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Moroccan Berbers in Europe, the US and Africa and the Concept of Diaspora

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**Author**

van Heelsum, Anja

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## **Moroccan Berbers in Europe, the US and Africa and the concept of Diaspora**

### *Summary*

In this paper we will discuss the following questions: can the movement of Berbers in Europe and the U.S. be considered a Diaspora? We will first look at the meaning of the concept Diaspora, then at the history, geographical dispersion of Berbers and the current political context in Morocco. After that we discuss some results of a study on new trends among Moroccan associations in the Netherlands and on the Berber associations (Kraal & van Heelsom, 2002). The outcomes show that the number of associations that publicly bare the designation Berber and that are engaged mainly to Berber issues is evidently on the increase in the Netherlands. But identity issues seem to be more important to the members than political ones. We will subsequently describe the activities of the Berber associations throughout Europe and their transnational ties. In conclusion we will examine whether the concept of Diaspora fits to the situation of the Berbers.

### **1. Meaning and characteristics of the concept Diaspora**

Diaspora (Greek dispersion, from diaspeirein) is a concept that was first used for Jews, who lived outside Palestine after the Babylonian exile. They scattered all over the world and had a common aspiration to establish a Jewish state. The meaning of 'Diaspora' expanded into the breaking up and scattering of people, and to describe people that settle far away from their homelands. Van Amersfoort (2000) describes how the term Diaspora became fashionable in the scientific literature after a publication of the Israeli political scientist Gabriel Sheffer in 1986. Sheffer summarises what a Diaspora is understood to mean to his opinion:

'Diasporas are distinct trans-state social and political entities; they result from voluntary or imposed migration to one or more host countries; the members of these entities permanently reside in host countries, they constitute minorities in their respective host country (thus for example Canadians of English descent are not regarded as Diaspora community); they evince an explicit ethnic identity; they create and maintain relatively well-developed communal organisations; they demonstrate solidarity with other members of the community, and consequently, cultural and social coherence; they launch cultural, social, political and economic activities through their communal organisations; they maintain discernible cultural, social political and economic exchange with the homeland, whether this is a state or a community in a territory within what they regard as their homeland; for this as well as for other purposes (such as establishing and maintaining connections with communities in other host countries), they create trans-state networks that enable exchanges of significant resources; and have the capacity for either conflict or cooperation with both the homeland and host country, possibilities that are in turn connected to highly complex patterns of divided and dual authority and loyalty within the diasporas (Sheffer 1996: 39).'

As Van Amersfoort correctly observes this is not yet a consistent conceptualisation and more a descriptive characterisation. Two elements seem to be of decisive importance though, namely first that an ethnic group is permanently settled, and secondly that the group has political aspirations regarding their homelands.

A concept that is often used in combination with the concept Diaspora is transnationalism. Both concepts refer to relations that exist between migrants and their home countries. Vertovec (1999: 447) known for his work on transnationalism, has given the following description of this concept:

'Transnationalism describes a condition in which, despite great distances and notwithstanding the presence of international borders (and all the laws, regulations and national narratives they represent), certain kind of relations have been globally intensified.'

In this description, a Diaspora is actually seen as a form of transnationalism. Van Amersfoort concludes however that in the literature on Diaspora the emphasis is put on the political aspects and in the literature on transnationalism the emphasis lies on economic and socio-cultural aspects. In this paper we will use the definition of Van Amersfoort (2002: 3), he concludes from the variety of aspects that other authors have been using, that the most clear and useful definition of a (modern) Diaspora is:

'a settled community of a population that considers itself to be from elsewhere and whose common and most important goal is the realisation of a political ideal in what is seen as the "homeland".'

An element that we would like to add is that a Diaspora cannot exist without an interconnected network of associations in different countries. The central question of this paper is: can the Berber Movement be considered a Diaspora in the sense of a political international movement of more generations. We study this question by examining Moroccan associations. In the discussion we want to make some remarks on the relation between Muslim and Berber identity.

## **2. Berbers in Morocco and the Amazigh Issue**

The Berber people, or Imazighen (singular Amazigh<sup>1</sup>) constitute the original population of North Africa from Egypt to Morocco, including the Canaries; southward they are found as far as Nigeria. Several dialects of Berber languages are nowadays spoken from Egypt (Siwa), Lybia (Mazir), Tunisia (Chelha), Algeria to Morocco (Riffan, Tamazight, Tashelhait). The role of the Berbers in the Maghreb has always been particularly interesting, since they alternately resisted and accepted new beliefs and political regimes, and yet remained to a certain extent an ethnically coherent group.

