



**SPECIAL FOCUS ON AMAZIGH LITERATURE: CRITICAL AND CLOSE
READING APPROACHES**

Kabyle Literary History and Questions Related to its Periodization: The Case of Poetry

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Abstract

Writing about Kabyle literary history today is a difficult task, considering the very nature of this literature. It is fundamentally oral and did not take its first steps toward a written form until the mid-1940s. There is a considerable lack of works dedicated to Kabyle literature, and those that do exist have primarily focused on poetry, due to the characteristics inherent to this genre. Indeed, unlike prose, poetry includes temporal markers since it accompanies or relays easily identifiable historical events, whereas the narrative genres (legends, fables, and tales) are difficult to date, at least in the case of these last two. For this reason, undertaking more work in this area seems to be a matter of urgency. It is therefore necessary, as required by any work on literary history, to start with periodization; this consists of dividing the historical continuum into linear segments. This work should be based on the establishment of literary facts (e.g., authors, publication dates, etc.) as relevant elements, as well as on the socio-historical events that have marked literary production. By examining the textuality of some poetic works produced at different times by different Kabyle poets (e.g., Youcef Oukaci, Si Mohand Ou Mohand, Ben Mohammed, Idir, Matoub, Ferhat, etc.), I will attempt to propose a historical periodization that will account for the development of the theme of identity in Kabyle poetry.

Keywords: poetry; Kabyle; literary history; periodization; identity



Like prose, Kabyle poetry develops a poetics of identity. Identity “designates collective identity as a construction.”¹ While this poetics is relatively recent in terms of prose, there are traces of it in the oldest published poetic texts. The present contribution endeavors to shed light on the poetics of identity in Kabyle poetry from a historical perspective. This article attempts to broadly trace the thematic development of identity in Kabyle literary history based on selected texts, with the assumption that Kabyle poets’ self-perception has changed considerably in response to changing sociopolitical conditions since the eighteenth century.² However, our objective is not so much to find clues about identity in each text, but rather to establish a periodization of Kabyle literary history by following the development of a literary theme – in this case, the assertion of identity in poetry. To illustrate our point, we have chosen excerpts from texts by well-known Kabyle poets. Thus, this article is comprised of two parts: first, a discussion of the state of research on periodization in the field of Kabyle literature; second, an analysis of poetic extracts, presented in a chronological order, that present the poetics of identity.

Any work on literary history requires prior periodization, which “thus refers to constructed durations, to the division of time into periods. It is up to the historian to find and to justify the relevant points for dividing history into periods – that is to say, to replace the elusive continuity of time with a meaningful structure.”³ A period is defined here as a series of years encapsulating “the configuration of the literary field,” including its relationships to the social system, cultural legacy, various genres, themes, structures, styles, modes of production and dissemination, and transformations in “literarity,” i.e., the changes that mark the transition to a new period.⁴

Each period should be defined by distinguishing the different forms of literary practice and describing the system of genres as well as the reasons for the change and the causes and conditions of the new practice. It should also be delineated using precise dates that show a gradual transition or a shift between the transformation of one genre and another. These dates must be literary and not political. In literary history, a distinction is made between long periods of time (as in the case of oral literature, manuscript literature, etc.), medium-length periods of one hundred years (the century), and short periods lasting twenty to thirty years (the generation).

In contrast to societies with a long-standing written tradition, the question of periodization is still an object of study in the Kabyle field. Further, dividing up the history of Kabyle literature is, to say the least, a difficult task, mainly because of its fundamentally oral character. Mouloud Mammeri was the first

¹ Paul Aron, Denis Saint-Jacques, and Alain Viala, *Dictionnaire du littéraire* (Presses universitaires de France: Paris, 2008), 291. Samir Akli and Mohand Akli Salhi, “Personnages et espace dans le roman kabyle. Une lecture de *Tettqilli-d, ur d-tkeččem* d’Amar Mezdad,” in *Expressions Maghrébines* 20.2 (2021):141-56.

