The diasporic Amazigh movement in France: articulating Indigeneity

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Abstract:
This chapter examines how the diasporic Amazigh movement, networked in France's Amazigh cultural associations, village committees and political movements, constructs an imaginative geography of North Africa, which activists call Tamazgha, partly through articulations of Indigenous identity. Drawing on Stuart Hall's concept of *articulation*, the chapter works within the tension within approaches to indigeneity, between the essentialist tendency to reify cultural difference and therefore seek to establish things like 'authenticity' or to see indigeneity as purely 'invented' or 'constructed'. These articulations are identified through the discursive and embodied practices of Amazigh activists relating to village territoriality, performing alterity in Amazigh costume and spoken Tamazight, discourses of colonisation and exile, and networks of solidarity within the Indigenous Movement globally. All point towards the existence of an emergent Indigenous diaspora, whose discourse and politics have wide-ranging and sometimes unexpected effects 'on the ground' in North Africa.

Keywords: Amazigh, Articulation, Indigeneity, Diaspora, Territoriality
Word count: 7254

One quiet Saturday afternoon in July 2016, on the premises of Azul Éspace Franco-Berbère Créteil, a long-standing cultural association in the Parisian banlieue, a group of around fifty Amazigh (Berber) activists and association leaders came together to discuss federating their respective groups to create a new platform to challenge the French government to do more for the Imazighen (Amazigh pl.) of France. The meeting had been called by activists from the Congrès Mondial Amazigh (CMA) around a month previously, in reaction to changes in language education policy affecting those of North African origin in France announced by then French Education Minister Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, herself of Moroccan Amazigh parentage. Arabic (along with other 'languages of origin') was no longer to be taught by foreign teachers employed by origin-states but by teachers employed by the French state, like any other foreign language. Seeing their chance to advance Amazigh interests in France, this diverse group of Amazigh activists and association leaders were calling for the incorporation of Amazigh languages into the portfolio of languages taught in French schools, as this, they argued, was their true 'language of origin'.

The crowded meeting took place in the association's main meeting room. The walls were a colourful mural representing Amazigh scenes from across North Africa - a Tuareg tent pitched in the desert, distinctive *ghorfa*, *igherman* and *agadir* (fortified granaries of Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco respectively), *axxam* (the Kabyle house) and prehistoric wall painting in the style of the *Tassili N'Ajjer*. Words in *Tifinagh*, the Amazigh script, named Berber heroes - ancient king Micipsa (ⵎⵉⵙⵉⴱⵙⴰ) and female colonial resistance leader Lalla Fadhma N'Soumer (ⵍⴰⵍⴰ ⴼⴰⵟⵎⴰ ⵏ ⵙⵓⵎⵔ). The CMA's Secretary General, Belkacem Lounes, opened the meeting by saying that those in attendance were 'united by Tamazgha'.

Tamazgha in France

This chapter examines how the Amazigh diaspora, networked in France's Amazigh cultural associations, village committees and political movements, constructs an imaginative geography of North Africa, which they call Tamazgha, partly through articulations of Indigenous identity. France is home to a large Amazigh diaspora; hundreds of organisations group together hundreds of thousands of individuals who are united by a common interest in the preservation and promotion of *Amazighité*, that is, the quality of being Amazigh. Indigenous to North Africa and distinct from Arabic, Amazigh language (Tamazight)[i] and culture are under threat in the eyes of the diaspora's leaders, not only as the children of Amazigh migrants grow up as 'French', but as Amazigh across North Africa and the diaspora are being 'arabised'. Arabisation, they argue, is the result of state policies dating from the colonial period and accelerated in the post-colonial era, which privilege(d) Arabic as the language of administration, education, literature and media as well as religion, and coded Algerian, Moroccan, Tunisian and Libyan national identities as exclusively 'Arabic'. As a result, the activities of the Amazigh diaspora associations are necessarily political in their motivation and content.

The Amazigh diaspora today is diverse, complex and divided, but nonetheless remains as a category of cultural, linguistic and ethnic affiliation outside the nation-state, comprising various regional sub-groups (Kabyles, Tuaregs, Chawis, Chleuhs, Mozabites, Riffians and others). In France it is over a century old, with first North African labourers arriving to work in France's factories and mines and later their families coming to join them, and today many of those attending and animating Amazigh associations are second- or third-generation

French citizens. The diaspora does not merely exist as an automatic consequence of immigration, but is continually reproduced and constituted by the multiple structures, events and practices that articulate Amazigh identity. As such, the Amazigh diaspora cannot be conceptually dissociated from the Amazigh movement; by referring to it as 'the diasporic Amazigh movement', this chapter constantly positions the diaspora and Amazigh identity in ongoing processes of becoming, as well as making a distinction between the Amazigh movement 'in Tamazgha' and 'in diaspora'.

