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Author(s): Rabah Kahlouche

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## **SOCIO-HISTORICAL DETERMINATIONS OF LOAN WORDS FROM ARABIC TO KABYLE (BERBER)**

**Rabah Kahlouche**  
*Mouloud Mammeri University*  
*Tizi-Ouzou, Algeria*

**Abstract:** Kabylia is one of Algeria's regions that have escaped language shift from Berber to Arabic that most of the Maghreb has known. Its language has, nevertheless, come under strong influence. An illustration of this is that 46% of the lexemes contained in a corpus—collected through the recording of a monolingual Kabyle speaker during five hours—come from Arabic. No lexical field has been spared, even those known to be refractory to the penetration of foreign words such as body parts, field life, etc., as for instance, *lhənk* 'cheek', *lkaffa* 'palm', *ʃʃədʒra* 'tree', *amhɾaθ* 'plough', *lmədwed* 'feeding trough', *lehʃif* 'grass', and so on and so forth. Even the Arabic plural form *at* has been introduced in Kabyle by means of loans. Several of them are still in use in the reception language with this identification, as for example, *lyar* 'cave' (singular), *lyaraθ* 'caves' (plural).

**Keywords:** Kabylia, language, Berber, Arabic, Maghreb, monolingual Kabyle speaker

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**Rabah Kahlouche**, Chancellor, Mouloud Mammeri University, Tizi-Ouzou, Algeria.

Some loans like *χid*, 'to stitch', *lavhar* 'sea', etc., literally replace their native equivalents. To trace the original word usually requires knowledge of other Berber dialects. These words are nothing but *gnu* found in Mozabite, and *illem* found in the Zouara idiom (Libya). Others loans, however, coexist with the Kabyle word, as for instance, *axerfi* 'sheep' (Arabic), and *ixerri* 'sheep' (Berber root), *leafja* (Arabic) and *times* (Berber) to designate 'fire', *leev* (Arabic) and *urar* (Berber) 'to play'.

Such an influence shows the depth of the relations that existed between Kabyle and Arabic speakers (Arabs and Arabized Kabyles) due to a long cohabitation. This paper aims at explaining the conditions in which the contact between the two communities has taken place; in other words, I will explore the socio-historical determinations of this linguistic situation.

There is little historical data on Kabylia in the Middle Ages. Even Ibn Khaldoun, the Berbers' historian, gives only few indications, and these focus only on the Zouaoua [Editor's Note: Arabs used this name (singular Zouaoui) to designate the people of the Kabylia province (Algeria). The term Zouaoua is an Arabic rendering of the Amazigh (Berber) name Agawa (plural Igawawen)] confederation, although the Zouaoua land is taken to mean almost present day Kabylia. This is why the few elements of answer presented here constitute only reasonable assumptions that are based on the events in which the region has been more or less involved.

The first contacts between the Kabyle populations and the Arabic language probably took place via soldiers, civil servants, religious men and intellectuals who held positions in the Fatimide, Ziride, Hammadite, and Hafside administrations. Indeed, it was the Zouaoua and Ketama confederations that led the Fatimide dynasty to power in 909 A.D. (Ibn Khaldoun, 1968:298). The Kabyle officers and troops who took part in the Fatimide conquests (nearly the entire Maghreb area, Sicily, Egypt and Syria) were, as early as the beginning of the tenth century, in contact with the Arabic language. It is very likely that the army has been, from the beginning of the Islamic conquest, the first crucible of the Arabization of the Berbers. Soldiers returned home with new notions and vocabulary and spread them among their people.

The Zouaoua also played an important part under the Ziride dynasty in the army as well as the administration (Ibn Khaldoun, 1968:286).

It was especially under the Hammadite, who founded their second capital [El Kalâa was their first capital city.] in Bejaïa, the heart of the Zouaoua country, that the Kabyle elite stood out and turned this city into the intellectual capital of the Maghreb. Bejaïa competed even with Damascus and Baghdad (Feraud, 1852:43). Abou El Abbas Al Ghobrini (1970), who lived there in the eight century had registered a great number of skillful Zouaoua who contributed to the cultural radiance of the city. They had contributed in all scientific fields, Koranic exegesis, astrology, grammar, mathematics, medicine, etc.