² The available documentation does not go back any further, since the Kabyle language remained oral until the 1940s.

³ Antoine Prost, *Douze leçons sur l’histoire* (Paris: Seuil, coll. Points histoire, 1996), 115.

⁴ Jean Rohou, *L’histoire littéraire. Objets et méthodes* (Paris: Nathan, 1996), 41.

to critically address periodization of Kabyle poetry. In his article “Evolution de la poésie kabyle,”⁵ Mammeri traces its development, relating the decisive moments in the history of Kabylia to their repercussions for poetic themes. He also discusses the status of the poet. Writing in 1950, he divided the history of Kabyle poetry into two parts: prior to and following the French conquest, with 1871 as a reference point for the break. It was from this date forward that the French effectively conquered Kabyle territory, resulting from the repression that followed the failure of the insurrection of El Mokrani and Chikh Aheddad. In the history of Kabylia, this event is synonymous with social and political collapse and inspired the imagination of Kabyle poets for more than half a century.⁶

In “Poèmes kabyles anciens,”⁷ Mammeri used approximately the same division to trace the process of Kabyle poetic genres’ decomposition and disintegration. He divided this process into three stages: 1857–71, 1871–1918, and post-1918. The same author⁸ completed his literary history of poetry with a third period that starts after Algeria’s independence: 1871, 1914–18, 1939–45, 1954, and 1962.

Salem Chaker⁹ traced the evolution of resistance poetry and distinguished six periods of varying lengths: pre-1830, the initial shock (1830–57), collapse (1871), the “Dark Days” (1871–1940), nationalist emergence (1945–54), war of liberation (1954–62) and the affirmation of identity (1970–present). Adopting the same principles (the history and themes of poetry), Youcef Nacib¹⁰ divides Kabyle literary history into three periods, each lasting one hundred years: the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries.

Mammeri, Nacib, and Chaker refer to some of the great poets – Youcef Ou Kaci, Si Mohand Ou Mhand, Chikh Mohand – who marked their era with stylistic and thematic renewal, though this criterion (renewal) is never indicated as a principle for periodization. However, one of the criteria for delimiting and defining a literary period is the transformation of literary forms. Generally, the latter is only perceptible in literature over a relatively long period. This is the case, for example, for poetic production that addresses the defeat of 1871 and the war of liberation (1954–62). The periods that Mammeri and Chaker propose are too short to judge the evolving state of poetry and to perceive the changes.

At first glance, the secular division proposed by Youcef Nacib seems to be more appropriate, but from a methodological point of view, it suffers from

⁵ Mouloud Mammeri, “Évolution de la poésie kabyle,” in *Revue Africaine* 422–423 (1950).

⁶ See, Louis Rinn, “Deux chansons Kabyles sur l’insurrection de 1871,” *Revue Africaine*, 31 (1887), and Jean Dominique Luciani, “Chansons Kabyles de Smail Azikkiou,” *Revue Africaine*, no.43–44, 1899/1900

⁷ Mouloud Mammeri, *Poèmes kabyles anciens* (Paris: Editions La Découverte & Syros, 2001).

⁸ Mouloud Mammeri, “La littérature Berbère orale,” in *Les temps Modernes*, 375 (1977); “L’expérience vécue et l’expression littéraire en Algérie,” in *Dérives*, 49 (1985), reprinted in *Culture savante, culture vécue: Etudes 1938–1989* (Algiers: Tala, 1991).

⁹ Salem Chaker, “Une tradition de résistance et de lutte: la poésie berbère kabyle, un parcours poétique,” in *Revue du Monde Musulman et de la Méditerranée* 51 (1989).

