

THE DYNAMICS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGE IN THREE ALGERIAN PEASANT COMMUNITIES :

An essay on the dialectical relations between economy ecology
and social organization.

by

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This study attempts to analyze the causal and dialectical relationships between the economy, ecology and social organization of an Algerian peasant community. Indeed, the intrusion of French colonialism ushered in drastic changes in the economic life of this community, which tried to resolve an agricultural crisis by altering the underlying ecological structure. The combined changes provoked far-reaching transformations in the social organization of the population under study. The study of a local community such as this requires one to situate it in a wider historical context so that the analysis would move from the national to the local level and vice versa.

The rural district under investigation, Douar El Akbia, is composed of three peasant villages and two hamlets. It was the focus of my year-long anthropological field research in 1973-74. This *douar* is located in eastern Algeria in the Numidian mountain chain, 72 kilometers northwest of the city of Constantine. Prior to 1869 when this *douar* was established by the colonial authority, this district was inhabited by a tribe called the Beni Kaïd. After their conquest by the French army in 1858 new cash taxes were imposed on the local population. In 1869 when the *senatus-consulte* was applied there the colonial public domain expropriated 11 percent of the territory of the *douar* (1). In 1873 the right to use the forest was denied. In 1888, when the application of the Warnier Law to this *douar* was effected, the population lost close to 363 hectares, which amounted to 26.1 percent of its territory. By this time the colonial administration had confiscated 37 percent of the land of the peasants of Douar El Akbia. The population of the *douar* increased, however, from 602 in 1869 to almost 1800 by 1954.

(1) Archives Nationales de France
(AN), F 80535.

Confronted with this situation the peasants of El Akbia endeavored to resolve the economic crisis created by colonization within their traditional technoeconomic framework. Grain growing was expanded over pastures and woods. Moreover, with the increasing disequilibrium of man-land ratio, the biennial fallowing system was stopped. In the long run some fields were ploughed every year resulting in soil depletion and the decline of livestock and agricultural yields. The economic conditions of these peasant villages and hamlets kept deteriorating gradually, forcing, after 1920, an increasing number of impoverished or landless peasants to seek employment outside the district as migrant wage laborers in the colonial cities, agricultural plantations and mines.

ECONOMIC CRISIS AND PEASANT RESPONSES

The French colonial authority not only compressed the Beni Kaïd on the spot but also introduced about one hundred additional peasant families into their diminished territory. Henceforth the remaining land carried a population far greater than it could sustain by the traditional methods and techniques of production. These events ushered in a growing imbalance between man and the environment. In order to compensate initially for the continuous decrease of material resources brought about by the intrusion of colonialism the peasants resorted to a traditional solution which consisted of augmenting or expanding grain growing over pastures and bushlands that were cleared off for this purpose. The extension of agriculture over the other complementary ecological zones contributed to the deterioration of both the natural and cultural landscapes of the *douar* without ever resolving, in the long run, its economic crisis.

The practice of extensive agriculture supplemented by intensive horticulture and complemented by arboriculture and livestock raising was very effective in sustaining the subsistence needs of the rural population. As an economic adaptation characterized by polyculture, it was best suited to a pre-capitalist market economy. These poly-cultural economic activities were more suited to and in full harmony with the local micro-geographical zones prevailing on the territory of the Beni Kaïd. Although the technology utilized was and still is pre-industrial in its general features, it was devised in relation to the productive requirements of these diversified economic activities which provided the inhabitants with a sufficiently varied diet of meat and other foods, such as fruits and vegetables. According to William Shaler (1826), the American Consul General at Algiers,

... bread, mutton, poultry, fish, milk, butter, cheese, oil, olives and fruits, with the couscous, which is a granulated paste made of wheat or mixed with barley of the nature of macaroni, generally constitute the food of the people of Barbary ; the latter may be regarded as their national dish, equivalent to the macaroni of Italy and the rice of India. The couscous is cooked in a collander generally of wood, over the steam of broth, and when skillfully prepared with hard eggs, vegetables, sweet herbs, spices, etc., is a savory and nutritious food... In the season of the best pasturage when the cattle are in good condition, it is a practice... to slaughter a bullock or two, the flesh of which is jerked and dried, then seethed in oil, packed away in jars and covered with oil or melted butter for future use (1).

According to a post-1830 official report describing in great detail the daily pattern of consumption of the Algerian rural population of Constantine province,

... the peasants eat two meals per day ; lunch at 10 AM and dinner at about 6 PM ; the quantity of food consumed per person includes : in the morning a piece of bread containing 450 grams, 200 grams of dates, a half litre of milk ; in the evening 500 grams of couscous served with olive oil, spices, and 250 grams of meat per person thrice a month (2).

As for the qualitative and « hygienic » aspects of this nutrition, the authors of another study made by a French official concluded that the food consumed « is very adequately diversified and is better prepared than that of the French peasants » (3). These Algerian peasants were reported also to consume « mutton, beef, poultry, dry fruits, etc. » and during the summer when their animals are well-fattened, they processed some meat and suet according to the procedure indicated above by Shaler, to be stored for the winter season when their animals became too meager to butcher. General Pellissier de Renaud, who commanded the province of Constantine during the 1840's and 1850's also reported that « the basic ingredient of their diet is the couscous, which is made of wheat flour prepared with butter and fat ; they serve it in large wooden plates with pieces of meat or poultry sprinkled with pepper » (4). George Rozet noted that the diet of Eastern Kabylia consisted of a very good assortment of various ingredients. The inhabitants « con-

(1) William Shaler, *Sketches of Algiers, Political, Historical and Civil, Containing an Account of the Geography, Population, Government, Revenues, Commerce, Agriculture, Arts, Civil Institutions, Tribes, Manners, Languages and Recent History of that Country* (Boston : Cummings, Hilliers, and Company, 1826), p. 64.

(2) Quoted in Andre Nouschi, *Enquête sur le niveau de vie des populations rurales Constantinoises de la conquête jusqu'en 1919* (Paris: P.U.F., 1961), p. 40.

(3) Quoted in Nouschi, *Ibid.*

(4) Pellissier de Renaud, *Annales Algériennes* 3 (1854) ; 446.

sume a lot of dairy products, eat melons, fruits, berries, and mutton, beef, and poultry cooked with couscous. During the bad years the poor peasants resort to the consumption of sweet acorns and seeds in addition to millet, lima beans, and sorghum» (1). André Nouschi concluded in his analysis of the pre-colonial nutritional problem of the peasantry of the province of Constantine that,

In truth and qualitatively, the specialists who studied this question had already demonstrated that the traditional nutrition of the Algerian peasants cannot be derided at all as some would like to pretend. These specialists emphasized the advantages of this nourishment which furnished at the same time adequate proteins, fats, and carbohydrates. The only major objections are :

1. A regularly monotonous diet, interrupted simply by the consumption of seasonal fruits and vegetables - melons, watermelons, grapes, peaches, apricots, etc. ;

2. The insufficiency of meat ; however, since they regularly consumed milk, butter, cheeses, and meat once or twice per month, the scarcity of meat is compensated for. In the mountainous regions, the peasants utilized regularly their own olive oil, vegetables, fruits, honey combs, and a large quantity of milk. In most cases they consumed the amount of grains required and the remaining surplus was stored in silos for eventual hard times (2).