We will discuss the history of the Berbers in Morocco briefly. Approximately 1000 before Christ a civilisation developed in Morocco known as Libyco-Berber. The populations was known as Lybians or Numidians (=nomads), and they called themselves Imazighen (Obdeijn et al, 1999). This civilisation developed into the kingdom of Numidia, that existed from 201 BC until 46 BC, until it's collaboration with the Romans led to Roman rule. There were two tribes that made up the people of Numidia, the Massyli on the east, and the Massaesyli on the west. King Syfax ruled Western Numidia and was the most powerful leader; he supported Hannibal in the Punic Wars. Masinissa of Eastern Numidia allied with the Romans from 206, as he was losing ground against Syfax. In 201 the Roman Empire won the war against Carthage, and put Numidia under the rule of Masinissa, but after his death it fell to pieces again. The next leader was more powerful: when Jugurtha ascended the throne in 113 BC, he managed to put all of Numidia under his control. In 46 BC Numidia became part of the Roman province of Ifriqia Nova and in the 3rd century CE Numidia is turned into a separate province. This situation lasted for a long time. Only after the Roman Empire collapsed, Numidia was conquered by the Germanic tribe of Vandals in the 5th century and fell apart.

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<sup>1</sup> Because of the negative connotation of the word Berber ('barbaric'), people nowadays prefer the term Amazigh, meaning free people, but because many Dutch are not familiar with the term Amazigh Moroccans grudgingly employ the term Berber in addressing the Dutch public. On the terms used for the Berber languages there is more agreement, usually 'Tamazight' refers to all the dialects. We will use Berber and Amazigh alternately.

In 681 Islam was first introduced to Morocco and from this moment onwards Arabisation and Islamisation became a disturbing issue for the native population. Uqba Ibn Nafi is believed to have spread Islam to Morocco with a 5000 km long march around the country. According to historic writings the Arab tribes Bano Hilaal and Bano Chajm attacked the area of the current Morocco, and the Berbers defended their country, mountains and rivers, but the occupiers were stronger. The Arab tribes that invaded South Morocco (Sousse) were Dawu Hassan, Beni Mokhtaar, Dawi Mansor, Bno Nabit and Wlaad Ali. Particular phenomena in this period were the North African female warriors on horses, known as the Amazones of the Mediterranean who fought the invasions. The most legendary Imazighen female warrior was Dihya or Damia, who defended against her country against the attacks of the invading Arabs. The Arabs called her Kahina ('priestess'). She fought the Arabs, while prophesising their eventual victory and she was right: in the 8th century the Arabs conquered the territory. In 710 the Arab governor Musa Ibn Nasr had taken control over the central regions of Morocco. As the famous historian Ibn Khaldoun writes: 'this is how the land of the Berbers, except the mountains, fell into the hands of the Arabs'. At this point both Arab culture and Islam gained a strong positions in Morocco. The Arabisation of Morocco went on for ages.

A new phase in Moroccan history was the attempted colonisation, against which Berbers resisted fiercely. Obdeijn et al (1999) describe that, while Algeria was colonised in 1830, Morocco remained an independent trading partner with Belgium and France in the 19th century. Attempts to colonise Morocco started in 1904, with an agreement between French, English and Italians on spheres of influence over Africa, leaving Morocco within the control of France. In 1907 the French occupy Oujda in the North Moroccan Riff, the area of the Riffan Berbers. In 1909 Spain sends 90,000 troops to Melilla, their enclave in North Eastern Morocco. During this period the Berber leader Abdelkrim El Khatabbi became famous, because he fought the Spanish in the northern Moroccan Riff. A rebellion in the Riff Mountains started, as a protest against the Spanish exploitation of their territories. In his campaign of 1921, he lead his tribesmen against a Spanish fortification and had 16,000 soldiers of the Spanish forces killed. Three years later the Spanish had been pushed out to their holdings along the coast. Not before 1926 was Abdelkrim El Khatabbi defeated, and that with the joint efforts of Spanish troops and French troops under the leadership of Marshal Pétain.

The French used a policy of divide and rule in an attempt to diminish the power of the Arabs. Berber families like the Glaoui in Marrakesh became the most loyal allies of the French. Colonial propaganda presented the Berbers as racially and culturally nearer to Europeans. The Berber issue became historically highly charged with negative overtones after the French introduced separate laws for Arabs and Berbers in 1930, the so called 'Dahir Berbere', which is generally seen as a catalyst for Arab nationalism.<sup>2</sup> In the western parts of Morocco sharia law was exercised, while the Berbers were allowed to use their customary laws.

The government that took office after the independence of Morocco in 1955 stressed unity and nationalism, since the division between Berbers and Arabs was seen as a colonial remain. Sultan Mohammed V married a girl from one of the Berber families from the High Atlas, to reconcile the earlier tensions that were caused by the association between the feudal Berber lords and the French. But his successor Hassan II, who was confronted with social unrest, tried successively to enforce his grip on the regions further away from the capital, by sending Arab speaking officials from Rabat to the provinces and villages. He consciously attempted to diminish the local power. Especially in the Riff, the king tried to enhance control by use of force and by dividing jobs and favours among Arab speakers. Morocco slowly developed into a terror state, not only towards Berbers but also towards other possible opposition.