¹⁰ Youcef Nacib, *Anthologie de la poésie kabyle: Bilingue* (Algiers: Editions Zyriab, 2012).

some inconsistencies. The author does not specify the criteria for dividing the periods. By adopting rounded figures (eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries), he takes the risk of altering the historical facts. Poets who were born in the nineteenth century are classified as twentieth-century poets. The dates of birth and death for the poets are approximate, since civil status in Kabylia was only established in 1882. Thus, according to Mammeri, the poet Youcef Oukaci “probably lived between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with his adulthood covering roughly the first half of the eighteenth.”¹¹ In the case of Si Mohand, who was born between 1840 and 1848, the margin of doubt is reduced to a few years.¹²

Meanwhile, Mohamed Djellaoui¹³ proposes another periodization that is based on the duality of modernity and tradition, with all that relates to content, themes, the duties of the poet, channels for creation and transmission, and textual characteristics. There are thus two periods, with choices of texts for each. However, this division suffers from a few shortcomings, one of which is that the boundaries between the two periods are not delimited by precise (or even rounded) dates.

In these draft studies on the periodization of Kabyle literary history, we note the predominance of oral or sung poetry and, to a lesser degree, written poetry. Although the themes and status of the poet are addressed, only historical events (essentially just those related to the French occupation: 1871, 1914, 1945, 1954, 1962, etc.) have been used as markers. Furthermore, the birth or death dates for the poets did not serve as historical indicators; nor did the publication dates of their works.

It should be noted that literary history is different from the history of Kabyle literary heritage. The studies for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had published collections of poetry or manuscript collections as their basic documentation. These documents do bear dates but also contain texts from different periods.

The first traces of the expression of identity in Kabyle poetry date back to the eighteenth century, in the oldest texts¹⁴ collected and published by Mammeri.¹⁵ An exemplary illustration of this is found in the laudatory poems of Youcef Oukaci, one of the most well-known Kabyle poets who, during an oratorical joust, clearly displayed that he belonged to the *arch* (tribe) of At Jennad:

I am a member of the Ait Djennad
Who break their opponent
With a hundred riders in the saddle

¹¹ Mouloud Mammeri, *Poèmes kabyles anciens* (Paris, Editions La Découverte & Syros, 2001), 18.

¹² Mouloud Mammeri, *Les Isefra: Poèmes de Si Mohand-ou-Mhand: Texte Berbère et traduction française* (Algiers: Editions Hibr, 2018), 12.

¹³ Mohamed Djellaoui, *Evolution et caractéristiques de la poésie kabyle (Entre tradition et modernité)* (Algiers: HCA, 2009).

¹⁴ There are some texts published by Mammeri in the book *Poésies populaires de la Kabylie du Jurjura* by Adolphe Hanoteau (Paris: Nabu Press, 1858).

¹⁵ Mouloud Mammeri, *Poèmes kabyles*.

Such is our cavalry
 We vigorously pull the dal¹⁶
 At the sight of us, the enemy bows down¹⁷

His opponent Mohand ou Abdellah, a famous poet of the Ait Iraten, replied in kind:

I am from the Ait Yiraten, as is well known
 And mine are people of glory
 They do not seek peace
 When engaged in battle
 And lovely sheep are slaughtered for us
 When we meet hospitable men¹⁸

At that time, the poet was the spokesman for his group, and his mission was to “elevate his tribe in the eyes of those in the group whose pride is bolstered by powerful and flattering poetry and also of those from the outside, who are offered a positive image of the extolled tribe.... A great poet was responsible for his group’s honor and he served as the tribe’s standard-bearer and champion”.¹⁹ Youcef Oukaci was, moreover, an exception; as a native of the At Jennad, he was also the herald of the At Yanni. “It is not known how this confluence, which Youcef says was providential, came about.”²⁰

Between me and the Ait Yenni, the die has been cast
 They are mine and it’s clear I’m theirs! (They are mine and I, clearly, am theirs!)²¹

At that time, poetry was group-based, identity was “collective” in a way, and though one may have claimed to belong to a tribe and distinguished oneself from other *archs*, one did not refer to oneself as Kabyle or even less as Berber (Amazigh). There is no trace of any reference to an intermediate “Algerian” or “Maghrebian” community level in this poetry.