In any case, the results of the French colonial authority's economic survey of this district in 1868 revealed the following facts : every person had at his disposal an average of 0.80 cattle, 1.50 sheep, 2.60 goats and 2.66 hectares of land. By 1955 the average per capita had declined to 0.14 cattle, 0.17 sheep, 0.33 goats, and 0.60 hectares of land. In fact, between 1868 and 1955 the total territory of the Beni Ka'd diminished by 36 percent ; the other quantified economic resources represented by livestock and land taken here as measurable economic indices diminished in the following magnitude : cattle by 82.5 percent, sheep by 88.5 percent, goats by 87 percent, while the population increased between 1868 and 1954 by 186.71 percent. It appears now from these percentages of livestock and land, and from the variety of fruit trees, vegetables and grains produced, that traditionally the peasant communities of El Akbia not only subsisted on a mixed multicropping rural economy which ensured the population an adequately balanced caloric intake, but also that the pre-colonial standard of living of this *douar* was relatively high. However, by the turn of the twentieth century, Douar El Akbia, like many other Algerian rural districts (3), had sunk deeper and deeper into a severe socio-economic crisis that was bound to cause far-reaching degenerative changes (4) both in the traditional way of life and in the ecological basis of the agriculture and animal husbandry.

THE BIOGEOCHEMICAL BASIS OF AGRICULTURE

Agriculture depends on specific biogeochemical cycles or processes which are responsible for the formation of cultivable soil. The physical conditions of a soil are predetermined primarily by the climatic and ecological factors prevalent in a given geographical region or district. The subtropical soil - similar to that of El Akbia - is usually made up of various principal elements. A sandy material is derived from sandstone, schists, and quartzites, materials known to be deficient in plant nutrients, but whose relative coarseness allows the roots of plants to circulate with it (5). Clay, an indispensable substance for soil formation, is composed of materials derived from certain rocks : shales, granites, gneisses. Lime is formed from limestone and chalk rocks whose function is to loosen soil texture. As plant detritus such as dead leaves, twigs, and algae are broken down, a process of humus generation occurs (6). The function of humus is not only to create a top soil storehouse of nutrient materials in colloidal form to be drawn upon gradually as needed (7) but also to lighten soil texture. The quantity of water and air within the soil plays a vital

(1) Quoted in Nouschi, *Enquête*, p. 40.

(2) *Ibid.*, p. 43.

(3) As a consequence of the constant erosion of the economic base of the Algerian peasantry accompanied by demographic increase, a twofold process of pauperization and proletarianization through migration was ushered in. For instance, in 1872 an Algerian peasant had at his disposal an average of 83 ares of cultivable soil ; by 1848, this had fallen to a mere 24 ares. This fact signifies that the average annual quantity of grain per head fell from five quintals in 1872 to 4.7 in 1911, 2.8 in 1936, and declined to less than two quintals in 1951. Jean Dresch, « La situation économique et sociale de l'Afrique du Nord », *Industrialisation de l'Afrique du Nord* (Paris : A. Colin, 1951), p. 230. As a result, the number of peasant landowners diminished between 1929 and 1954 (by 20 percent) while that of both permanent and seasonal laborers increased by 29 percent. Bourdieu and Sayad, *Le Déracinement*, pp. 16-17.

(4) Degenerative change is used here in a double sense : disintegration of both the ecological system underlying the natural economy of the peasantry, and the pre-colonial socioeconomic organization. It is not the kind of change that is either initiated, accompanied or superseded by innovating techniques of cultivation that may generate a new type of economic structure capable of increasing both agricultural yields and dairy products, which is the only feasible way of integrating the peasant sector into the national economy of the larger society. According to George Dalton, « Degenerative change does not mean that some people believe themselves to be worse off materially or culturally under the new conditions. Some people are made worse off by any kind of social change. Rather, it means the old society ceases to function in important ways : most people perceive the changes as worsening, and in no important area of social or private life is there widespread absorption of new culture (e.g. literacy), new technology and economy (e.g. new farming methods and enlarged production for sale), of the sorts which create permanent state of affairs. Worsley (1957) argues that Melanesian misunderstanding of European economy, and distorted religiosity contain the beginning of wider political organization of an anti-colonial sort which may possibly evolve into more orthodox and productive political activity ». « Theoretical Issues in Economic Anthropology », *Economic Development and Social Change : The Modernization of Village Communities*, ed. Dalton ; (New York : Natural History Press, 1971), pp. 216-17.

(5) These paragraphs are based mainly on Patrick W. Bryan, *Man's Adaptation of Nature : Studies of the Cultural Landscape* (New York : Henry Holt and Co., 1933), pp. 114-15.

(6) Eugene P. Odum, *Ecology* (New York : Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), p. 44.

(7) C. Geertz, *Agricultural Involvement: The Process of Ecological Change in Indonesia* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1963), p. 21.

(1) Odum, *Ecology*, p. 42.

(2) *Ibid.*

role in the manufacture and distribution of these plant nutrients. In other words, water is the medium through which the basic nutrients are transmitted to the roots of plants, which is why the presence of moisture within the soil stimulates the growth of leaves and stems, while relatively dry conditions foster the production of seed and grain crops. Therefore, the growth of leaves and stems is fostered by nitrates, the development of flowers and fruits is maintained by phosphates, and the production and assimilation of plant nutrients is promoted by potash which maintains the general health of the plants. Thus the continuity of soil productivity or fertility depends on the maintenance of an ecological « steady state » where « gross production equals respiration plus exports, as in stable agriculture (1) ». However, if these nitrates, phosphates and potash are either eroded or rapidly used up by growing crops, an ecological imbalance sets in which would result automatically in soil depletion or infertility. This signifies in ecological terms that organic matter necessary for the production of plant nutrients is used up faster than it is produced (2).

In response to these ecological processes agriculturalists devised specific techno-economic practices for the express purpose of maintaining a certain ecological equilibrium which has been recognized as necessary for the sustenance of soil fertility. Fallowing was a major agrarian innovation designed to increase both water content and plant nutrients in the soil. It consists of allowing land to lie fallow for a year or more. Since some leguminous crops are known to increase the nitrogen content of the soil, a rotation system based on the cultivation of alternate crops was also practiced. Green manuring was also used to fertilize the soil for the purpose of augmenting both the quantity of nitrogen and the existing humus. Finally, animal manure was utilized under various forms, including the holding of livestock on arable land. All these techno-economic practices, and many more, were made to maintain the quality of the soil which is the foster mother of all rural populations whose primary subsistence activities are geared to agriculture. Therefore, as long as the biogeochemical basis of agriculture is not radically altered or interrupted by either human or animal activities, the natural processes analyzed above are more or less bound to maintain an ecological balance or steady state. Moreover, if people are forced to resort, as a consequence of demographic and politico-economic pressures, to the alteration of the ecological system of agriculture in total disregard or ignorance of the biogeochemical processes and their systemic structural and functional interrelationships analyzed above, the existing environmental conditions would result in an ecological deterioration.