The Zouaoua also had close ties with the Hafside of Tunis whom they continued to serve as officers, magistrates, and civil servants until the Turkish era. According to Boulifa (1925:120) Ahmed Ben Kadi, the king of Koukou, a kingdom Higher Kabylia, was probably a high ranking official of the Hafside state. This is evidence of the intensity of contacts between Kabylia and the Arabized cities that were the undeniable sources of linguistic and cultural influence on the area.

The spread of Arabic also took place through the teaching of religion and grammar provided by Maraboutic Zaouias (religious lodges or schools). These zaouias were so numerous that almost each village had its own. Even today, Kabylia still has the highest number of these schools. Nevertheless, one should not exaggerate the importance of the spread of Arabic through such religious institutions.

Religious language that reached secular quarters was limited to clichés, invocation formulas, oath formulas and memorization of Koranic verses useful to prayer recitations, the meaning of which almost always escaped the faithful. According to Al Warthilani (T.1:332) commentaries on the Koran and sermons were conducted in Berber.

The Arabic language introduced in Kabyle by educated elites was very likely and generally the official classical form of the language. Borrowed terms usually referred to a civilizational content (theological, juridical, and administrative, etc.) that was new to Kabyle society. Such words, for example, were *ddin* 'religion', *fariea* 'law', 'statute', *leəqd* 'act', 'contract', *ddəwla* 'state', *hkəm* 'to govern', *leilm* 'knowledge', *lhidz* 'pilgrimage', *θakθabθ* 'book' etc. Only indirect contact could give birth to this category of loans.

In return, Arabic words that cohabited with these native vocables or that supplanted them can be seen to result only from a direct contact between Berber speakers and Arabic speakers. The largest part of the vocabulary of Arabic origin contained in the Kabyle lexicon is very likely attributable to the immigration of Arab populations, Arabized populations or populations that were in the process of being Arabized and who had come to settle down in the area. The migratory

movements were a consequence of great historical events that caused unrest in the plains. Four of such particular events had a decisive influence on demography in the Kabyle mountains (Marcais, 1938, 1956).

#### **THE BEJAÏA SIEGE BY THE ABDELWADITES OF TLEMCEM**

Early in the fourteenth century (1313), the Abdelwadites, rulers of Tlemcen, undertook the siege of Bejaïa with the help of contingents of Hilalian Arabs (Ibn Khaldoun, 1968: 394). The king of Tlemcen had two fortresses built around the city to accommodate his troops, Hisn-Bekr and Timzezdekt. He also built a city called Tinklât not far from Bejaïa (Ibn Khaldoun, 1968:208). According to Gaid (1976:33), the number of inhabitants of the two fortresses and Tinklât city was estimated to three thousand, a number made of Zenatas, Toudjins and certainly Arabs and their families. The Bejaïa historian added that the former allies of the Tlemcen kingdom finally adopted the cause of the Hafside governors and blended thoroughly in the local population. This ethnic contribution has undeniably influenced the Kabyle country at the linguistic level.

During the Bejaïa siege, to keep a close watch on the city, the Abdelwadites occupied Dellys, Azeffoun where they built other fortresses (Ibn Khaldoun, 1968:443). It was, according to Boulifa (1925:72), during that very period that the fertile plains of the Maghreb (Algiers), and Hamza (Bouira), the valleys of the Isser, the Sebaou and the Sahel River had been invaded and occupied by Arab elements left behind by the Abdelwadite troops (*"Toutes ces vastes régions reçurent définitivement au détriment des tribus Berbères refoulées, des colonies arabes destinées à soutenir l'influence des gouverneurs de Tlemcen"*).

The Zouaoua, enclosed and surrounded by Arabs or Arabized tribes that occupied the plains, had then to have direct contacts with Arabic speaking populations. The relations started as neighborly and economical and evolved to become closer as in inter-ethnic marriage and other kinds of ties with the neighboring regions. This mixing resulted into Arab-Kabyle bilingualism, the linguistic borders of which are continuously changing with the Arabization or the re-Berberization of either community.