In the last two decades the political situation in Morocco has improved, human right abuse has diminished and a liberalisation has taken place. The position of the Berbers was put on the agenda again. This started with the announcement of King Hassan II that the national dialect would obtain a formal place in Moroccan society. A summary of television news in three

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<sup>2</sup> See the complete 'Dahir Berbere 1930' in French by Gilles Lafuentes on the website Syphax (archive) <http://www.syphax.nl>.

Tamazight-languages was introduced and the development of educational material for schools has been initiated. Nevertheless the process of Arabisation is also pursued on several policy areas. According to one of our respondents the official registrar of births does not allow parents to give their children Tamazight-names, or names of the old Amazigh-kings, like Syphax or Jugurtha. The registrar of births accepts only known names, and those are usually Arab names.

The Berber issue is not restricted to Morocco; especially the recent developments in Algeria have influenced the Amazigh-movement in Morocco. In this sense the movement of Berbers is an international political movement. Compared to Algeria, the Moroccan movement has never been very influential (BBC January 2 2001), but since the Berber rebellion in the Kabylia region (Algeria), which started in April 2001, the possibility of a Berber separatist movement in Morocco has again increased. The Moroccan government reacted by prohibiting the distribution of a newspaper and forbade some Berber meetings. The Moroccan government provides just enough space to prevent the cultural Amazigh movement to develop into a political movement. Towards the end of July 2001 King Mohammed VI stressed the importance of Berber language and culture in the history of Morocco and initiated an institute for the study of language and culture in an academic way. The Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture is chaired by professor Mohammed Chafik and has started to compose dictionaries, grammar- and schoolbooks. Though the establishment of this institute is an important step towards the recognition of Amazigh culture in the current Morocco, not all spokesmen of the Amazigh movement are contented with it. The Confédération TADA des Associations Amazighes du Maroc has for instances made a statement against it. TADA consists of 17 member associations according to the website of 'Le Monde Berber'<sup>3</sup>. The Federation Tada addresses the following issues:

- It reiterates the claims of the cultural Amazigh Movement and initiates the constitutionalisation of Tamazight as an official language, only guaranteeing the true recognition of Amazighity of Morocco;
- It regards the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture as an apparatus of the Makhzen (state), just created with the aim to neutralize the Cultural Amazigh Movement;
- It finds the use of the Latin alphabet for writing Tamazight the most adequate, considering that there is absence of serious political good-will to arrange the work to use the Tifinagh alphabet - that it considers a symbols of Amazigh identity;
- It denounces the malevolent manoeuvres undertaken against Imazighens by individuals who betrayed Timmouzgha to collaborate with Makhzen (state);
- It denounce political exploitation of Tamazight by the apparatuses of the state and the political parties;
- It denounce the interdiction to Imazighens to give Amazigh names to their children;
- It denounce the prohibitions to which Amazigh associations are victims, in particular the Association Azmez (in Boumal-n-Dadès), which was recently prevented from celebrating the Amazigh New Year's day 2953;
- It calls on all associations and all the militant Imazighens with more vigilance to keep the autonomy of the Cultural Amazigh Movement towards the Makhzen (state) and the political parties.

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3 [http://www.mondeberbere.com/societe/actu/20030215\\_comm\\_tada.htm](http://www.mondeberbere.com/societe/actu/20030215_comm_tada.htm)

The following associations are members (on 15 January 2003): Association ABRID (Fès), Association ADDOUR IMAZGHEN (Sefrou), Association AKABAR (Aghbalou-n-Iserdane), Association AMDAZ (El Hajeb), Association AMENZU (Khénifra), Association AMGHAR (Khénifra), Association ANARUZ (Demnat), Association ANEZWUM (Azrou), Association ASAFAR (Mellab, Goulmima), Association ASEKKA (Azilal), Association ASSIREM (Rissani), Association AZEMZ (Boumal-n-Dades), Association IGHBOULA (Mrirt), Association TALTEFRAWT (Goulmima), Association TZALEGHA (Tinejdad), Association TIFSA (Aïn Louh), Association TILELLI (Goulmima).

We want to emphasize that the dividing line between Berbers and Arabs is not always clear, due to extensive intermarriage throughout the years. That is why some authors speak of linguistic groups and not of ethnic groups. But from this historical and current account on the Berber issue, we can conclude that there is a contrast between people who see the Amazigh-movement as an irredentist political movement and moderate people who think that certain cultural and language rights should become recognised part of the general Moroccan culture.