The Berber sense of identity thus has “ancient historical roots and was manifested well before the contemporary era. It is not a creation of colonialism, as the Arab-Muslim nationalist discourse tends to make it seem, even though France’s irruption had important repercussions in this area.”²²

¹⁶ Dal: a metal piece that sits on top of the hammer and that the warrior pulls to cock the rifle.

¹⁷ Youcef Nacib, *Anthologie de la poésie kabyle*, 215-216. Original text: Nekk d ajennad men lasel -iw // Yettružun leedu // Miyya i irekben ur iris // D amnay netteuđdu // Njebbed dđal s leħris // Mi aγ-yezra uđdaw yeknu

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 216-217. Original text: Meelum lasel-iw d ayirat // Iggad ilemden cciea // Ur ak-ttcihwin tıfırat // Mi ara weqen d lfeťna // Zellun-aγ medden rrexlax // Mi ara nemlil d lkerma.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

²⁰ Mouloud Mammeri, *Poèmes kabyles anciens*, 40.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 36. Original text: Nekk d At yanni greť tesγar // Nitni inu nekk baney-nsen.

²² Chaker Salem, “L’affirmation identitaire berbère à partir de 1900: Constantes et mutations (Kabylie),” *Revue de l’Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée* 44 (1987).

One century separates Youcef Oukaci from another emblematic figure of Kabyle poetry. Kabylia was shaken by two events that were to mark it forever. The French army, which had already conquered Algiers and other regions of Algeria in 1830, forced its way into Kabyle territory for the first time in 1857 and overcame the resistance of Fadhma N'Soumer. Following the battle of Icherriden, Marshal Randon's troops succeeded in occupying At Yiraten and set up a fort there. It was on these lands used for this fort, which was known as Napoléon, that Si Mohand Ou Mhand was born around 1840. He was one of the best-known poets of this time, thanks both to his talent as well as his particular destiny. This poet suffered from the ravages of the war that tore his family apart and set him on a path different from the one his father and his uncle had envisioned for him. Si Mohand had already started studying to become a clerk, but fate had other plans in store for him. By force of circumstance, he became a poet who wandered the streets of the nation's cities.

The repression that followed the failure of the revolt of 1871 marked the personality of Si Mohand and his contemporaries. These upheavals that Kabylia suffered in the last half of the nineteenth century likewise affected the conditions for producing and sharing poetry. "The old bards, who were itinerant semi-professionals, vanished very quickly, and the tribal fabric that supported this highly socialized literary production collapsed."²³

Si Mohand became the spokesman for Kabylia; all the fundamental cultural references in his poetry were Kabyle and intended for a Kabyle public. His poetry was a lament for a bygone era and a condemnation of present realities. With Si Mohand, poetry became personal. The poet was no longer the champion for his group; he expressed his own torments and despairs. As such, he embraced his individuality in poems where the "I" was the main element. In Si Mohand's texts, he himself is represented by the speaker.

Si Mohand "quickly became the man of a vocation and through it the symbol of a collective destiny."²⁴ Mammeri finds it paradoxical that the most personal of poets was at the same time the most popular.²⁵

My heart pants for breath
 And without fear of perjury vows
 That it will no longer live in Icheraouien
 In the happy days gone by
 I used to walk down every street
 Where my word meant something (Where my word had meaning)
 Now life has taken hold of me
 My sorrows are innumerable
 It's done, I've lost the art of pleasure²⁶

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Mammeri, *Les Isefra*, 9.

²⁵ Ibid., 12

²⁶ Ibid. Original text: Ata wul-iw yesnehtit // Yeggul ur yehnit // Ur yezdiy deg Yicersiwen // Asmi yella zman d leali-t // Mkul azniq nuy-it // Lehdur-iw tseedayen // Tura tettef-iyi dduint // Lemhayen-iw ggtit// lereq-ay zzhu dayen.

In another poem, Si Mohand refuses to submit to the colonial power and its collaborators, preferring exile and a life of wandering.

