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Neil MacMaster. *Colonial Migrants and Racism: Algerians in France, 1900-62.* London and New York: MacMillan Press, 1997. vii + 307 pp. $65.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-312-16501-7.

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Neil MacMaster's new book does not claim to unravel the complexities of present day violence in Algeria or anti-Arab incidents in France. What it does is seek to clarify some of the anomalies of French racism, which in modern-day France at least is essentially anti-Arab and where even "the second generation *Beurs* come in for a higher incidence of harassment and assault than other ethnic or religious groups" (p. 1).

Two explanations are usually given for this phenomenon, namely the widespread French dislike of Muslim cultural differences, and the impact of the Algerian war of independence. But MacMaster argues that Algerians became a target of racism and discrimination in the early part of the twentieth century, well before the 1954-62 war. To prove his point, he looks at the patterns of Algerian migration and the French response to the influx of colonial labour.

The first two chapters of the book deal with the roots of Algerian emigration, that is to say, the social and economic factors which prompted Algerian men to emigrate to France. These are followed by two chapters on the early years of emigration and the opportunities France presented the newly-arrived immigrants. Chapters 5 to 9 deal with aspects of life in the immigrant "enclave" and the reasons why the "Arab problem" caused public concern. The concluding chapters consider the impact on emigration of the crises of the 1930s, the Second World War, and the Algerian war of independence. A number of useful tables, figures, and maps help to illustrate MacMaster's argument.

In addition to examining the political reactions to Algerian migration, MacMaster sets out to provide a social history of migration, to document its transformation over time, and to examine the manner in which the discourses of French officialdom (metropolis and colonial) created racial categories. MacMaster's sources for the study are the large quantity of official documents which detailed the movements of Algerian immigrants. These include police reports and the official records of departures and arrivals from major French ports. Photographs, documentary films, letters from Algerians in France and interviews amplify these official sources.

The result is a fascinating study of the factors spurring emigration and the pitfalls and problems of settlement in France. MacMaster adopts an essentially non-Eurocentric view of the Algerian immigration/emigration process. He does this by paying particular attention to the long-term causes of emigration, the impact of colonialism, the socio-economic conditions in the departure zones, and the influence of remittances and return migration in stimulating further departures (p. 9).

In dealing with the dislocations in Algerian society caused by colonization, MacMaster covers well-known territory. Massive land appropriation dislodged pastoralists and peasants from their lands and ruptured traditional socio-economic structures. It was the dispossessed who ultimately created sources of colonial labour. However, he avoids the mainly Marxist interpretations which have characterized Algerian society as an essentially homogeneous entity disrupted in an undifferentiated manner by colonial capitalism. Instead, McMaster examines the spatial differences in emigration patterns. He draws attention to the fact that "zones of maximum colonization and capitalist penetration were the areas of very low emigration in the half century up to 1950" (p. 36). And he offers reasons why the majority of emigrants came from the mountainous region of Kabylia where colonial penetration was the lowest and why emigration was so low from the regions of intensive colonial settlement and farming.

The commercialization of agriculture in Algeria and the biggest leap to capitalist production occurred in the period 1880-1930. Initially the demand for indigenous labour was met through the use of traditional Kabyle seasonal migrants. As demand for labour increased, the Kabyle contingent was supplemented by the dispossessed indigenous population (from outside Kabylia)

who returned, first as share croppers and then as wage-earners, to the lands from which they had been evicted.

In Kabylia, however, opportunities for agricultural employment were rare so the Kabyles migrated first to the plains, then to the urban areas, and finally on to France. The analysis of spatial patterns of emigration, such as the one MacMaster provides for Kabylia, is one of the most valuable aspects of his work.

Another conclusion which runs counter to accepted interpretations is that French working class hostility toward Algerian immigrants was not grounded in economic competition beginning during the Great Depression. MacMaster shows that xenophobia was at its height in the 1923-4 period, well before the slump. He suggests that it had more to do with increased visibility whether as a result of a greater influx of immigrants, as in the early 1920s, or because of high immigrant concentration in certain areas. A lack of cultural understanding, housing problems, and negative stereotypes disseminated by the press, were greater stimulants for racism than job competition. In fact, MacMaster suggests economic competition between different groups of immigrants was much more prevalent than between French and immigrant workers.