### **3. Amazigh associations in the Netherlands**

In this paragraph we will summarize the development of Moroccan associations in the Netherlands briefly and then describe the activities of the Amazigh associations in more detail. As we have stated in the first paragraph, a Diaspora can hardly exist without international politically active associations. We carried out two studies on Moroccan organisations in the Netherlands and interviewed some of the Berber organisations (Kraal & van Heelsum 2002; Van Heelsum 2001). We use these data to describe the way Berber associations operate in the Netherlands.

#### *Moroccan associations in the Netherlands*

The first immigrants from Morocco to the Netherlands arrived in the nineteen sixties as temporary workers: 'guest labourers'. The intention of both the Dutch employers and of these 'guest labourers' - as the designation indicates - was that the 'guests' would return within a short period. Similar labour immigration took place in France and Belgium (Boussetta 2001; Boussetta & Martiniello 2003; Withol de Wenden 2001). In this first phase of Moroccan immigration, the labourers were predominantly single men, who lived in very poor housing conditions in hostels with many in one room. Residence permits were temporary, so the guest labourers lived with the fear of deportation. Moroccan associations that were established in that period were primarily focussed on the improvement of the legal position and living conditions of these immigrants. Secondly there were associations that focussed on the situation in the home country. Political associations that were allied with parties in Morocco (particularly the left) emerged, and tried to influence the political situation and human rights in Morocco (Van der Valk, 1996).

After a number of years, it became clear that 'guest workers' had become permanent immigrants. They decided to bring their families and in this second phase of the migration process the number of women and children increased through family reunification. The new composition of the community had consequences for the type of activities required. It led to the emergence of new type of migrant associations. A demand developed for courses and activities for women and children. The migrants brought their culture and habits from the country of origin, and in the case of the Moroccans their religion, Islam is as an essential component of the cultural baggage. Moroccan migrants felt the lack of venues of worship for Muslims prayers as an urgent problem and started founding mosques. Like Penninx & Schrover have stated in a more general way (Penninx & Schrover 2001: 55), the first generation immigrants get organised in order to recreate the world they have left, partly because it is easier to encounter the new society from a familiar environment. Today we can observe that a third phase has been reached in the settlement process of the Moroccans. The composition of the Moroccan community in the Netherlands is radically changing: at present 43 percent (117,085) are second-generation children; most of them are younger than 15.<sup>4</sup> Because of the increase in the number of children that are born in the Netherlands, the diversity of associations has increased: theatre- and sport clubs, music, language and literature groups have developed. The second generation tends to have a dual frame of reference: firstly to their community and by extension to their country of origin and secondly towards the Dutch society of which they are a part.

#### *The first Amazigh organisations in the Netherlands*

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<sup>4</sup> Statistics on January, 1 2001 according to the Dutch bureau of statistics (CBS) <http://www.cbs.nl/nl/statline>

Since 1990, organisations of Moroccan Berbers have developed activities in the Netherlands, among the first were IZAOURAN (Amsterdam), ADRAR (Nijmegen) and SYPHAX (Utrecht). About 85 % of the Moroccan immigrants come from the Northern Riff Mountains, a region with mostly Berber population, where opposition towards Arabisation and French colonial occupation was fierce. In some cases the founders of the organisations arrived as refugees in the Netherlands. Some of them had been political prisoners because of their struggle to improve Berber rights in Morocco or tried to expose the abuse during the reign of Hassan II. Both members of the leftist and of the Berber rights movement were in danger. Many of the refugees from these 'years of led', ended up in France, but some of them in the Netherlands (Bouddouft 2001). The first Amazigh organisations have tried to make clear that human rights were not taken serious in Morocco. They associated themselves with the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO).

The Berbers seems to be confronted by challenges from all sides in the Netherlands as well as in Morocco. One of the board members of one of the Berbers organisations explains:

'Berbers are not in a position of high esteem in Morocco. They are seen as backward, farmers, and no real Muslims. Within the Moroccan community in the Netherlands similar notions exist on Berbers. Berbers in the Netherlands are not proud of their culture, but try to behave as Arabic as possible, while the Arabic culture was actually imported to that region. The second generation has even more problems, since the children speak a Berber language at home and Dutch is the standard in school and neighbourhood. A foundation like ours that wants to spread Berber language and culture becomes an issue of discussion. Left wing Moroccans accuse us of being "regionalist". And royalists accuse us of being anti-Moroccan. Because we try to promote a local language, we are called anti-Arab and against the King. From conservative circles, the mosques, they call us anti-Islamic. The Arab language is the language of Islam, so the reasoning is a person that finds Berber language important is against Islam.' (translated from Lindo et al. 1997: 18, appendix)

This representative thinks that stimulating minority languages has nothing to do with religion.<sup>5</sup> The debate that we noticed earlier, between people who see the Amazigh-movement as an irredentist political movement and relatively moderate people who think that certain cultural and language rights should become a recognised part of the general Moroccan culture is repeated in the Netherlands.