I swear from Tizi-Ouzou
 To the Akfadou
 None of them will order me around
 Rather break than bend
 Rather be cursed
 In a country where leaders are middlemen
 I am destined for exile
 By God I like it better
 Than the law of swine²⁷

The poets who came after Si Mohand viewed his poetry as a model. Up until the 1930–40s, Kabyle literature was essentially oral. The transition to writing gave it a new life, and was introduced by some Kabyles who were educated at French schools. At the time when Belaid At Ali (1909–1950) was writing down his poems, published by the FDB, a generation of young Kabyle militants of the nationalist movement (PP) began to write politically committed poems that were meant to be sung in Kabyle.

M. Benbrahim (1982) collected a corpus of approximately thirty texts primarily written by young high school students. Their poetic texts are inspired by the historical and cultural Berber identity of the Maghreb. Almost all the historical and geographical references and values are drawn from the Berber or specifically Kabyle heritage: Massinissa, Jugurtha, the Kahena, the Kabyle resistance fighters of 1857 and of 1871, etc.; Kabylia, the Djurdjura, and the mountains (*adrar*). The ethnic referents are all Berber – *Imaziɣen* (Berbers), *Iɣawawen* (Kabyles), *Icawiyen* (Chaouias); strictly national (Algeria/Algerians), or “internationalistic” (Africa).²⁸ At the time, singing in Kabyle was already a form of self-affirmation.

Once independence was achieved in 1962, Algeria adopted a policy of Arabization, and one immediate consequence of this was the elimination in October 1962 of the Berber professorship held by Mouloud Mammeri. The classical Arabic language was instituted as the national and official language of all Algerians, and, with the aim of promoting a mythical national unity, the Amazigh language and culture were anathematized. A climate of repression of any political or cultural activity related to “tamaziɣt” took hold.²⁹ This repression resulted in the emergence of a very dedicated political current.

²⁷ Ibid., 126–27. Original text: Ggulleɣ seg Tizi ɣzzu // Armi d Akfadu // Ur ḥkimen deg-i akken llan // Ad nerreɣ wala ad neknu // Axir deewessu // Anda ttɣewwiden ccifan // Lɣerba tura deg uqerru // Welleh ar d ad nenfu // Wala leequba ɣer yilfan. This verse has often been taken up in the form of a slogan by the demonstrators in all the protest movements and marches that Kabylia has experienced since 1980 (the Berber Spring).

²⁸ Salem, “L’affirmation identitaire berbère.”

²⁹ The FDB (Fichier de documentation berbère, or Berber Documentation File) created by the Pères Blancs in Kabylia in 1946 and closed in 1976.

At the time, the identity song was the only way to fight against the denial of identity.

Ben Mohammed was learning to write the Kabyle language in an unofficial class taught by Mammeri and set the tone with his text “A baba Inuba,” which was performed by Idir in 1973 and signaled “a cultural renewal through which the Kabyles would ‘rediscover’ their identity and origins.”³⁰

Please open the door
 O dear father
 Shake your silver bracelets
 O daughter Ghriba
 The ogre of the forest is looking on me
 O dear father
 I’m so afraid, me too
 O daughter Ghriba
 The old man in his burnoose huddled
 In the corner warms himself
 To the food his foreseeing son
 Scroll the days in his head (In his head, the days scroll)
 The daughter-in-law is behind her loom
 Arranging the sinews
 The children surround the grandmother
 Who tells them stories³¹

This song is what launched the Kabyle protest song. It draws on the ancestral Kabyle literary and cultural heritage, and “brings back to life the tale and family gatherings around the brazier (lkanoun) . . . along with (the) ancient social practices that are disappearing.”³²

With this text (and others as well), Ben Mohamed sought to create what he called an “internal perspective” or “inner gaze” that would reassert the value of his own society, develop a new vision of Berber identity, and produce a deep sense of attachment and affiliation. “Our system of reference had been either the East or the West, [but] we didn’t have our own lens.” The vision of Berber identity communicated by Kabyle songs of the era was at odds with the official state ideology, which defined Algeria as being exclusively Arab and Arabic-speaking. With Idir’s success (1973), the Kabyle “néo-chanson” provided a solid foundation for the theme of identity and would reinforce the national and international credibility of Berber culture.