This chapter, based on a mixed-method ethnographic study carried out from 2015-2017, therefore approaches the Amazigh diaspora as its primary object within a relational analysis that eschews methodological nationalism. One of the key demands of the diasporic Amazigh movement is for Amazigh people not to be amalgamated and subsumed within state or religious categories of identity which they see as secondary. Taking inspiration from Indigenous scholars who have challenged the state's categories of governance by aligning with Indigenous claims to self-determination (Tuhiwai Smith, 2004; Hunt, 2014), this chapter resists categorising the Amazigh diaspora according to their or their forebears' sending-state as in much of the existing literature (Silverstein, 2004; Lacroix, 2012; Aïtel, 2013). It also problematises the other categorisation through which the Amazigh diaspora are amalgamated in much of the literature that informs their governance: as Muslims (Fredette, 2014; Beaman, 2017). Of course, these categories are not entirely absent, but rather are understood as secondary to the self-ascribed identity claim of the members and leaders of the Amazigh diaspora. Amazigh diasporic experience is therefore defined by heterogeneity and hybridity, and the cultural or religious boundary-maintenance often associated with diasporas (Brubaker, 2005) is diffuse and multi-faceted.

Throughout this chapter I focus on the ways in which Indigenous articulations are (re)produced in the Amazigh diaspora in France. The counter-intuitive combination of 'rooted' indigeneity and 'routed' diaspora sheds light on the complex relationships to place and mobility in the postcolonial Middle East and North Africa.

Indigenous Articulations

At first the idea that a diaspora can be Indigenous might seem like a contradiction, as diasporas are so frequently imagined to be mobile and Indigenous peoples fixed in place. However, James Clifford (2013) argues that more scholarship on global indigeneity should engage with populations in the urban, diaspora environment. Rather than assume that Indigenous territoriality must necessarily entail continuous residence, Clifford's theorisation of 'Indigenous diaspora' points to the "complexly routed and rooted experiences" (2013, p.83), where "diasporic displacements, memories, networks, and reidentifications are recognised as integral to tribal, aboriginal, native survival and dynamism" (2013, p.71). Clifford draws on Stuart Hall's concept of *articulation*, which he proposed as a way of understanding how seemingly disparate "ideological elements come, under certain conditions, to cohere together within a discourse" (1996, p.141). It is achieved discursively and politically (and not necessarily consciously), with the consequence that a range of different *positionings* may be linked so that "people begin to recognise themselves in all of them" (Hall, 1988, p.61). Such a perspective offers a way of dealing with the essentialist tendency in approaches to indigeneity to reify cultural difference and therefore seek to establish things like 'authenticity' (Gagné, 2016) or to see indigeneity as purely 'invented' or 'constructed' and therefore meaningless or dangerous (Kuper, 2003; Amselle, 2012).

One of the limitations of this articulation approach, however, is that it can become overly focused on discursive and textual representations at the expense of the practiced, situated and embodied ways in which indigenous subjectivity is (re)produced (Radcliffe, 2017). In order to address this, I will also draw on the language of performance as modelled in recent ethnographic work in relation to Indigenous people (Oiry-Varacca, 2013; Loyola-Hernández, 2018). Performances are "explored as practices rather than expressions of essential identities" (Jeffrey, 2013, p.6) wherein subjectivities and relationships are repeatedly reworked through embodied and situated actions and processes. Performing Indigeneity is an embodied legitimising practice that gives Amazigh diaspora leaders a voice and a visibility related to a status and a quality as Indigenous, 'culturally authentic' and therefore within the bounds of acceptable difference in French society. However, when I argue that indigeneity is articulated in the diasporic Amazigh movement, I do not then mean that it is imported as a coherent set of ideas, but rather that is has been "inflected and reworked as it has travelled" (Li, 2000, p.155). This inflected and reworked indigeneity joins a set of discourses, political subjectivities and histories that are specific to the diasporic Amazigh movement, and is referred to and articulated without necessarily being identified as such.

The remainder of the chapter uses Tuhiwai Smith's (2004) twenty-five 'indigenous projects', referred to in italics below, as a non-prescriptive starting point for identifying a series of positionings which articulate indigeneity in the diasporic Amazigh movement. The first section focuses on how Amazigh leaders position themselves within the wider, global movement of Indigenous peoples, *claiming* indigeneity as a putatively fixed and knowable category in an *indigenising* process. The second part raises the common discourse of ongoing 'Arabo-Islamic' colonisation, as diaspora Imazighen bear *testimony* to episodes of violent repression in their home regions and *celebrate survival/survivance*. The third section details how performed Amazigh difference in the diaspora is manifested in *revitalising and regenerating* the Tamazight language, and public displays of 'traditional' costumes, which articulate with *gendered subjectivities*. Finally, the fourth section examines village territoriality as an Indigenous positioning, expressed through the continued institution of village committees, traditional forms of village sociability and politics, habitation and *restoration*, and a continued practice of *returning* exemplified in repatriating the deceased for burial. I conclude by suggesting that as the concept and politics of indigeneity translate into the Middle East and North Africa, it is worth paying attention to its mutability, relationality, and diasporic manifestations.