#### *Developments among the Dutch Amazigh organisations*

Young people of the second generation Moroccans in the Netherlands are increasingly attending meetings of Amazigh-organisations. This is on the one hand due to a less negative attitude of the general public towards Amazigh culture both in Morocco and in the Netherlands. On the other hand the motives of the youngsters have to do with identity issues: they want to gather information on their background, language, culture and history. We will now discuss how the associations work with the three subjects: language, culture and history.

**Language** is an important issue for the second generation Berbers in the Netherlands. These youngsters grew up, speaking a Riffine dialect of Tamazight at home, but when they entered Dutch school, they had to learn Dutch. They then had to participate in a programme known as OETC, i.e. lessons in ones own language and culture, but that programme uses Moroccan Arabic. This OETC was originally meant to make it easier for the kids to return to Morocco, to adjust to the Moroccan educational system. Parents liked the idea, also because their children need Arabic in the mosque. However more and more people decided to stay in the Netherlands. Educational authorities then argued that pupils would benefit, even if they do not repatriate, when they repeat the regular subjects in their own language: calculus,

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<sup>5</sup> The attitudes towards Berbers that he describes, are more recognisable for Berbers from the Rif mountains than for Berbers from South Morocco or the High Atlas. About Southerners (Soussi) some other stereotypes circulates, for instance on their spirit of commerce (Kraal & Van Heelsum, 2002).

geography, history etc. Of course this way of using the OETC in Arabic for the children from Tamazight-speaking families could only be experienced as an extra difficulty. That is why experts are appealing for the development of similar courses in Tamazight. But the problems with the Tamazight languages are many: it is mainly a vernacular with many dialects and there is no standardized and unified spelling and hardly any teaching material.

Language has always been an important issue for the Amazigh organisations, both in Morocco and in the Netherlands. In Morocco Arabic was used in schools, newspapers, TV and by government agencies. The Amazigh associations have worked on publications in Tamazight for many years, concerning the alphabet, grammar, teaching materials and also stories and literature. Publications have appeared in France and the Netherlands, because they were not allowed in Morocco. The Amazigh associations have also tried to put pressure on the Dutch authorities to develop Tamazight OETC and with the help of educational authorities this led to a teaching package. Internet increased the rate of exchange of information. Websites offer language and writing courses and made their own standardised form of Tamazight. New books and methods are reviewed and discussed on the websites. In 2001 Said Essanoussi developed computer dictionaries (Tarifit - Dutch, Spanish, English and French) and fonts to type in Tifinagh, the Tamazight alphabet on a computer (Bouadi, 2001). The discussion on the website shows, that youngsters would like to learn Berber language but find it very difficult. After the establishment of the Royal Institute in Morocco, standardisation is more likely to occur in the future.

Dutch Amazigh associations have organised several **cultural** activities. Moroccans in general are very active in the field of literature and since most Dutch Moroccans are Berbers, we also find Berber stories and poems. Recently the Dutch publisher Bulaaq presented a book plus CD containing Berber fairy-tails. Mohammed El Ayoubi published Berber stories, based on the oral literature from the surroundings of Ayt Waryaghel - an area the Riff. He explains his motive for gathering these stories as follows:

'My generation is the last one that is acquainted with the oral literature of the Riff. One day this oral tradition will come to an end.' (Bouadi, 2001: 32)

We see large numbers of young Moroccan visitors who attend music and literature festivals, organised by the Amazigh associations. When TARZZUT (a Berber organisation from Rotterdam) organised on 12 May 2001 a cultural event in the Amsterdam ODEON-theatre, the tickets were sold out within a few hours. The organizers emphasize that the event was not political:

'Berbers have inhabited North Africa for ages and have a very rich culture and a long history. We want to show as much as possible of this (...) A language expert will give a lecture and some known Moroccan writers in the Netherlands - Abdelkader Benali, Said el Haji, Mimoun Essahraoui, Ehmed Essadki and Najib Elyandouzi - will read from their work and explain how their work is influenced by Dutch and Berber culture. There is also a lot of music. The legendary Berber protest singer Walid Mimoun will perform and also Ayned and Choukri.' (the daily Metro on May 8 2001)

Though the remark of the organizers that event was not political is sincere since most young visitors are mainly interested in finding out about their roots, politics is difficult to avoid. It comes to the surface in the texts of the singers and these singers usually go from country to country and build connections between the Amazigh organisations without deliberate political intentions. In this way the non-political cultural events cannot be considered completely unpolitical from the point of view of our central question on the Berber Diaspora.