³⁰ See Jane E. Goodman, “Writing Empire, Underwriting Nation: Discursive Histories of Kabyle Berber Oral Texts,” *American Ethnologist* 29.1 (2002): 86-122.

³¹ Idir, *A Vava Inou Va* (Vinyl), Oasis Disques, Pathé, Marconi EMI, 2C 266-14334, (France, 1976). Original text: Ttxil-k ldi-yi-n tawwurt // A baba inuba // Sčenčen tizebgatin-im // A yelli Yriba // Ugadey lwehç n lyaba // A baba inuba // Ugadey ula d nekkin // A yelli Yriba // Amyar yettel deg ubernus // Di tesga la yezzižin // Mmi-s yetthebbir i lqut // Ussan deg uqerru-s tezzin // Tislit deffir uzežta // Tessalay tijebbadin // Arrac zzin-d i temyart // Ad asen-tesyar tiqdimin.

³² Moh Cherbi and Azreki Khouas, *Chanson kabyle et identité berbère: L’œuvre d’Ait Menguellat* (Algiers: EDIF, 2000), 43.

The poetics of identity can sometimes take several forms: the attachment that this new Kabyle song has to the origins, history, and ancestral traditions of the Berber community, but also to the Tamazight language, which is an indispensable vehicle for protecting this age-old cultural heritage. The restoration of the Algerians' history and the rejection of oriental descent constitute the theme of the following poem:

I no longer know where I come from
 Or even where I'm going
 Once I start to question
 The situation gets confused
 As if I were, from the sky, falling
 Joke's on me who forgets!
 Standing on the hill I called
 And my call fell into an abyss
 I began to listen attentively
 My head kept turning
 I oriented myself toward the East
 It ordered me to bow
 I gazed at the land of the Berbers
 Jugurtha, I saw your face
 The place where I found myself
 Thrills at your name
 Your message read at once
 Proud to be your descendant³³

This is the first time that the designation "Amazigh" was introduced in Kabyle poetry in post-independent Algeria to refer to identity; it will be used again by other poets like Matoub in a text that echoes Ben Mohammed's:

Let him say: I am Algerian
 The treacherous centuries have cheated me
 I'll go back to my roots
 Even if I have to water them with my blood
 It wasn't at a market that I discovered
 My Amazigh ancestry
 It cannot be sold or traded away.³⁴

³³ Idir, *A Vava Inou Va*: Ur zriy ansi i d-kkiy // Wala s anda tedduy // Mi kkrey ad steqsiy // Ad affey lihala tluq // Amzun seg yigenni i d-yliy // Ccah deg-i mi tettuy // Beddey di tiyilt ssawley // Tiyyri-w teyli yer wannu // Mekkney lewhi-w ad sleq // Allay itezzi irennu // Tdal-d lqebila muqley // Tumer-iyi-d tenna-d knu // Muqley tamurt n amaziy // Yugurten walay udem-ik // Nnesma-nni n wanda lliy // Hulfaq tcewweq s yisem-ik // Tabrat-ik segmi i tt-yriy // Ferhey imi lliy d mmi-k.

³⁴ Lounes Matoub, *Regard sur l'histoire d'un pays damné*, [disque], France, Triomphe Musique, 1991, Original text: Ad d-yini d azzayri i lliy // D leqrun id iyi-iyurren // Azar-iw ar d ad t-nadiy // Yas ad t-sswey s idammen // Mačči di ssuq i t-ufiy // Lasel-iw d amaziy // Ur yettnuzu ur irehhen (emphasis added).

In this fight for identity, the poets call for the protection and preservation of the language, which is a vehicle for expressing the cultural heritage and unique characteristics of any ethnic group. Ferhat Mhenni (ImaziyenImula), another great figure of the Kabyle song, refers to the non-recognition of the mother tongue (Tamazight) and urges Imazighen to speak it and to promote it.