Articulating Indigeneity on the International Stage

The diasporic Amazigh movement's most self-evident articulations of indigeneity position the Amazigh within the global movement of Indigenous peoples, *claiming* indigeneity as a putatively fixed and knowable category of ethnic identity. A clear example can be found by returning to Paris-based NGO the CMA, referenced in the opening vignette. Secretary General Belkacem Lounes described the group's beginnings when activists met "under the guise of indigeneity at the UN" in the early 1990s when the issue of indigenous rights was gaining momentum:

> These first Indigenous meetings [were where the CMA began to take form], even though we all already had the idea of the *Amazighité* of North Africa […] But we didn't know how to reach each other until at the UN in Geneva.

The UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (of which the 2017 chair, Mariam Wallet Aboubakrine, is Tuareg), the UN Human Rights Council's Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights are all examples of platforms where CMA activists network with and are exposed to the political arguments of Indigenous delegates from across the globe. CMA delegates like human rights lawyer Hassan Id Balkassm or activist Kamira Naït Sid use these fora as platforms for raising awareness of the Amazigh movement; they attend a range of international meetings as representatives of the Imazighen, exchange statements of solidarity with other Indigenous leaders and activists, and challenge state governments by bringing human rights cases to the attention of relevant experts. These practices repeatedly draw comparisons between the Amazigh struggle and those of Indigenous peoples around the world, particularly from the New World, comparisons which are then articulated in the wider diasporic Amazigh movement.

Each comparison serves a purpose in the discursive positioning of the Imazighen, as not all Indigenous peoples and geographies are equal (Coombes *et al.*, 2012). For example, one diaspora leader referred to the Imazighen as the "Aborigines of North Africa", whilst another, Chawi autonomist Yella Houha explained; "We had an immense territory, but we now have nothing – no language, no recognition of our identity – we are the Apaches of Algeria." These comparisons with Indigenous peoples whose historic struggles with and near-extermination by European settlers are well-known and dramatic serve to emphasise the minoritised and dispossessed status of the Imazighen. In contrast, Mohamed Bennana, a Moroccan Amazigh association leader who told me he had visited an Indigenous reserve in Labrador, said he would "prefer to speak in terms of 'First Peoples'". Bennana's comparison serves rather to assert the potential for more effective political recognition and autonomy through the discourse of Indigenous rights, as in Canada First Peoples have achieved to a comparatively high degree. Though he said he had no illusions as to the difficulties of life on a reserve, Mohammed also recognised the economic and political rights that Indigenous groups in Canada had vis-à-vis the state. Whatever their emphasis, these comparisons position the Imazighen within the constellation of Indigenous peoples worldwide (Silverstein, 2015). For Bennana, this positioning legitimises Amazigh claims to the rights associated with Indigenous peoples. He explained the articulation of indigeneity as part of a political evolution from a cultural, to a political/economic, to a regional/territorial struggle, where the Amazigh movement in North Africa has begun to position itself as Indigenous in order to claim territorial rights after decades of cultural and later political/economic activism (Oiry-Varacca, 2013). In a similar vein, association leader and open supporter of Kabyle independence Cyprien Hamadouche argued that "[the issue of] independence goes past Algeria, to the UN and its statutes for Indigenous peoples".

While for many comparisons with other Indigenous groups around the world provided a means for articulating their own Amazigh Indigenous identity, for Rahma Houzig, president of *Tamaynut-France*, a meeting of "Indigenous African Women" held in her native Agadir in 1998 was a formative experience in terms of building transnational links across North Africa:

> I have friends in Libya and in Egypt, luckily. In 1998 we did an event in Agadir on *'Les Femmes Autochtones*' that gathered women from across Tamazgha. It was a shared moment. We shared things like clothes, jewellery, songs.

This 'shared moment' of transnational networking is just one example of many instances where Amazigh leaders have been exposed to and participated in wider Indigenous networks and discourses. In these instances, Amazigh leaders articulate indigeneity as if it were a fixed

and knowable quality rather than viewing indigeneity as constantly being (re-)made; they are Indigenous by association.