The author's treatment of elite racism and the Colonial Lobby is also interesting and persuasive. MacMaster suggests there was an "obsessive concern" among colonial politicians and personalities with the way in which the segregational and racial hierarchies of the colonies were neutralized in France, or at least perceived to be so. Cohabitation, sexual relations, and notions of equality were the most worrying to "Arab specialists" for they indicated public ignorance of the "'reality' of native psychology" and the "need for a firm hand" in dealing with the Arabs (p. 140). MacMaster concludes that the logic of the colonial lobby was to convince the public of the need to exercise controls on the Maghrebi immigrants, especially the Algerians, by depicting them as a particular threat to law and order (p. 152). Algeria, after all, was a "part of France" and ideas on Franco-Arab relations subversive to the status quo there would not be tolerated, even if they did originate in the Metropole.

The good overall impression of the book is diminished somewhat by a number of inaccuracies. In discussing Kabylia and the Kabyle migrant tradition, MacMaster states that the "underlying functions of the Manichean image created by the French of Arabs and Kabyles was to establish a policy of divide-and-rule" (p. 44). This is misleading. There was no official policy of divide and rule in Algeria.[1] The "Kabyle Myth" may well have helped to reinforce the French policy of protectionism towards Kabyle institutions and social structures, but it was not the underlying reason.[2]

When General Randon, expeditionary leader and Governor of Algeria, finally subdued Kabylia in 1857, he obtained permission from the ministry of war to keep Kabyle institutions in place in the interests of security, not because of pro-Kabyle sentiments. Kabylia, being the most heavily populated area of Algeria, was potentially the most likely to rebel. Indeed those parts of Kabyle institutions incompatible with French rule were gradually eliminated. Officers of the *Bureaux arabes* stationed in Kabylia, who imagined the Kabyles to be receptive to these reforms because of their affiliations with the French, were greatly disillusioned when the Kabyle insurrection broke out in 1871, the worst of its kind prior to the war of independence.[3] Large scale land sequestration occurred in the wake of this rebellion disrupting Kabyle institutions and social structures alike.

With regard to the famine of 1921, MacMaster states that "tens of thousands of corpses lay scattered along the highways" (p. 69). Such remarkable figures should be substantiated, though MacMaster inexplicably fails to do so. Casualty figures are often notoriously inaccurate. Credibility can only be established by providing similar figures from varying sources; yet MacMaster furnishes only one inadequate eyewitness report.

Two questions could have been developed further, namely French attitudes towards Islam and to non-Maghrebi immigrants. Although the importance of Islam to the migrant community and the ways in which it was accommodated by French authorities is discussed at length, an analysis of French anti-immigrant sentiment toward Islam as a religious phenomenon (as opposed to merely a cultural one) would have enhanced the study. The struggle for the secularization of the French state which lasted over a century and coincided with 75 of the 130 years of French rule in Algeria, contributed to shaping attitudes towards Islam both in Algeria and in France. Did secularization effect French attitudes to immigrants, and, if so, how? With regard to other groups of immigrants, it would have been useful to have some comparison and contextualization of French attitudes towards Vietnamese and black African immigrants.

These weaknesses apart, MacMaster's work is a valuable contribution to the growing literature on immigration and an essential reference for all those interested in the modern-day ramifications of French colonization in Algeria.

Notes

[1]. See Charles Robert Ageron, "La France a-t-elle eu une politique Kabyle?," *Revue historique*, no. 223 (1960), pp. 311-352; P. M. E. Lorcin, *Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, Prejudice and Race in Colonial Algeria*, (London, 1995).

[2]. The Kabyle Myth maintained that the Kabyles could be more easily assimilated than the Arabs because of their "egalitarian" tribal institutions, their less fervent Islamic practices, and their racial superiority. As a result, a positive stereotype of the Kabyle was contrasted with a negative one of the Arab.

[3]. For an analysis of the officers' reports in the *Bureaux arabes* in Kabylia, see Lorcin, *Imperial Identities*, pp. 79-88.

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