Her face, look at it
 Though it's twilight
 But be honest
 Isn't she in the prime of her youth?
 Isn't she a pearl?
 Doesn't she smolder like an ember?
 You're talking about her withered face
 You marry her competitors
 Her voice breaks
 Tears shed for you³⁵

The conviction that “being politically ahead of the other regions of the country is translated into a certain pride. One is no longer ashamed to be Kabyle” is common in Kabylia.³⁶ The Kabyle poets feel it is their duty to bring this claim beyond the Kabyle territory by appealing to an awakening of identity among other Amazigh groups.

O my brother
 They call you Chaoui
 My heart is close to you
 My Mountain and your Mountain
 Are born on the same land
 I called on you
 Please answer me³⁷

Matoub makes this same appeal to the Chaouis brothers in two other texts. The first is entitled *Ġerġer yessawel i luris* (Djerdjer Calls the Aurès) (1979) and the second is *Seleeb-itt ay abeħri* (1981):

O land of eternal snows
 You can parade the beauty of your lands

³⁵ Ferhat Imaziyen Imula, *Chants révolutionnaires de Kabylie*, [disque] (France: Editions Imedyazen, 1979). Original text: D udem-is kan walit-tt //Ulamma d tameddit // Tini-m-d ala tidet // Ma ur telli d tilemzīt // Ma ur tecbi tawizet // Ma ur treqq am target // Tennam wesser wudem-is // Tzewġem-d anda nniġen // Tuym tisdawin-is // Tesmeġliz s wallen // Tebbeħbeħ taġect-is // Seg yimeṭṭi fell-awen.

³⁶ Mohammed Harbi, *Le FLN, mirage et réalité des origines à la prise du pouvoir (1945-1962)* (Paris: Editions Jeune Afrique, 1980), 61.

³⁷ Idir, *Ay arrac-nney*, [disque], (France: Azwaw, 1979). Original text: Uh a gma-inu // Qqaren-ak acawi // Ul-iw yer ħur-k i d-imal // Adrar-ik d udrar-iw // Mmyin-d deg yiwen n wakal // Rriy-n tiyri ħur-k // Ttxil-k err-iyi-d awal.

Djurdjura and Aurès are one and the same
 The Imazighenes are your children
 They insulted us and we responded
 To those who were your enemies³⁸

This recurrent appeal specifically to the Chaoui Berber speakers can be explained by the geographical proximity and linguistic inter-comprehension between the two groups, but there are historical reasons as well: over the centuries, Kabylia and the Aurès have been the main centers of resistance to colonization.

After a long struggle for identity and many sacrifices made by the Kabyle people (the Berber Spring (1980), the school boycott (1994), and the Black Spring (2001)), the Algerian state finally recognized and instituted Tamazight as a national language (1993) before its officialization in 2016. This symbolically ended politically engaged poetry, and the theme of identity claims has been increasingly giving way to other, more current themes. However, these songs take their place in demonstrations and marches that commemorate anniversary dates.

The purpose of this contribution was to study the development of the theme of identity from a historical perspective. As we have seen, the Kabyle poets' conception of self has increased in accordance with the historical and political events that have taken place in Kabylia since the eighteenth century. It is possible to distinguish four periods. The traditional poets first expressed a form of "collective" identity as they claimed to be from their respective tribes. With Si Mohand, poetry became more personal and the sense of identity was more "individual." Gradual schooling in Kabylia and the transition from oral to written language in literary practices had the effect of reinforcing self-awareness, particularly from the 1940s onwards, to then more radical and politically engaged poetry from the 1970s onwards. This identity movement borne by Kabyle songs faded toward the end of the 90s following the nationalization and the officialization of Tamazight in Algeria.

³⁸ Matoub Lounès, *Yekkes-as I zznad uckal* [disque], (France: Triomphe Musique, 1979). Original text: A tamurt n yideflawen // Xas beggen-d ssifa n wudem-im // Čerđer d wawras yiwen // Imaziyen d arraw-im // Regmen-ay nerra-asen // Widak yellan d iedawen-im.

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