The third type of activities that most Amazigh associations in the Netherlands organise, is the **information** meeting, for instance about history. The increasing educational level of the second generation Moroccans lead to a more intellectual approach to issues like the Amazigh identity and also towards Islam. Beside language, music and literature, activities to increase knowledge of the history of Berbers have become more significant. In this field some associations are active in the Netherlands that do not explicitly present themselves to be Amazigh-organisations. The Moroccan Cultural Union Bades (MCV Bades), the Association of



Moroccan Migrant in Utrecht (AMMU), the Moroccan Association for Cultural Action Rotterdam (MACAR) organised a conference in November 2001 on the Riffine hero Abdelkarim El Khattabi, in cooperation with the University Leiden. At this two-day congress researchers of international allure were invited from France, Egypt, Spain and Morocco, to expound on the history of the Riff. BADES organised two more events in 2001 on subjects that were (indirectly) connected with Amazigh-culture: a congress on developmental aid in the Riff and a discussion evening on the booklet by Mustafa Arab: 'Riff between palace, Istiqlal and the freedom movement'. A spokesperson from BADES explains:

'Culture is more than language and literature. Attention for history is also important for our activities, it's part of our identity ... and that consists of Amazigh-elements, Arab elements, Islamic elements, and also Jewish elements, although these last elements nowadays do not get so much attention anymore. One needs to be realistic: 80% of Dutch Moroccans are Berbers, so we pay attention to that. But we are not fanatic.'

It is quite clear that politic is difficult to avoid when discussions are held about such issues. But having a discussion does not mean that the members of the organisation have common political objectives. In some cases this is surely so, but in other cases the attitude is neutral.

The three issues mentioned earlier - language, culture and information - are all discussed on the Amazigh websites. On websites like [www.amazigh.nl](http://www.amazigh.nl) and [rif.couscous.nl](http://rif.couscous.nl) visitors discuss Amazigh issues in so called 'chat boxes'. The subject matter that appears in the chat boxes is often related to current affairs and life in the Netherlands. Though the intention of the web organisation is 'to raise awareness of Amazigh identity', the website is also used for heated discussion on the war in Iraq that characteristically have a humoristic touch. The website organisations offer possibilities to young Berbers to acquire information, to find out about meetings and cultural shows and to discuss their opinions directly through chat boxes. Communication on websites can accelerate national and international contacts, and make it easier to define oneself as part of the Berber Movement. But we cannot automatically assume that all youngsters that define themselves as Berbers also have political objectives in Morocco. There is a completely different process that intervenes here. According to one interviewee, the negative coverage of Moroccans in the Dutch media, has stimulated the interest in Amazigh identity:

'The level of education of the second generation is higher than that of their parents and they are very conscious of the difference between them and others. The negative news on Moroccans in the Netherlands has provoked them to look for another self-definition. "Berber" might sound better than "Moroccan". It can be associated with heroes and a romantic image.'

When we look at the Amazigh organisations in the Netherlands, it seems reasonable to conclude that the first cases had a political orientation towards the country of origin. This seems understandable and logical for the first generation immigrants, and also in the political circumstances of suppression that existed in Morocco. In the course of the years, when more Dutch born Moroccans became interested in the Amazigh issue, the associations became more orientated towards questions of identity, raising and solving social problems in the Dutch society, like helping young brothers and sisters in the Dutch educational system. Furthermore the political situation in Morocco improved considerably, so tendencies to work as a political movement became less urgent. Nevertheless, some three of the ten associations have contacts with the European network of the Amazigh movement centred in France, though restricted by their limited knowledge of French. The international cooperation and exchange of information might increase the alliance among board members with the international political movement that intends change in the country of origin. But probably the common members don't notice much of that and they are more interested in facts about their roots.

#### **4. Berber associations in Europe, Canada, the United States and other countries**

Berber associations exist in many other European countries and in the United States and Canada. The Berber organisations in the Netherlands are all Moroccan. That is not true for the organisations in other European countries. In France and Canada we find also a considerable number of Algerian Berbers. We now list a first inventory of the Amazigh associations that we found in Europe and Canada and the United States, with a short description of these organisations. We gathered data on Internet and by analysing the literature on this subject, but we cannot pretend that this list is in any sense complete.

The most influential Amazigh website is Mondeberbere, in three languages: most information is in French, some things in English and in Tamazight (using Latin alphabet).<sup>6</sup> On this website we see the variety in background of the people and groups connected. There are Berbers in several European countries, villages in Morocco (like Azems in Boumale de Dades), the Moroccan federation TADA, Tuaregs, groups in Kabylia in Algeria, Lybian groups, groups on the Canaries and though the US and Canada. Mondeberbere is made in France and can be considered the main connection point of the Amazigh movement.