As will be demonstrated below, the clearance of bushlands, situated in most cases on the former wooded steep slopes and rugged hillsides of El Akbia, in order to expand grain growing, stimulated the activity of bacteria and fungi within this subtropical soil which was being rapidly weakened by the direct impact of rainfall and sun. Then cultivation of this virgin soil by a plow facilitated the removal by rainstorms and torrents of the already thin layer of humus formed by the decomposition of organic plant remains and the final products of clearing. As the geographer André Nouschi put it,

... coastal regions are wooded and humid ; their every exploitation must be preceded by local clearance. The valleys alone contain favorable fields. The mountainous coastal regions as a whole correspond to acidic and podzolic lands where washing off of the surface soils occurs more easily than anywhere else because of the intense humidity, slopes and clearance. The pedological equilibrium is therefore precarious specifically if the vegetation cover is absent. Then the agriculturalists find themselves before the following dilemma ; either they leave intact the surrounding vegetation so that the ecological equilibrium is preserved ; they have then to resign themselves to a small scale agriculture, restricted to the natural clearings and alluvial woods. Or they reduce the extent of vegetation cover as a result of the process of clearing

off, with the risk of destroying the pedological and biological equilibrium of the region. Once cleared off, the virgin soil will be easily eroded and the region will rapidly become barren.

It is evident that the forest population suffered heavily from the modification of the condition of their traditional life, either because the lands of the valleys were confiscated from them or because they, then, received other peasants that were pushed back from the coastal or high plains. This phenomenon resulted in augmentation of demographic pressure which brought about the breakdown of the equilibrium of nature (1).

(1) Nouschi, *Enquête*, p. 13.

Erosion resulted in the rapid decrease of both humus and soluble organic plant nutrients. The newly planted crops - wheat and barley - required during their growing season, a greater amount of nutrients from the soil. This state of affairs not only quickly led to the exhaustion and impoverishment of the new arable land but also undermined the ecological system of agriculture which resulted in the disruption of the functionally interconnected sectors of this rural economy : grain growing, livestock and agriculture. Thus in their endeavor to raise their subsistence production, the peasants of El Akbia accelerated an irreversible process of ecological deterioration ; that is, a pattern of environmental changes whereby organic matter necessary for soil regeneration was being used faster than it was produced.

DEGENERATIVE CHANGE IN THE RURAL ECONOMY OF EL AKBIA IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

In accordance with the logic inherent in a rural economic system adapted to the domestic social organization analyzed above, and based since Neolithic times on a combination of grain growing, horticulture and sylviculture, and stock raising, the peasants of El Akbia, when confronted with constant food shortage aggravated by the aforementioned factors - confiscation of land, demographic increase and new tax requirements - started widening the surface of cultivation by clearing off bushlands and plowing certain meadows that were traditionally used as pasture. The basic subsistence needs of the peasantry had been always expressed in terms of demand for grain. As a result of this shortsighted agrarian expansion, the vital multifunctional geographical zones represented by arable lands, pasturage, bushlands and forests, which form the basic ecological niche of this peasantry was gradually being undermined. In fact, the bushlands constituted an important component of the peasant ecosystem. They provided wood that was used both as raw material for building houses, fences around gardens, orchards and fields, and firewood. The pastures were equally necessary for the grazing of livestock, specifically during the wet season when the fields left fallow are grassless and muddy. This expansion of agriculture which was culturally induced turned out to be very detrimental to animal husbandry. It also provoked a rapid cyclical process of degeneration in the biophysical environment because this activity resulted in the disequilibrium of the ecological relationships underlying a natural peasant economy. In the 1930's and 1940's for instance, some peasant households increased their plowland twofold in less than ten years through the clearing-off process.

Indeed, an area of about 115 hectares, locally called Hayouna, situated on the western sloping hills and steep mountainsides of El Akbia, used to be covered with bushes marked by a few patches of grassy meadows utilized previously as common grazing grounds for all the peasants of the district. It was cleared after the 1920's and devoted to grain growing. By 1950 all the vegetation cover that had existed there previously had been obliterated. Today only very small spots covered with a few plants adapted to rocks and natural quarries are left uncleared. Prior to 1920 this section of the territory, although privately owned by several lineages who kept it in a state of indivision, was considered as a reserve area for both pasturage and a supply of wood for fire, construction, and erection of fences.

(1) Neville Barbour, ed., *A Survey of North West Africa (The Maghrib)* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 242.

Since this area consists of steep slopes of various kinds and is cross-cut by many streams running down to Oued Gharaf, as soon as the vegetation cover was removed the few inches of humus formed by the decay of organic material was rapidly washed away by the torrential rainfall of this Mediterranean region (1). These stream beds have been deepening and widening to the detriment of the surrounding new fields, to the extent that today only a very few flat plots of land are productive enough to warrant cultivation. In 1974 only a few scattered olive trees that were either grafted to the original wild ones, or planted, remained in the area.

El Haït and Aghaouar, two other major areas divided only by a deep stream-ravine, situated along the northern banks of Oued Gharaf and consisting of about 35 hectares, were cleared off by the inhabitants of village El Akbia in the twentieth century for grain cultivation. However, from an agronomic vantage point agriculture and sparse olive plantations have been more successful in certain flat spots. In the sloping parts the same erosional processes have been at work. Similarly the village of Amdij and the hamlet of Ghardiba expanded agriculture over three other sections along the river : Aliouish (a local saint), Azrika, and Zardaz, constituting altogether about 45 hectares. The inhabitants of Benihai also cleared off some remaining vegetation belts, whose width is unknown, that had existed on their territory prior to the 1930's.

In the short run, the agricultural yields of these areas increased, but in the long run the extension of grain growing over marginal unfertile clearings, mountain slopes and rugged hillsides to the detriment of grazing grounds and wood supplies, resulted in the decline of both livestock and agricultural yields because of erosion. As for those impoverished peasant households which did not possess bushlands to clear off, they simply interrupted the age-old system based on biannual agriculture. The persistent overuse of an already light soil preventing the process of regeneration, accelerated the impoverishment of the cultivated surface.