A similar and parallel articulation is made through performances of inter-community solidarity with other ethnic minorities. In France, Amazigh association members draw lines of comparison with Breton, Occitan, Corsican, Basque, and Catalan groups, who they argue represent the victims of the same French 'Jacobinism'[ii] that has seen the enforcement of repressive language policies in its North African ex-colonies. Nationalist groups like the Kabyle MAK-Anavad engage in a mimicry of state diplomacy (see Harris, 2020b) with representatives of these ethno-linguistic minorities, offering congratulations on successes, holding joint press-conferences, and organising actions together. A key locus for this activity is the European Free Alliance (EFA) at the EU, which represents a number of European 'stateless nations' and which has invited numerous 'diplomatic delegations' from the MAK-Anavad, performing solidarity with the Kabyle nationalist cause through signed agreements and declarations. Similarly, representatives of several stateless nations such as Panjab attended the creation in Rotterdam in 2014 of the Riffian separatist '*Mouvement 18 Septembre*', and in 2018 a Kabyle national football team mainly comprising players from the diaspora competed with other stateless nations such as Tibet, Western Armenia and Panjab in the CONIFA world cup in London (see Harris, 2021).

These links with the global Indigenous groups and Europe's ethno-linguistic minorities are "not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time" (Hall, 1996:141). They are articulated by Amazigh diaspora activists seeking to position themselves outside the state narratives of identity and belonging in France and North Africa. In *claiming* indigeneity in relation to these other groups and structures, they are working out and redefining the meanings and subjectivities of indigeneity in the diaspora. As such, these seemingly straightforward articulations of indigeneity on the international stage are only a small part of the picture of the diasporic Amazigh movement, whose everyday practices and politics performed in associations are unpacked in the following sections.

The Colonial Present

The experience of colonialism is perhaps the one unifying trait of Indigenous subjectivities. Indigenous peoples "share experiences as peoples who have been subjected to the colonisation of their lands and cultures, and the denial of their sovereignty" (Tuhiwai Smith, 2004), and this key articulation of indigeneity reappears often in diaspora Amazigh discourse. Through the common discourse of ongoing 'Arabo-Islamic' colonisation, as diaspora Imazighen bear *testimony* to episodes of violent repression in their home regions and *celebrate survival/survivance*. Emotional and affective language of suffering, violence, and trauma frames the experience of colonialism in a way that highlights its psychological and embodied nature and effects on the individual and the group. In diaspora members' narratives, the sense of instability and underdevelopment in Amazigh regions over the long term is punctuated by episodes of inter-ethnic and state violence against Imazighen in North Africa. These are widely publicised and protested by diaspora Amazigh, through street demonstrations, press statements, social media, and reports to international institutions. Often diaspora Imazighen frame these episodes as 'colonial' using descriptive vocabulary such as 'apartheid', 'genocide', 'racist' or 'ethnic cleansing', such that Amazigh culture itself is understood to be under attack or dominated in a colonial system, as well as highlighting colonialism's racial-ethnic dimension.

A key example of the diaspora Amazigh movement's articulation of a colonial present in recent years lies in how it represented the inter-community violence which erupted periodically in the Mzab, a remote group of oases in central Algeria between 2013 and 2016. Several instances of looting and killing were reported by Amazigh activists as having been inflicted on the Amazigh population by the local Arabophone population with police support as part of a government-sponsored program of ethnic cleansing, whereas official discourse of the Algerian government and the mainstream press framed the violence as sectarian and minimised the role of the security services. Amazigh diaspora activism aimed at drawing international attention to the Mzab and securing the release of scores of Mozabites held under preventive detention continued into 2015-2016. The version of events as established in this activism explicitly framed the Mozabites as victims of violent colonisation, as Arabophone mobs took possession of Mozabite ancestral lands (cemeteries and palm groves particularly), with apparent state endorsement. The historical autonomy of the Mzab, its pre-colonial political institutions, and cultural specificities were framed as being under threat:

> This war unfolds through a policy of confining the Mozabites within a few isolated islands on their historic territory […] The objective is clear: to flood these territories with exogenous populations in order to upset the urban organisation of the region and make the Mozabites a minority in their own territory. (*Izmulen pour les droits des At-Mzab*, "The Algerian Government continues its war against the Mozabites" 23 December 2015).

> Mr. Secretary General Ban Ki Moon … we would like to draw your attention to the institutional violence … perpetrated against the At-Mzab (indigenous Amazigh of the Mzab valley) … an ancient civilization listed since 1982 as UNESCO world heritage. The At-Mzab are under attack by men of the "Chaamba" Arabic community with the known support of the Algerian police force. (CMA Open Letter to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, 3 March 2016).

> They [Chaamba] say 'we are nomads, and for a long time we used this place as a base for our tents. We are the first'. The Mozabites say no, it was them. We have our walled towns; we structured the environment. That's a deep debate between the two communities. And of course, the Mozabites consider themselves to be Indigenous. (Sliman Tounsi, Collectif des Mozabites en Europe).