However, the Kabyle region, because of its large population and its strong social structure, has been conferred a solid assimilation power among the non-native groups that were introduced into Kabylia. This is why it was often the Arab or Arabized groups that ended becoming Kabyle. The Berberization of the Amraoua tribal confederation, which occupied the Sebaou Valley, is a clear evidence of this process.

## **OF THE ANDALUSIAN REFUGEES IN KABYLIA**

In 1510, Bejaïa fell under Spanish power. It was liberated in 1555 thanks to the combined pressure of the Kabyle kingdoms of Koukou and Beni Abbas and of the Turkish armies. The greater part of the Moslem population, Arabized because of the presence of the Andalusian refugees that were expelled from Spain, left the city to scatter in the Zouaoua mountains. With the goal to erect a Christian city during their occupation of Bejaïa, the conquerors subjected the natives to the inquisition laws in force in Spain after the "Reconquista". According to Gaid (1976:130-131), they were forbidden to speak or write Arabic, whether in public or in private. They were even forced to burn their Arabic books, renounce their rites and customs, and adopt Christian ones. Such exactions drove the Bejaïa elite to look for shelter in the mountains, where it put itself at the service of the new kingdoms of Koukou and Beni Abbas.

According to Hanoteau and Letourneux (Hanoteau and Letourneux, 1893:90), entire villages had been founded by Andalusians. A village in Azeffoun, at present still bears the name Ait Wandlous, "the people of Andalusia". Likewise, a family from Aït-Yanni is named Aït Ali Andalous, literally meaning "the people of Ali the Andalusian". Many villages of Higher Kabylia still have Arab names, such as, Aïn El Hammam "Bath Spring", Mekla "Quarry", Djemâa Saharidj "Friday's Basin", to name but a few.

As far as the inhabitants of the Koukou kingdom are concerned, they may be identified through this quote of Luis Carvajal De Marmol (*L'histoire universelle*, 1742-1802:304): "*Les habitants sont Arabes, Berbères et Azuagues*" (The inhabitants are Arab, Berber and Azuagues). This account by the Spanish traveler about Arab presence in Kabylia dates from the seventeenth century. The Andalusian refugees estimated to about 450,000 for the whole Maghreb coast, enjoyed undeniable social quality and intellectual value. Many of them were well known learned men and scientists; others were farmers, builders and craftsmen. They had through their prestige strengthened the Arabization that was started by the Banu Hilals in some inland cities and Arabized completely most Berber speaking cities of the coast, from Morocco to Libya (Kahlouche, 1992:132-134).

## **A POSSIBLE SIXTEENTH-CENTURY POPULATION FROM TUNISIA**

The Zouaoua mountains were said to have received in the early sixteenth century a tribe from what is now northern Tunisia, more precisely from Blad El Djerid, Gafsa, and Gabes. The tribe in question was fleeing the Hafside repression. Luis De Marmol refers to this small tribe as the Azuagues. The Azuagues can be traced down to the Zouagha tribe that Ibn Khaldoun (1968:258) situated in the Tripoli province, in the fourteenth century. According to De

Marmol (1667:71), these emigrants were bilingual: "Leur language est celui des Berbères; mais ils parlent aussi arabe" (Their language is that of the Berbers, but they also speak Arabic).

This exodus from the plains was probably not the only one that had flooded Kabylia, given the disturbances and lack of safety that troubled the Maghreb between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This climate was caused by the almost perpetual wars between the then decaying Berber kingdoms and the Hilalian 'bedouinization' of the plains.

#### ARABIZATION OF THE KABYLIA VALLEYS UNDER TURKISH OCCUPATION

In order to force the Kabyles to submit to their authority, in 1594, the Turks set up garrisons in Bordjes (fortresses) in the periphery of the Zouaoua mountains (Robin, 1873: 134). These were built in Bouira, Boghni, Drâa El Mizan, Isser, Bordj Menâiel, Bordj Sebaou, and Tizi-Ouzou.