Besides the aforementioned reasons for devegetation, the clearing of bushlands for charcoal making has become a generalized activity since the 1930's. Charcoal making involves unearthing roots of certain species of plants, especially lentisk (*Pistacia lentiscus*), which are left on the ground for a few days to dry out, then transported to a specially made platform close to a stream or spring where they are piled carefully and covered with diss grass. The pile is then covered with dirt except for a hole on top through which the fire is set. Once the fire penetrates the core of the pile, the top hole is covered with dirt so that the fire burns slowly inside, producing heavy smoke. About 13 hours later, when the smoke declines markedly, the dirt is shoveled off quickly beginning at the top and water is sprinkled immediately over the cleared areas so that flames will not consume the charcoal as it becomes exposed to air. Once the fire has been entirely extinguished the pieces of charcoal are sorted individually in order to determine if they are well burned. Finally, the pieces not well burned are reprocessed in a smaller pile.

When the charcoal is dry it is loaded into special bags and carried on a donkey or mule to Mila, situated about 27 kilometers southwest of the *douar*, to be sold to the city dwellers. Two sacks were sold for 250 to 600 old francs in the 1940's and early 1950's. (In those days a *saa*, weighing between 106 and 120 kilograms, of wheat cost up to 16,000 old francs).

Charcoal making was devastating to the vegetation cover because it made use of the roots of plants, ruling out any possibility of regeneration. According to an old former charcoal maker, between 1945 and 1948 the village of El Akbia alone had 20 people who were living willy-nilly from this activity. This economic activity was induced by the growing landlessness of the impoverished peasants. This informant stated :

In those days there were still plenty of roots. You could unearth them from any place, regardless of who owned it. I could extract roots from any place, I was able to unearth the equivalent of four sacks of charcoal per day. Now the roots have become rare. We indulged in this activity because there was no other means of earning our living.

It is important to note that most former charcoal makers became migrant wage laborers, like this informant who has been working in St. Louis, France since 1951.

As a result, most of the vegetation patches and belts along streams and rivers are completely denuded today. Indeed, prior to 1930 various plants existed along the shores of the basins of rivers and streams which protected the surrounding fields from the devastation erosion of the soil. Only herds of goats grazed there occasionally during the winter and early spring period. However, with the clearance of major brushlands, discussed above, which was caused by various interrelated factors — demographic, colonial and ecological — the growing population turned to these alluvial vegetation belts for firewood and charcoal making for the market. The end result was not only the eradication of plants but also, and specifically, the onset of a severe ecological crisis in the scientific sense of the term.

The denuding of the banks of streams and rivers resulted in the destruction of roots of plants which used to protect the soils situated in the vicinity of the basins and beds of water courses. Henceforth the surrounding landscapes were exposed to devastating erosional forces which accelerated both ecological deterioration and soil depletion to the extent that the productivity of cereals and the growth of grasses declined drastically. This state of affairs led to both overplowing and overgrazing of arable lands, two activities that will render even the most fertile soils barren wastes. The end result was a generalized continual decrease in agricultural yields and livestock. Table 1 illustrates the sharp decline of animal husbandry by the 1940's and 1950's in El Akbia.

TABLE 1
FLUCTUATION IN THE NUMBER OF LIVESTOCK
IN THE DOUAR BETWEEN 1939 and 1955

	Sheep		Goats		Mules		Donkeys		Cattle	
	Total	Pct. +/-	Total	Pct. +/-	Total	Pct. +/-	Total	Pct. +/-	Total	Pct. +/-
1939	762		1670						455	
1941	711	- 6.7	1748	+ 9.3	52		32		304	- 33.2
1943					36	- 30.8	26	- 18.8	278	- 8.6
1946	650	- 8.6	1353	- 22.6	55	+ 25.0	30	+ 15.4	320	+ 15.1
1947	1050	+ 61.5	1800	+ 33.0	64	+ 16.4	37	+ 23.3	512	+ 60.9
1949	465	- 55.7	734	- 59.2	63	- 1.6	12	- 67.6	325	- 36.5
1950	887	+ 92.5	825	+ 12.4	62	- 1.6	18	+ 50.0	404	+ 24.3
1951	465	- 47.6	1100	+ 33.3	81	+ 31.0	18	-	358	- 11.4
1952	515	+ 10.8	829	- 24.6	64	- 20.1	30	+ 66.6	312	- 12.8
1953	466	+ 9.5	734	- 11.5	63	- 1.6	12	- 60.0	325	+ 4.2
1954	420	+ 9.9	742	+ 1.1	60	- 4.8	10	- 16.6	285	- 12.3
1955	295	- 29.8	570	- 23.2	35	- 41.7	10	-	240	- 15.8

Source : Archives de la Sous-Préfecture d'El Milia (ASM).

From a rural economic vantage point, animal husbandry is far more profitable and adapted to this sloping semi-arid zone than is grain growing. Economically (and the peasants knew this fact too well), animal husbandry should not have been undermined by the expansion of agriculture. However, when a *fellah* became uncertain of his basic sources of livelihood, he always tended to indulge in unprofitable activity. As Bourdieu and Sayad put it, « the more the present is escaping from his control, the more he tries to get hold of it » (1).

(1) Bourdieu and Sayad, *Le Déracinement*, p. 17.

Although agricultural expansion, analyzed above, has certainly widened the land surface cultivated, total production and per capita income have not increased commensurately. Indeed, population growth was outrunning any attempts to increase the productive capacity of the economy of the *douar* within the traditional techno-economic framework.

It must be reiterated at this point that the penetration of colonialism resulted not only in the confiscation of one-third of the territory of the Beni Kaïd, but also in new taxes extorted in cash. Colonialism, by pressuring the population in seizing part of its territory and increasing taxation, forced these peasants to overexploit their remaining plots which ushered in the destruction of the ecological system underlying their agricultural, silvicultural and animal production. The deterioration of this ecological system was caused by colonial economic and demographic factors which compelled the peasants to overactivate their traditional techno-economic mechanisms in order to resolve their growing crisis. However, this careless utilization of the techno-economic structure undermined the ecological structure which backfired in the long run. In an instance of dialectical interrelation between man, nature and culture, an initial crisis generated a chain reaction of systemic feedback whereby economic and demographic crisis brought about by colonialism which itself was stimulated by the rise of capitalism in Europe, triggered an ecological imbalance that accelerated the disintegration of the traditional way of life of these Algerian rural communities. As a result a degenerative process led to the radical alteration of both the environment and socioeconomic organization of the population of this district. Thus, a multiplicity of functionally and causally interconnected factors culminated in the disintegration of the traditional peasant ecosystem.

Since the frontier of agricultural extension was being closed for many families, the only available occupation within the traditional rural economic framework for the growing number of peasant households that had been reduced to a state of landlessness was sharecropping, known locally as *khammassat*. This is an ancient socioeconomic mechanism designed to allow the landless peasants to eke out their livelihood within a given community. When an adult male peasant became landless he decided to accept a position as a *khammas* (working for one fifth). He sought a contractor, known as a *fellah*, who would furnish him with land, the necessary tools, seeds and draft animals for the cultivation of the soil. In exchange for his labor the sharecropper received one-fifth of the total yield. Actually, this arrangement resulted in the pooling of the labor force of the two families, the *khammas* and his wife, and the *fellah* and his wife, daughters and sons, and even brothers and their wives if it was still a joint or extended family. The reason for this situation can be explained only by the fact that agriculture in such a rugged district required labor intensive activity.