This example may seem to be an extreme case, particularly when presented using the rhetoric of groups like *Izmulen*, but it is not alone in its representation as an instance of present colonialism. MAK-Anavad activists routinely refer to the Algerian state as the 'colonial state' in communiqués, on social media, and in public discourse, particularly in reference to the activities of the Algerian *gendarmerie* in Kabylia where they are framed as constituting a 'force of occupation'. This discourse presumes a sovereignty that has been illegitimately usurped. Other Amazigh activists use the same vocabulary to describe the Moroccan state's presence in the Rif and the recent French military interventions in the Tuareg regions of Mali and Niger, positioning them as illegal and illegitimate attacks on the sovereignty of local Amazigh groups. Through this discursive articulation of episodes of conflict in North Africa with colonialism, the Amazigh diaspora's activists are positioning themselves as Indigenous. Regarding the diaspora itself, the linkages between colonisation and emigration are well-documented in Amazigh scholarship (Chaker, 1985; Dirèche-Slimani, 1997). Abdelmalek Sayad, the pre-eminent Franco-Kabyle sociologist of immigration, defined the diasporic condition as a 'double absence' wherein the emigrant feels viscerally detached from the place

and people they have left but is equally unable to avoid exclusion in their new home (Sayad, 1999). The psychological and affective conditions of 'double absence' demonstrate how social alienation is central to lived experiences of the diasporic as well as the colonised condition. The two are bound together in the memory of exile, of land appropriation, and of the threat of violence, but even more fundamentally in their logics of assimilation that compel the racial or migrant 'other' to aspire to join the hegemonic social group. Amazigh leaders in the diaspora frequently describe themselves as exiles rather than emigrants, in part to eschew the stereotypes of race and class associated with the term *immigré*, and in part to articulate a colonised subjectivity based on alienation from the homeland. Riffian activist Fikri El Azrak expressed his position in this way:

> I feel exiled, not emigrated. Even if I'm here, I'm in the Rif […] I feel that I'm far from my home. I want to be there, but the regime has chased me out.

For Malika, who was born and brought up in Paris, starting an Amazigh association was a way of working through a feeling of alienation;

> I have an awareness of what's at stake - the politics of it, Tamazgha, Berber... it's affective and I need to transmit ... It's important for me but it's not easy, to manage this double culture. I don't belong totally to either. It's a sort of cobbling together of a third identity.

If Amazigh diaspora discourse "articulates, or bends together, both roots *and* routes" (Clifford, 1997, p.251), then it does so in a way that highlights the colonial forces that have shaped and continue to shape those roots and routes. The diaspora's members materially and metaphorically locate themselves between French and Arabic cultures and colonialities. Third spaces of cultural hybridity are far more complex in this inter-colonial schema, but Amazigh leaders tend to celebrate Franco-Amazigh hybridity over Arabo-Amazigh. Writer Kateb Yacine famously opposed the Arabisation policy of the post-independent Algerian state, saying that "the deepest alienation for an Algerian is not to think that he is French but that he is Arab" (Aïtel, 2013, p.64). French-born Malik Houha explained his admiration for "the [French political] party '*Indigènes de la République*'" which presents injustices in French society as being a continuation of colonial power relations, but couldn't agree with them as "they only talk about being Arabs, and the colonialism and imperialism they talk about is only Western. But my problem is the colonialism of Arabo-Islamism".

Performing the 'Authentic' *Authochtone*

Whilst other details may be negotiable, the main identity claim of the Amazigh movement is to be at once North African and non-Arab. Preceding Arabic civilisation by over a thousand years, this is also a claim to cultural 'authenticity' that is performed and embodied as well as discursive. Performed Amazigh difference in the diaspora is manifested in *revitalising and regenerating* the Tamazight language, and public displays of 'traditional' costumes, which articulate with *gendered subjectivities*.

Since at least the 1940s, the Amazigh diaspora has played a central role in revitalising and regenerating Tamazight through literary production, media and academic work. Out of a desire to preserve and transmit Tamazight to the next generation, the vast majority of Amazigh cultural associations in the diaspora operate weekly language classes. Amazigh leaders frequently see the language as the essential vehicle of Amazigh identity, and describe Arabisation as a form of 'cultural denial', 'erasure', or even 'extermination'. Therefore, most diaspora Amazigh associations try to create "a secure linguistic environment in [the] mother tongue" (Rubio-Marín, 2003, p.56), where Tamazight occupies a privileged place within