Because the Bordjes housed only limited armed forces that were just enough to guarantee their defense, the Turks relied on Zmalas. Zmalas were colonies of peasants and or soldiers in charge of collecting taxes from the subdued populations. These colonies were ordinarily composed of Arab riders, Couloughlis (half castes from Algerian mothers and Turkish fathers), and Kabyles, most of whom were elements who had fled their villages in fear of reprisals after a crime they had committed. There were also black Zmalas such as Abid Chamlal, near Tizi-Ouzou. Today, toponyms from the name "zmala" are still around. Examples of these toponyms are Zimoula, a village of Sidi-Nâamane, Tazmalt, which is the name of a small village in the Sebaou Valley and of a town in the Bouira province.

The Zmalas, composed of loose tribes, were founded *ex nihilo* in the following manner: each Zmoul (colon) received from a Bordj two pairs of oxen, a plot of land to farm, weapons, and a horse, all of which were to be repaid through a share of the crops. In return, he was ready to be mobilized and in attendance on garrison whenever the Turkish interests were threatened (Aucapitaine, 1857:21). The largest of these tribes was the Amraoua, who occupied and still occupies the Sebaou Valley. Going up the river, we could count among the Amraoua tribes, according to Robin (1873:179, 198), the village of Kalf Al Aogab, Bordj Sebaou, Taouarga, Drâa Ben Khedda, Sidi Nâamane, and Litama, which constitute the "Tahta Amraoua" (Lower Amraoua); the Ouled Boukhalfa, Tizi-Ouzou, Abid Chamlal, Timizar Loghbar, Sikh Ou Meddour, Ighil Ou Radjah, Tala Athmane, Tikobain and Mekla, making up the "Fouaga Amraoua" (Upper Amraoua).

In 1842, Carette (1842:193) considered the Amraoua confederations as being Arab. As for the Belloua and Sikh Ou Meddour villages, Doutte and Gautier (1913:41) wrote: "*Dans ces deux douars habités par des individus venus de pays arabes, la langue parlée il y a cinquante ans était exclusivement l'arabe. Actuellement on y parle presque entièrement le Kabyle*". According to this work, we can conclude that the Redjaouana (Belloua) and Sikh Ou Meddour villages used to speak only Arabic until 1960. This was also the case of villages such as Timizar Loghbar, Tala Athmane, and Drâa Ben Khedda.

Nowadays, these villages have re-Berberised themselves. The inhabitants speak Kabyle but they have not lost their Arabic accent. Other old Zmalas of the Amraouas, such as Sidi Nâamane or Taouarga, are bilingual. However, their bilingualism seems to evolve in favor of the Kabyle language. One should expect, in due course, these villages to re-Berberize themselves owing to a mass movement that leads the population to the industrialized plains, thereby implying more intensive contacts between Arab and Berber speakers in the work place (factories, administration, farms, schools, collective accommodation) where Kabyle-speaking elements are dominant.

One can then conclude that the large number of Arabic words found in the Kabyle lexicon seems to be the consequence of three factors. The few loans referring to things and new concepts carried by the Islamic civilization can be mainly linked to the Kabyle soldiers, civil servants, religious men, magistrates, and intellectuals who had contributed to the spread of the Fatimide, Ziride, Hammadite and Hafside dynasties. The main part of other loans superimposed on Berber terms, expressing still familiar contents by supplanting them or coexisting with them, surely come from the assimilation of the Arabic-speaking populations that took refuge in Kabylia. The latter had Berberized themselves but had maintained in their new language, vocables, expressions and even grammatical forms of their original language.

The adoption of Arabic words by the Kabyles to the extent that such loan words substituted for Kabyle words, leads us to assume that at least part of the immigrants enjoyed a high social status which added value to their language. An example of this is the Andalusians that have come, not only with very developed agricultural and industrial techniques, but with a refined urban culture as well. Besides, their koranic knowledge gave them a tremendous prestige.

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