This arrangement was also undertaken by newly established households who, for some reason, fissioned off from an extended or joint family which remained headed by the patriarch and his wife ; a condition that ruled out any claim to land as long as the father was alive. Consequently, the only feasible means for the sons to earn their livelihood was to sharecrop. However, in many cases this

was a temporary solution. Usually upon the death of the patriarch the son received his share of the land. But with the drastically increasing land scarcity, this source of income in the *douar* shrank too.

Before proceeding to analyze the emergence of new patterns of subsistence in El Akbia after the 1920's the nature of peasant work and labor and how they affected the daily lives of the members of peasant households as productive units should be described. The purpose will be to show how the rhythm of work in Algerian traditional rural communities is geared to the rotating seasonal cycles.

DAILY LIFE, SEASONS, AND WORK AND LABOR IN EL AKBIA

The annual agricultural work of a peasant family starts in about the beginning of the autumn with the clearing of wild bushes which have grown in the fields during the previous year of fallowing. This task is performed exclusively by adult males. The laborers wake up at about 4 AM. If they practice Muslim prayers they go either to a spring or a stream to perform their ablutions and come back to the house to pray. If they are not practicing Muslims they simply go to wash. While the men are out, one of the women of the family usually heats some leftover couscous for breakfast. Then they take their working tools, a hoe and an ax, and proceed to their fields where they work until 10 or 11 AM depending on the temperature of the day. Then the laborers return home to have their lunch which consists of *kisra* (1) with oil, milk, or just water. After the midday siesta, around 1 : 30 PM, most adult males pick up some tools and go to cut wood from the bushes or forest for cooking food and heating the house during the winter. At around 5 PM this activity is given up and both the adult working males and the shepherds go home. At sunset all members of the family gather in the home after a day's work. They all have dinner at the same time right after sunset, but the males eat together from one dish and the females and children eat from another.

(1) *Kisra* is a traditional bread made of a mixture of wheat and barley.

The leftover couscous is saved for the next morning's breakfast. The couscous called locally *barbousha*, consumed daily by the Algerian mountain peasants, is a mixture of wheat and barley ; its sauce is prepared with water, salt, chick peas or lima beans, and other seasonal vegetables. After dinner all family members congregate in the house to discuss the events of the day and the future work prospects, family and livestock affairs. Around 9 PM everybody goes to sleep. In former days there was not a single mattress in the entire district. The inhabitants used special mats manufactured either of diss or esparto grass, and covered themselves during the cool season with wool blankets woven locally by the women. Many peasants owned only one set of clothes at a time, and since most of them possessed no special night clothes, they were forced to keep them on day and night. Therefore they were all infested with fleas.

By the beginning of October the plowing of the soil starts. Every *jabda*, a plow pulled by two animals, required the labor of at least two adult males, one to hold the handle of the plow and drive the oxen, and another to work behind with a hoe, turning over the soil missed by the plowshare. By the end of January the plowing season for wheat and barley ends.

The olive harvest begins around the first of December each year. The picking of olives is a labor intensive activity. All members of the family are mobilized, including the children. During the olive harvest the members of every household are required to start working at about 3 AM. While the men and children are getting ready, the women are cooking the *kisra*. From the beginning of the olive harvest to the beginning of April the lunch is eaten in the morning. After this the family work team leaves the house carrying all their blankets, carpets, and other

necessary tools and sacks. Upon arriving at the olive trees to be worked that day, they start sweeping under them. After wooden fences are erected the blankets, carpets and covers are hung on them in such a way as to collect the falling olives. Women and children remain on the ground and the men take special long clubs or sticks made of pomogranate branches and climb the trees to sweep the branches and force the olives to fall to the ground. There are two types of these sticks : a short one of about one meter in length and a long one of two to three meters. The women and children pick up the fallen olives with their hands. When the men finish their work on the trees they come to help the family pick up the olives. They put them in sacks to be carried home on mules or donkeys. This daily work is usually terminated at about 4 PM. One couple with about three children can hardly finish one olive tree per day. According to a well-experience informant the olive harvest is one of the most tiring periods of the year for a family.

We became so worn out because we weren't very well fed and the work was very hard. The picking is done almost olive by olive if the trees are located on the slopes. We went back home very exhausted. Upon arrival at home the women had to make dinner : we men gathered around a fire and waited for the food to get ready. We dined around 7 : 30 PM and fell asleep like donkeys in the dust, to rest for the next day's labor.

But once all the olives are collected from the trees and carried to the house the oil processing is performed exclusively by women. A portion of the olives are ground raw to produce a milder form of oil called locally, *boumgergub*. The rest is boiled in a large tub and stored in a specially built place called *ahjiz*. The grinding is done with two large stones, one flat and the other like a roller pushed back and forth by a woman holding it at each end ; another woman feeds the grinding stones by continually throwing olives between them. The ground olives are put in a vat where someone presses them with their feet for two to three hours. The women then pack it against the side of the vat so that during the night the oil will drain to the bottom. In the morning the oil is dipped out, then the process of pressing with the feet is repeated. The smashed olives are carried by the women to a well dug near a stream which has been filled with water. The olives are poured into the hole. They stir the water with sticks forcing the oil to rise to the surface where it is collected and put into a vessel. The oil which contains olive skins must be boiled to remove the water and is then stored. The duration of this work depends on the amount of olives, usually running from ten to forty days.

While women are processing oil at home men are plowing the fields and the children are tending the livestock. The family laborers or the *khammas* wake up at 3 AM during the entire plowing period. They have lunch which consists only of *kisra* dipped in oil. They take a piece of bread and a few oranges for a midday snack. They take a quarter of a *saa* of seed on a mule and leave for the fields. Usually the field work ends after 3 PM. The oxen are untied and driven to a nearby meadow to graze under the supervision of a shepherd who brings them home at sunset. When the *fellah* or *khammas* goes home he has to prepare some straw for the mule and oxen to feed on during the night. When these animals are brought to the house by the shepherd they are tied by their legs to the pillars holding the mangers for cattle and mules or donkeys.