association life. For example, even if French is the universal language, most conversation classes, cultural and literary events, are zones of linguistic exclusivity. Early in Tamazight classes at the *Association de Culture Berbère*, beginners are taught a Kabyle proverb "*Agdud mebla idles am wemdan mebla iles*", which translates as "a people without culture is as a being without a tongue", the teacher explicitly linking a wider imperative of cultural survival to the project of education in the language. As such, many classes are as much about identity formation and performance than everyday literacy. This is evidenced in the way that the distinction of Tamazight from Arabic is a central concern of Tamazight teachers and scholars. Tamazight includes several loan-words from Arabic, and their identification and consequent 'correction' is disciplined by the members of Amazigh associations. In the words of one long-term association member, "We're all learners ourselves. Often, I correct myself and others". As Houria Labou, an association leader in Parisian suburbs, said; "We tolerate French, but never Arabic. For us it was a way of resisting, against forgetting our memory, our identity".

Amazigh costume in its diverse forms is worn by organisers and attendees of numerous Amazigh diaspora events such as *Yennayer* and *Tafsut*, as a way of performing and embodying Amazighité. Diaspora Amazigh wear these costumes as spectacular rather than functional garments - Tuareg men in music groups wear the attire of the desert including vast enveloping headscarves when performing and Kabyle women pull their dresses on over their 'Western' clothes when they arrive at the venue for a special event. At one such event on the 8th of May 2016, around 2,000 people gathered on the 'Esplanade of Human Rights' opposite the Eiffel Tower for Paris's first *Journée de la Robe Kabyle* (Day of the Kabyle Dress). The organisers knew that the event would draw a crowd, emphasising the force for unity that the Kabyle dress represents:

> Everyone feels implicated by the Kabyle dress. I don't think a single Kabyle household in France is lacking one. Very few Kabyle women don't have one, and they're worn at weddings etc. […] And we know that we barely ever go out wearing traditional dress, so here we said let's go, a good event for families, it was a dream.

Colourful Kabyle dresses were worn by about a third of the women at the event, and a handful of the men present wore the male costume, the *burnous*. Several women wore henna tattoos of the 'Aza' (ⵣ)[iii], and even more wore the symbol in jewellery form. The event had a festival atmosphere that was unmistakably North African, whilst embodying non-Arabic *Amazighité*.

Although wearing Amazigh costume performs indigeneity by embodying an aesthetic of alterity to both the 'Western' and the 'Arabo-Islamic', it can also however be silent, passive and gendered in a way that essentialises, disempowers and fixes it. As Sarah Hunt writes, "in order to be legible [to Western eyes], Indigenous geographic knowledge must adhere to recognised forms of representation" (2014, p.29), and Amazigh costume worn as an 'authentic' cultural object fixes this knowledge on the bodies of the (female) diaspora population. Identified in the anthropological literature as the 'trap of visibility' or the 'cunning of recognition' (Povinelli, 2002), this means that being acknowledged as Indigenous through performing cultural 'authenticity' frequently entails behaving in ways that reinforce the stereotypes and expectations of wider society. Indigenous peoples often have limited power to define what is 'authentic' vis-à-vis state hegemony. However, diaspora Imazighen articulate these claims to cultural authenticity with other forms of diaspora activism in relation to home and host societies. Always 'out of place', at a distance to the imagined and essentialised Amazigh subject of rural North Africa, embodiments of Amazigh indigeneity

can be made dynamic, political, and vocal through the activism of diaspora members: the subaltern speaks through the diaspora.

In other words, wearing Amazigh costume and exclusively using Tamazight, written or spoken, does political work. The tones and cadences of the language are markers of difference, which like the Amazigh costume are put on display at specific times and in circumscribed spaces in the diaspora. To quote Hunt's formulation that the embodiment of indigeneity is "lived, practiced, and relational" (2014), speaking Tamazight achieves this embodiment because it requires making a distinctive sound, hearing, understanding and dialogue with other people. Whereas the Amazigh costume is silent and passive, speaking Tamazight is active and vocal. These are only two examples of how the Amazigh diaspora performs Indigenous authenticity and makes visible its difference. As with the 'cunning of recognition', the benefits of this visibility for preserving and promoting *Amazighité* exist in tension with the essentialisation of Amazigh culture that comes with it. Aware of this, diaspora association members invest considerable time, energy and resources into the ongoing use of Tamazight as the vehicle for Amazigh thought and cultural expression. Diaspora associations remain key sites for language revitalisation due to their ability to create 'secure linguistic environments', and articulate with a moral politics of authenticity based on the minoritised status of language and the knowledge associated with it.