Another influential association in France is Le Congrès Mondial Amazigh (CMA) or the Amazigh World Congress, this website is completely in French.<sup>7</sup> CMA in Paris is a federation and organises once a year an international congress where its member associations meet; in 2002 this took place from 29-31 August in Roubaix. This CMA states solidarity with the Amazigh brothers in Kabylia, the region in Algeria where riots took place during 2001 and 2002. CMA has an enormous list of member organisations in Morocco, Algeria, France, Spain, the Netherlands (1) and Norway. In France we find many other Berber associations, mostly Algerian and Moroccan Berbers, like L'association de Culture Berbère Paris (ACB)<sup>8</sup>, Afus degwufus (Roubaix), Awal (Lyon), ACBK (Montpellier), Argane (Sevran), Amazigh (Nantes) and Tiwizi (Paris).

In Belgium there are several Amazigh associations of a militant nature that are closely linked to the Congrès Mondial according to Boussetta & Martinello (2003). The authors mean with militant that they are mainly interested in political issues. Since these associations don't have websites, we cannot give further information here.

In Germany, there are at least seven Berber associations. On the website of Tiddukala, Berber organisation in Frankfurt, we find four others in Frankfurt and one in Münster and one in Münschen.<sup>9</sup> There is a Moroccan Berber association in Frankfurt, namely the Marokkanischer Verein für die Tamazight-Kultur und Soziales (MVTKS) that is connected to the CMA in France.<sup>10</sup> MVTKS is clearly Moroccan, while Tiddukala seems Algerian since it has links to four Algerian newspapers.

On several websites in Europe and in the US we find links to one particular Swedish Amazigh association: Svensk-Berbiska Föreningen (Stockholm Sweden).<sup>11</sup> This association is also a member of CMA. The activities of this association seem to be not very recent, since the last activity was an educational programme on 20 April 2002. Their activities have also included a demonstration in front of the Algerian embassy in Sweden in 2001 to support the people in Kabylia in their struggle to speak Tamazight.

The Amazigh Voice in the United Kingdom seems to be of Algerian origin.<sup>12</sup> The website of this organisation has a lot of information on the Berbers in the UK.

There is also an Amazigh association in Tenerife on the Canaries: TIGZIRIN Asociación Cultural Canaria de Estudios Mazigios. The indigenous population of the Canaries is of Berber origin, just like the population on the mainland region of North West Africa. Two other associations in the Canaries is Tamazha, that has a website<sup>13</sup> and Azurug, that is connected to the Congrès Mondial.

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6 The website address is <http://www.mondeberbere.com>

7 The website address of Congrès Mondial is <http://www.congres-mondial-amazigh.org/>

8 The website in France <http://www.acbparis.org/association/index.php>

9 The website on Germany <http://www.multimania.com/tiddukla/>

10 The website of the association in Frankfurt <http://www.mvtnks.de/>

11 The website of the Swedish Berbers is <http://www.berber.nu/>

12 The website of the Berbers in the United Kingdom is <http://www.amazigh.co.uk/>

13 The website of the Berbers in the Canaries is <http://elguanche.net/tamazgha/>

In Canada there are two Amazigh organisations that have contacts with the rest through Internet. One is situated in the French part of Canada: Centre Amazigh de Montreal (<http://www.amazigh-quebec.org/>). The other one is in the French part of Ottawa (Hull), and seems very much oriented towards Algeria. These organisations are not members of the CMA.

In the United States, we can find the Amazigh Cultural Association in America (ACAA)<sup>14</sup> based in Bedminster, New Jersey. ACAA has maintained a multi-location centre since 1994 in New Jersey, Massachusetts and California. ACAA has participated in and co-sponsored a series of public seminars on Amazigh culture and language held by MIT, Tulane, Stanford, the University of California, Santa Cruz and New York. ACAA in Bloomingdale published a quarterly for some time: *The Amazigh Voice*, but the website information on this quarterly stopped in 1986. ACAA also organises exhibitions of Amazigh artists in San Francisco. It publicly condemned the way in which the uprising in Kabylia was violently ended by the Algerian government. An initiative of a different nature is the Tazzla Institute for Cultural Diversity in Los Angeles.<sup>15</sup> It is an initiative of an Amazigh woman from North Africa who studied in the US and became a female anthropologist in America, dedicating her lifetime work to the promotion of Amazigh culture in her adopted land. The mission of this institute is to promote multicultural understanding through peaceful, educational means, and to assist American Indian and Amazigh (Berber) organizations through cultural and educational projects. In 2002, it started a program at the United Nations, under UNESCO Culture of Peace, called "Creating Peace through the Arts and Media," presenting Amazigh (Berber and Tuareg) artists, speakers and films, annually.

Looking at all the Amazigh associations in the countries that we have included in the list, we see similarities and differences. A similarity between the website of the organisations is that they often have downloadable fonts available for users to install on their own computer. Language is one of the important issues also on the websites of the European and American Amazigh associations. Another similarity between the websites is that they often provide a lot of information on the older and pre-colonial history of North Africa. The stories of Syphax, Jugurtha and the female warrior Dihya (or Damia or Kahina) can be found in Dutch, German, English and French language. The third similarity is that we often find a bibliography of books in many languages that are available on Berbers.