The traditional peasant houses are constructed by laying two parallel rows of stones or sun-dried mud cemented together with clay. They are surmounted by three main beams of oak or ash which are covered with tiles and ash branches or with a thatch of wild reed-like grass called *diss*. Usually every house consists of only one room measuring eight to twelve meters long by four to six meters wide. The walls are from three to four meters in height and from forty to seventy centimeters thick. It is divided into two parts by a low wall ; one-half, called locally

el kana, serves as the stable for the cattle and the mules or donkeys. The other, called *el hala*, is a living space for the family. A loft is erected above the stable constructed of planks and connected to the living quarter by a ladder. Against the wall of the *hala* is a storage area called *dakan*. Huge urns as high as the ceiling, of unfired earthenware, are built there for the storage of wheat, barley, chick peas and lima beans. Beside the urns are small platforms upon which the kitchen utensils, an oil lamp, the pan for frying griddle cakes and the other soot-blackened pots of terra cotta are kept.

Beneath the *dakan* in the living quarter is the hearth, *kanun*, dug out at ground level. It is there too that the ground covered with mats serves as a bed for the inhabitants. Every household possesses a hand mill which occupies one corner of the *hala*. The water jugs are placed against the wall of the *dakan*. The women usually set their weaving looms near the wall of the living quarters. They scour, card, spin and weave the wool. They make men's wool clothes, *kashabaya*, saddle cloths, and blankets decorated with regular designs in black, relieved with touches of red and yellow. They also fire and decorate pieces of pottery of varying sizes. This traditional peasant house usually has two doors that provide entry for both people and animals, one opens onto the inner courtyard and the other onto the orchard or garden. It also has at least two small windows which serve to let out the smoke and provide light specifically to the loft. Beside the house, El Akbi peasants construct a *gourbi* or two usually attached to it. This is a hut with walls either of uncemented stones or of clay, or in most cases with pieces of wood and tree branches, covered with thatch or diss. It is usually used as a cooking place and as a stable for goats and sheep, as well as a place where agricultural implements are kept.

The plowing period, depending on weather conditions, may last two months. Usually the cultivation of the soil is finished around the end of January. The *fellahs* and *khammas* rest for about one month and a half. However, in the beginning of spring, plowing for the spring crops such as chick peas and lima beans starts again. For chick peas the field is plowed once, then after fifteen to twenty days the seeds are sown and the soil turned over with a plow again.

When the plowing is finished, fences around the fields, orchards and gardens are erected by the men to prevent the livestock from damaging the crops and fruit trees. In the early spring men and women begin weeding the fields of wheat and barley. Women finish processing the olives, they start collecting and carrying bundles of wood either on their backs or on their heads, to the house to be used for fire. They also help men hoe the sloping fields that cannot be reached by the ox-drawn plow. At the end of the weeding period women start working on their annual garden plots for domestic use. The men begin haymaking and preparing the threshing floors for the harvest. After raking the grass from the threshing platform a strong fence is erected around it.

The early harvest of barley, called *maramaz*, begins sometime in June. The men harvest some wet barley in the fields. If it is close to the houses the women transport it on their backs to the threshing floors, otherwise the men take it on mule-back. The women then proceed to thresh it with big sticks or clubs. They pass it through a filter to separate it from the straw. The grain is steamed over a pot. Then dried in the sun and ground in a domestic handmill called a *mathna*. The flour is processed and stored for use in the winter. This barley cereal is simply cooked or prepared with hot water, oil and salt, and used as a handy instant food during hard times.

The summer harvest is begun by reaping lima beans, done by men, women and children using only their hands. The bushes are gathered in bundles and left to dry on the ground for a few days, after which they will be carried to the threshing floor in a net on the back of mules or donkeys. The lima beans are threshed immediately and stored. This is followed by the barley harvest. Barley, like wheat, is reaped by men using sickles. Women's job is to follow behind picking up the pods which fall to the ground. It is also gathered in larger bundles and transported to the threshing floor like the lima beans. By the time the barley harvest is completed the wheat becomes ripe for reaping. The same technique is used.

The summer harvest brings every member of the peasant household into the fields ; men, women, children, and even livestock usually work in the fields beginning in the early morning at one and a half hours before sunrise. The daily pattern of food consumption changes sometime in May. This day is celebrated as a feast. Thenceforth the shepherds wake up at about 4 AM, have breakfast, and take the livestock to graze in the pastures. Between 9 : 30 and 10 AM when the sun becomes hot, they drive their animals back to the house to be milked and rest until about 1 : 30 AM when they are let out to graze in the nearby pastures until sunset. As for the members forming family productive teams, they start having their lunch at about 11 AM. This pattern will go on until sometime in October when the lunch time is again switched to early morning because the day becomes short and cool. This shift in the schedule of consumption is thus geared to the changing seasons. It allows the family laborers to have a siesta at noon permitting them to recuperate from the morning work.

The threshing floors are divided into three areas : a *tarba* or flattened platform for the actual process of threshing ; beside this core area there are two sloping platforms called *hallas*, used for piling wheat on one side and barley on the other. The threshing is not done until all the harvest is completed and the crops gathered on the threshing floor. A wooden pillar is erected in the middle of the *tarba* and the harvest spread over the threshing floor. The mules or horses are tied in a row to the pillar and a *khammas* or a *fellab* uses a long stick to drive these animals as fast as possible around the pillar to smash the straw and separate the grain. The threshing floors vary in size from six to ten meters in diameter. They are always situated in an exposed area, and when the mixture of grain, clay, and dung is scooped up from the floor with shovels and thrown into the air the wind carries away the chaff. The grain is taken home to be stored in huge urns either inside or outside the houses. The chaff is covered with diss in the side of the threshing floor to be fed to the animals in winter.

In order to be consumed, the grains of wheat and barley are usually mixed, cleaned of dust and gravel, and carried to a hydraulic mill to be ground. The mill owner takes about one-tenth of the grain for his services. This hydraulic mill is moved by a waterfall turning a paddle wheel which is connected to the upper of two millstones, the lower remaining stationary. The flour is returned to the houses to be refined by women and stored for use.

Since a *fellab* owns only one mule, exchanges of mules between the peasant families and turns are arranged so that everyone would be able to use at least three mules on the day of threshing. Interfamilial cooperation for harvesting and for threshing is organized at the village level during this period. One well-known form of cooperation in rural Algeria is the *tuiza* for the harvest of wheat and barley. A *tuiza* is organized by a *fellab* who feels that his family is behind in the summer harvest due either to a large agricultural yield or sickness in the family. He sets a day and invites every family to provide an able-bodied adult male to join *tuiza*

or village cooperative teamwork to harvest for one day. Every *tuiza* takes the form of a feast. In working side by side the men compete with each other to test their individual ability to harvest, singing special folk songs for the occasion. Breakfast is carried to the working men in the fields. The day culminates in a big feast in the house of the organizer of the *tuiza*. Every sort of cooperative work among this peasantry is governed by Marshall Sahlín's « balanced reciprocity » principle. Any family who sends a man to another family's *tuiza* would automatically expect the latter to reciprocate by sending a man, upon formal invitation, to the former's subsequent *tuiza*. Failure to do so would result in the invocation of the « negative reciprocity » principle, the threat of which always keeps the balanced reciprocity principle permanently operative.