Village Territoriality

Finally, village territoriality is also a key part of the Amazigh diaspora's Indigenous positioning, expressed through the continued institution of village committees, traditional forms of village sociability and politics, habitation and *restoration*, and a continued practice of *returning* exemplified in repatriating the deceased for burial. Nassim Amrouche (2013) argues that if the Amazigh village is presented as "a timeless or eternal place, inscribed in a legendary continuity, the foundation of indigeneity, it also offers a solid anchoring in time and a historical conscience that is reintroduced in the political struggle" (p.59) of the Amazigh movement. Rooting in the material environment of the village in this way underlines the indigenous territoriality of the Amazigh in contrast to the cultural hegemony of urban, Arabic-speaking North Africa.

Amazigh diaspora members trace their origins to a specific village and/or lineage, and encourage each other to recover knowledge of these origins if it has been 'lost'. For example, the MAK-Anavad's *Carte d'Identité Kabyle* (CIK) identifies the bearer's village (*taddart*) and confederation (*aarch*), deliberately evoking pre-colonial political institutions (Roberts, 2014) and prompting applicants to research their personal family heritage. The enduring importance of village connections articulates Amazigh identity with rurality and 'traditional society'. Tamazight language classes, despite taking in classrooms in urban Paris or Marseille, constantly position the language within the imagined rural village setting. Beginners learn vocabulary related to village life ("paths" rather than "roads", "field" rather than "office"), study dialogues set in village settings, and are constantly reminded of the rurality of the language in the French and Arabic loan-words used to describe urban phenomena and modern technology (e.g. *Takarrost* = Car (fr. *carrosse*)). Associations frequently hold and display village artefacts such as different clay jars or bridles, brought back by their members from their usually annual return visits. Village committees, informal organisations which regroup, represent and govern the diaspora population of a given village,

are both an important part of the organisational structure of the diaspora and a commonly evoked Indigenous political institution.

Amazigh village committees, particularly Kabyle ones, have operated in France for several decades (Lacroix, 2012). Principally, they act as a support network for new migrants, and pool resources to pay for infrastructural improvements in the village of origin and to repatriate the bodies of their members for burial. Their organisation reflects the *Tajmaât* which captured the imagination of the mostly French ethnographers, administrators and missionaries of the colonial period, who saw this village-level political institution as 'unchanged' and 'ancient', unique to the purportedly 'secular' and 'democratic' Berber society. Though this assessment has been challenged and nuanced by political historians (Roberts, 2014; Temlali, 2015), these received ideas remain strong in the Amazigh movement today. In its essential and idealised form as explained by Kabyle leaders in the diaspora, the *Tajmaât* includes every man[iv] in the village, and takes place in a designated common space. Decisions are taken unanimously, and so lengthy debates are aimed at building compromise and convincing those in opposition to a given idea, rather than a 'majority rules' version of democracy. Every man's opinion needs to be heard on a given issue and every man's voice should have equal weight, and consequently a man's ability to deliver good speeches, drawing on poetic forms and classical themes, is admired. In practicing *Tajmaât* as an enduring pre-colonial political institution unique to the Amazigh, diaspora members position themselves as Indigenous by articulating cultural difference, anteriority, a rejection of state institutions and an insistence on the village as the basic unit of political organisation. Diaspora village committees practice village territoriality by funding infrastructural improvements and repatriating the deceased for burial. With each repatriation costing upwards of €2,000, the collective insurance that the village committee represents is a strong draw for its members. Burial amongst ancestors in the home village forms part of a cosmology of presence of ancestors in the lives of their families, evidenced in ethnographic work in Amazigh villages (Scheele, 2009; Silverstein, 2015), but also in art and popular culture. For example, Mouloud Feraoun's *La Terre et le Sang* (Land and Blood) [1953], a favourite novel often included in Amazigh diaspora book sales, features an Amazigh man returning to his village with his French wife, and includes several scenes in the village cemetery where the living characters go to be with the dead, play and socialise. More recently Nora Chaouche's *L'étrangère française* [2011], exhibited at the ACB in November 2015 as part of their monthly literary event, includes the dead grandmother of a young Amazigh immigrant as one of the novel's key characters. Regardless of the extent of popular belief in the continued presence of ancestors in the world of the living, repatriation for burial remains sufficiently important for village committees to raise significant funds to achieve it and remains focused on the village cemetery.

The rehabilitation of particular sites within the village environment, notably the *Tajmaât* (meeting place) and the *Tala* (fountain), which are seen as central places of Amazigh sociability, is often funded by the diaspora population. A member of *IDmediterranée*, a France-based development organisation focused on Amazigh regions in North Africa, explained her part in the rehabilitation of the village *Tala*:

> I'm very attached to the fountain of my village. The fountain is a symbol. […] For me this place is important even though we have piped water these days. I've worked so that these fountains might be rehabilitated, embellished, for the pleasure of the village.