The most obvious difference between the Amazigh associations in the countries that we have listed is the language in which they communicate. French or not French is an important dividing line. French associations seem more political in their approach and seem to be more involved with the issue of Kabylia. They also seem to have more direct contacts in Morocco. The English, German, Dutch and Swedish associations seem less connected to each other, though we sometimes find links to *mondeberbere* and *Congrès Mondial Amazigh (CMA)*. The extent in which the international movement of Amazigh organisations are connected to each other seems to depend much on the language they have in common. Though the *Congrès Mondial Amazigh (CMA)* in France has a large network in France, Morocco, Belgium and Canada, their network seems to be less effective in countries where French is not the dominant language. Though the website of the Amazigh Cultural Association in America has links to the main French associations, the use of French seems to limit the contacts. The second-generation board members of the Dutch Amazigh organisations have more language proficiency in English than in French and this seriously curbs the enthusiasm to communicate with the French counterparts.

The difference that we noticed between cultural and political associations in the Dutch case is less clear on international level. It looks like most of the associations connected to the CMA have - to a certain extent - political objectives, but we have not enough information to make a thorough statement about this. Since we found most of the information outside the Netherlands through following links on websites, it is logical that local cultural associations are left out. More research is needed to find out, whether there is also a less political movement outside the Netherlands.

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14 The website of the Berbers in the United States is <http://www.tamazgha.org>

15 The website of the Tazzla Institute for Cultural Diversity in Los Angeles is <http://www.tazzla.org>

## 5. Conclusion

The central question of this paper is: can we consider the Berber Movement a Diaspora? As we have stated in the first paragraph, a Diaspora is marked by the following characteristics: an ethnic group is spread out in more than two countries, and permanently settled in these countries, with a political ideal regarding their home country and a network of associations work towards this ideal.

In paragraph 2 we have looked at the issues that are important for Berbers in Morocco, these are treated in their historical and political context. The role that Berbers played in Moroccan history cannot be neglected and their descendents want this fact to be recognized. But this did not lead to a struggle for independence like in Algeria. The current issue of the Confédération TADA des Associations Amazighes du Maroc is the recognition of the Berber language and the implementation of it in practice.

In paragraph 3 we studied the activities of Amazigh associations in the Netherlands. We saw that a political orientation directed towards the country of origin was logical for the first generation immigrants. The first Amazigh organisations in the Netherlands fought against the political oppression of Berbers in Morocco. But in the course of the years, when more Dutch born Moroccans of the second generation became interested in the Amazigh issue, the associations became more orientated towards questions of identity, raising and solving social problems in the Dutch society. A lot of new Amazigh associations developed that were less political than the first ones. Nevertheless, a small number has contacts within the European networks of the Amazigh movement centred in France.

In paragraph 4 we studied the Amazigh organisations in France, Belgium, Germany, the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States. Many of these organisations seem to be connected by a common political aim: more rights and freedom for Berbers, though there seem to be very different degrees in which this freedom and rights are defined. In nearly all cases the official recognition of language is one of the main issues, and this had the effect that the government of Morocco is now trying to solve some of the problems regarding language.

Internet makes international exchange of information easier, but because most discussions on the websites of these Amazigh-organisations are in Dutch, while the international websites use French, we can safely assume that only higher educated Dutch Moroccans who are versed in French join the international exchange. The limited knowledge of both Arabic and French put the Dutch Amazigh-community in a special position, until the moment that they can all communicate in a standardized form of Berber language. The Dutch Berber youngsters have fewer problems to communicate with the associations in the United Kingdom and the United States. But the fact remains that the main federation the Congrès Mondial Amazigh (CMA) is in France. It is too early to conclude what effect the peripheral position of the Dutch Berbers in terms of language has. It might lead to a looser position in the international network.

As we have seen the Amazigh organisations in the Netherlands are not always political, but often very engaged with issues of identity. How to define ones identity, as a person of immigrant parents, is nearly for all second-generation youngsters of pressing importance (Van Heelsum 1997). When your parents were a suppressed minority group in their country of origin, this makes the identity issue more complicated. When the Muslim aspect of their identity is also under attack because of the negative connotation that Islam currently has in the international news, the issue becomes even more complicated. Youngsters need a lot of information to determine which elements they want to stress, and which elements they find less important. Both Brouwer (2001) and Mamadouh (2001) have shown how identity of young Moroccans can be defined, redefined and shaped further by communication on Internet. The increasing educational level of second generation Moroccans causes a more intellectual approach to issues like Islam and Amazigh. It is not surprising that part of the Amazigh associations is more concerned with identity than with political objectives in the country of origin. Our conclusion is that though we can speak of an international Diaspora of Berbers with political objectives, but this does not include the majority of the Berber associations in the Netherlands.

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