- Tocqueville, Alexis de (1988 [1837]), *De la colonie en Algérie*, Paris: Complexe.
- Vatin, Jean-Claude and Philippe Lucas (1975), *L'Algérie des anthropologues (anthologie de textes)*, Paris: Editions Maspéro.
- Vince, Natalya (2009), 'Colonial and post-colonial identities: women veterans of the "Battle of Algiers"', *French History and Civilization*, 2, 153–68.
- Wilson, William A. (1973), 'Herder, folklore and Romantic nationalism', *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 6/4, 819–35.
- Wimmer, A. (2007), *How (Not) to Think about Ethnicity in Immigrant Societies: A Boundary Making Perspective*, Oxford: COMPAS.
- Xenos, Nicholas (1996), 'Civic nationalism: oxymoron?', *Critical Review*, 10/2, 213–31.
- Yacine, Tassadit (2006), 'Si tu m'aimes, guéris-moi.' *Etudes d'ethnologie des affects en Kabylie*, Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.
- Yacine, Tassadit (2011), 'L'art de dire sans dire en Kabylie', *Cahiers de littérature orale*, 70, 67–86.
- Yanagisako, Sylvia and Carol Delaney, eds (1995), *Naturalizing Power: Essays in Feminist Cultural Analysis*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Zamoum, Ali (1996), *Tamurt Imazighen. Mémoires d'un survivant, 1940–62*, Algiers: ENAL.