This nostalgia for a fading Amazigh village society, whose social, political and economic institutions should be preserved in the face of transformative forces and processes, is widely shared by diasporic Amazigh. The traditional house (*Axxam*) is mapped, reconstructed and actively restored, and its loss in the landscape bemoaned by diaspora Amazigh association members:

> My sisters were raised in a traditional house. And now my uncle has torn it down and put a garage over it. My sisters are really angry. They [the villagers] don't have a clue about architecture and its value. There are architects now working on [restoring traditional architecture] because it's part of the landscape, our culture.

The *Axxam* remains powerful imaginary for the Kabyle diaspora, removed from 'home' and nostalgic for it. If it is relatively well known amongst sociologists, it is because it figures as a central example for Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus', which he developed following fieldwork carried out amongst Kabyle refugees during the Algerian War (Goodman and Silverstein, 2009). However, the *Axxam* he describes, with all its perfectly balanced dualisms, symbolic forms and structures, was always an idealised version of the real houses left behind, remembered through the collective memory of an exiled group. Today, in the Amazigh diaspora in France, this idealised *Axxam* remains a powerful identity symbol as well as a locus of territoriality. It is a prised possession, the subject of poems and songs, the setting for Amazigh theatre adaptions, and inspires the interior decoration of many Amazigh activists' homes, even as it disappears from the landscape in rural North Africa. By enrolling the *Axxam* as an identity symbol, diaspora Imazighen articulate indigeneity within a quintessentially non-Western, non-Islamic cosmology.

As Amrouche (2013, p. 61) argues; "The (re)construction of language, tribe and village is in the image of the projected culture: an attempt to give form to an imagined past and community". This 'attempt to give form' can be understood as territoriality, which in the Amazigh diaspora determines relationships of exteriority and alterity in relation to an Indigenous subjectivity. The village, embodied difference in Amazigh costume and spoken Tamazight discourses of colonisation and exile, as well as solidarities and articulations with the Indigenous Movement globally all point towards the Indigenous diaspora. The diaspora's projection of 'Tamazgha', which in turn is a projection of its own groupness, centres on idealised village spaces under colonial oppression, traditional costume and Tamazight in the face of enforced Arabisation, and a place among the global constellation of Indigenous peoples.

Conclusion

The diaspora does not merely exist as an automatic consequence of immigration, but is continually reproduced and constituted by the multiple structures, events and practices that articulate Amazigh identity. As such, the positionings outlined above, articulated together within the discourse and practice of the diasporic Amazigh movement, do political work. Much of this work is intended to legitimise claims to the resources of the state, to sovereignty, and to acceptable difference in the French postcolonial context. It is therefore important that these articulations are secular and culturally defined, non-essentialist, and generally commensurate with French Republican worldviews (Harris, 2020a). In fact, by specifically claiming and embodying non-Arab, non-Islamic identity within an indigenous framing, the diasporic Amazigh movement has appealed to the nativism and islamophobia of the French Right (Harris, 2020b).

This chapter has explored four key positionings in which disparate subjectivities are articulated with indigeneity in the discourse and practices of the diasporic Amazigh

movement. Firstly, diaspora Amazigh articulate *Amazighité* and indigeneity through the Global Indigenous Movement. Secondly, they position themselves and their homeland populations as colonised people. Thirdly, they perform cultural authenticity within an 'Indigenous project' of cultural preservation and revitalisation. Lastly, diaspora Amazigh, particularly Kabyles, practice a village territoriality that articulates with indigeneity through the privileging of rurality and pre-colonial political institutions. These positionings are not always explicit strategies of the diasporic Amazigh movement, nor are they only the product of the agency of its members. They are constantly negotiated and reiterated, performed through the everyday politics of diaspora life. These four positionings are not exhaustive, but highlight the diverse, relational ways in which indigeneity is articulated in diaspora. It is significant that the discourse and politics of indigeneity have been led by the diaspora and are only very recently emerging in the Amazigh movement 'on the ground' in North Africa – reflecting the role of the diaspora as an enduring space of political and cultural innovation for the Amazigh movement. As the concept and politics of indigeneity translate into the Middle East and North Africa, it is worth paying attention to its mutability, relationality, and diasporic manifestations.

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[i] For continuity within this chapter, I refer to Tamazight as the catch-all term for all Amazigh language(s).
[ii] Appearing during the founding years of the French Revolution in Robespierre’s *Club des Jacobins*, this core element of French political culture radically asserts the equality of individual citizens. This has made French political culture particularly resistant to forms of regionalism and multiculturalism.

[iii] The Aza (ⵣ) is the first letter of the Tamazight alphabet, Tifinagh. It is found on the Amazigh flag, symbolising freedom and the Amazigh movement generally.
[iv] Women are not widely admitted to *Tajmaât*, though some are changing as Kabyle women struggle for gender equality