After the summer harvest is over a certain quantity of grain is sold in the local rural markets by most peasant families in order to pay their taxes and debts, and to buy clothes, shoes and other household tools and utensils, and sometimes for adding to the sum of money saved for bride wealth. Indeed, the period of wedding celebration immediately follows this annual harvest.

It should be clear by now that peasant work patterns constitute part and parcel of the traditional subsistence system. In rural communities work is primarily motivated by the desire to satisfy basic human needs. It is considered a collective domestic task inseparable from the other elements of social life. It is performed as a duty to others. Peasant work is accompanied by religious ritual and folksongs which intensify the enjoyment of social relationships and enrich them. In this respect, work is an integral part of domestic life and is not distinguished from leisure. The product created by peasant labor is not alienated from the producers. Even the *khammas* is considered as a fellow associate rather than as a laborer. He is not paid daily or monthly wages but shares one-fifth of the yield. Furthermore, the peasant social organization of production is based on the principle that every member of the household would provide work in accordance with his or her abilities and it is done in groups of kinsmen. Sometimes the whole village works together at large projects such as building or repairing a mosque, a road, or a house, or gathering in the harvest. Every individual works at his or her own pace. No one is constrained to speed up production. Finally, this work is not measured in time units as in modern industrial societies but is rather geared to seasonal cycles.

The peasant mode of production or way of life, though characterized in its general features by a use-value economic principle, was forced institutionally to develop increasing structural ties with the colonial economy based on and geared to exchange-value. At the micro-level of this mode of production were the peasant households which formed the independent productive units, owning their basic means of production : houses, land, livestock and tools. However, at the macro level the capitalist mode of production of a colonial type became predominant. The gradual multivarious encroachment — political fiscal and economic — of the latter on the former resulted in the emergence of new forms and patterns of subsistence.

The impoverishment of this rural population was accompanied by an increasing demand for wage labor both in Algeria and France, detracting both landless individuals from sharecropping and the sons of impoverished *fellahs* from the traditional peasant pattern of subsistence.

Due undoubtedly to the pressures discussed above, a new pattern of subsistence emerged in El Akbia, petty trading. An increasing number of people became peddlars of some sort. For analytical purposes these petty merchants can be

divided into village shopkeepers and peddlars. The local shopkeepers may be further isolated into two groups specializing in different branches of commerce : cloth merchant-tailors, and grocers. The former purchased from Constantine and occasionally from El Milia, semi-wholesale, various bundles of cloth, to be either processed for the local market or tailored on specific orders of the villagers. This business boomed during the wedding season, the last month of summer and through the fall. By 1950 there were seven merchant tailors. They constituted a genuine class of commercial middlemen who mediated between the *douar* and the regional marketing networks which were tied into the international market.

The grocery owners imported into the *douar* the basic modern products such as soap, coffee, sugar, needles and thread, tobacco, cigarettes, hardware and all sorts of gadgets to be sold to the villagers. They also bought from the villagers various agricultural products to be carried to the regional markets for sale. In 1953 there were six grocers of this kind, four in El Akbia, one in Amdij, and one in Benihai. In addition to this, there were, and still are, numerous seasonal peddlars whose trading activities consisted of dealing in poultry, eggs, and livestock, as well as buying from the inhabitants such products as figs, grapes, apples, plums, apricots and lemons, before they were harvested ; these were picked by the dealers themselves and shipped in most cases to Constantine, or to the regional markets where they were sold for profit. Trading activities of this sort became widespread in the district. However, it is perceived by the inhabitants as an economic pursuit of the last resort. Consequently, in the long run, the only feasible alternative within the colonial socioeconomic scheme of things became wage labor either on a seasonal or permanent basis to which innumerable paupers turned eagerly. This involved, of course, migration, which constituted a decisive break with the peasant way of living.

When the socioeconomic conditions of this hard-pressed social stratum became unbearable, it tried to break a vicious circle into which the heads of these peasant families saw their households sinking ever deeper ; they decided to borrow an odd sum of money to buy either a few bushels of grain and some basic clothing for their wives and children. They thought that they could pay back their contracted debts at the end of the annual harvest. However, the diminishing returns of their agricultural production never allowed them to do so. Thus, the exploitative nature of the credit mechanism resulted in the acceleration of the total ruin of the poorer peasants. In order to prevent outright seizure of their houses and necessary belongings, these impoverished *fellahin* had not other economic alternative than proletarianization.

INTERNAL MIGRATORY MOVEMENTS

One of the earliest major internal movements of migration was initiated in the 1920's by seasonal agricultural laborers. This movement led many peasant-proletarians from the *douar* to the high agricultural plateaus of the Constantine region where they sought employment as *hassada*, harvesters. These temporary migrant workers constituted a special labor force possessing its own organizational characteristics. They had to provide their own basic tools of production : a sickle and a *tabnta*, a protective apron and two covering sleeves made of sheep or goat skin. At the beginning of the harvest season temporary migrant laborers left their respective *douars* for Constantine city where they formed work-teams of various sizes before joining a sort of labor marketplace situated in the Rue de bienfait, where they huddled to be hired by French or Algerian landlords in need of their services. The landlords bargained with the harvesters regarding their wages and their living conditions. As a former harvester who now works and lives with his family in Mulhouse, France, put it :

... some said to us, « we offer you such and such amount of money per day plus bread and milk » ; others said, « no milk with bread, but we'll pay more per day ». Once we agreed with a landlord on our daily wages and whether we would have milk or higher daily wages he advanced us some cash money, called *masbrouta*, or condition, varying between 3000 and 5000 old francs for our pocket money. The landlord then collected our sickles which he kept with him as a guarantee. He gave us his name and explained how to get to his house, then left.

The work-team shared equally this advanced sum of money among themselves. About 3 PM they headed for the destination indicated by the landlord. Upon arriving they were usually show some grass or straw in the fields and given back their sickles. At sunset they carried bundles of grass or straw to the threshing platform to sleep on. « At night we were fed couscous, prepared with oil and chick peas. For our breakfast we were provided with some pieces of bread or leftover couscous. Our midday meal consisted usually of bread and milk or other combination which varied from day to day ».

The work schedule was geared to the sun. The agricultural laborers began harvesting before sunrise and continued until around 11 AM. They lunched and rested for about two hours. In the afternoon they went back to the fields where they worked until sunset. Since these laborers were hired on a daily basis they were supervised, usually from horseback, either by the landlord himself or his *wukaf*, manager, who « watched us all day long in order to make sure that the pace of work would continue as expected ». During the 1940's they were paid between 150 and 300 old francs per day.

« When we finished harvesting his fields, the landlord gave us a big feast ». On this occasion the food prepared consisted of wholewheat couscous served with meat and vegetables. Afterwards the work-team moved to harvest the fields of another landlord in the same area. Since the wheat and barley began to ripen first in the lowlands and then gradually spread upward to high plateaus and uplands, these agricultural laborers followed the annual ripening cycle. In this fashion they could extend their seasonal work days from thirty to fifty per summer.

At the end of the harvest season the temporary agricultural laborers went back to Constantine city where they bought some clothing for their wives and children or relatives, a few kilos of dates, soap, coffee, sugar, etc.; then they took the bus to return to their respective home villages. This occupation was taken even by the sons of modestly landed *fellahin*. The purpose, of course, was to earn some badly needed cash for the payment of taxes, bride wealth, or the purchase of other necessary products from the market, which required money. However, with the introduction and spread of mechanized harvesters on the agricultural macrofundia situated on the high plateaus and plains of Constantine and Setif, this kind of employment opportunity declined.

The other sources of employment that attracted numerous laborers from Douar El Akbia were the French Office of Public Works for the construction of roads, and the mining company of Sidi Marouf and Tissimiran. In constructing the Route Nationale number 12 which connects Djidjelli and Constantine via El Milia, the colonial Office of Public Works employed a certain number of peasant-proletarians during the first decades of the twentieth century. There are no statistics regarding the amount of this manpower, but many older men were able to relate to me their work experiences on this road which was, as noted above, constructed along Oued El Kebir.

The mining company of Sidi Marouf and Tissimiran began between the two World Wars to extract iron ore from two different sites situated on Douar Yahmiden. A large number of laborers of El Akbia were employed both as miners

and in road construction. A railway for the transportation of minerals had to be constructed between Sidi Marouf and the harbor of Djidjelli along Oued El Kebir. Many people are reported to have worked in the construction of this railway ; one of them, Bournane, was killed in a work accident there. Unfortunately, no official employment statistics are to be found. In addition to this, both the French state and the private companies which were granted large concessions of cork oak expropriated from the *douar* employed a few peasants during the late summer either to harvest or to transport on their mules, the cork destined for industrial use both in Algeria and France. However, the removal of cork from the trees occurred irregularly and sometimes only about once every three years.

After 1930 the coastal city of Skikda (Philippeville) became one of the most important centers of gravitation and because of its agricultural propensity and active colonial harbor, it continued to attract an increasing number of seasonal agricultural and industrial laborers up to 1962. Some of them even managed to secure permanent jobs there (but the majority of these migrants worked on a seasonal basis). The migratory movement was initiated in about 1927 by Rabih Ben Mallam, a former miner of the company of Sidi Marouf and Tissimiran. When its site at Boujoudoune was closed he was laid off. So he migrated to the mine of El Kouif where he worked also as a miner for a few years. When he quit this mining company he moved to Skikda where he was followed by his younger brother Amar. Rabih told me in 1974 :

I worked at the mine of Boujoudoune for a while ; when it was closed I went to the mine of El Kouif where I worked for some years and then I got into a fight with the French accountant who stole some of my hours of pay. As a result I was fired. At that time I decided to go to Skikda where I worked for about 25 years, which ended when I had a work accident. I came back to rest in the *douar*. When I recovered I was hired as a miner in the site of Tasmiran with my brothers Amar and Mohammed. We worked there for four years until the War of National Liberation put an end to the working of the mine.

The father of these three miner brothers had become landless, so they inherited only an unirrigable plot of land upon which their houses were built. When Rabih and Amar migrated to Skikda they were followed by innumerable migrant laborers from Douar El Akbia in the successive years. Some migrants went to « earn the bread » for their families left resourceless in the *douar* ; other migrated in order to be able to pay taxes or debts that had to be paid in cash. « Before I was drafted into the French army in 1942, I was working in Skikda with eight other persons from our *douar*. The reason for which I migrated and left my wife behind was the fact that I could not pay my taxes », said an informant who has been working in France since 1948. An old sick man wrapped in traditional ragged clothes and looking so forlorn, after complaining worriedly about the fact that he could not find a bride for his feeble son, informed me as follows :

In Skikda we worked for Spadaro in his quarry. When he bought a forest we cleared it off for him. Amar Ben Mallam was our foreman. There were many, many people who worked there. We sought employment there because of economic want. I went also to work in the port of Djidjelli for the mining company. I worked for four years in the construction of its railway and for many years more as a miner in Sidi Marouf. If the government opens this mine I will try to work as a miner again.

This old man in his fifties was just deluding himself ; his lungs are completely damaged and while he was reminiscing about his past work experiences he kept coughing and spitting. His tile-roofed house was destroyed by the French army in 1957 and he has been unable to rebuild it since 1962 when he was released with the rest of the *douar* population from the *camp de regroupement*. Today he is living with his wife and children in a hut surrounded by mud. In any case, most

migrants who are working today in France worked in the past as recurrent migrant laborers in Skikda.

Three other sources of employment of unequal importance simultaneously pulled an increasing number of migrant laborers from Douar El Akbia : Constantine, Annaba (Bone) and Algiers. Being economically stagnant, Constantine did not, after the 1920's attract many migrant workers despite its proximity, other than a few porters, petty traders, peddlars and some young men employed in domestic service as kitchen help by wealthy European families. Moreover, during the War of National Liberation, Constantine received a large number of dislocated families who did not deem it necessary to return to the *douar* after 1962. For instance, the village of Amdij contains today only 28 households because 44 families are living in the suburbs of Constantine.

In the 1940's Annaba attracted many people from the *douar*. It was there that a migrant from Amdij managed, during the Second World War, to exploit a quarry for commercial purposes. This short-lived enterprise specialized in the extraction of gravel from a river bed to be sold to building entrepreneurs and the Office of Public Works. Upon securing the site and the permit to extract gravel, he went back to the *douar* to recruit cheap manpower or, as he expressed it, to do favors for some village friends. This former entrepreneur has been working in France since 1951. When I asked him to describe his old industrial venture, he replied abruptly :

Yes, I was in Annaba during the Second World War, when the major gravel pit of that city was submerged by a sea flood. A friend of mine, my future partner, from Douar Ouled Debbab asked me if I was interested in opening a worksite to extract gravel for industrial use from the bed of a river located in the out-skirts of the city. I then retorted, « It is a good idea but the only problem is, we don't have a permit which is required for any commercial extraction ». He replied, « I have it ; it was delivered to me by the *sous-préfecture* last week ; if you are seriously interested we can start extracting gravel any day we want ». I agreed and left immediately for the *douar* to recruit five workers, among them my brother, Amar.

This information was confirmed in Algeria. It may be significant to note that all these five migrant workers who were actually recruited in Douar El Akbia were students of the local Koranic schools. Traditionally they were trained to become teachers in the rural districts.

The techniques of production used in the extraction of gravel were rudimentary but labor intensive. The two partner-entrepreneurs hired the laborers not only to dig the gravel from the river, but also to transport it on their backs in baskets up to the paved road. « We were feeding them, however », said Mohammed, one of the two employers. « In order to force them to work faster we gave piece work per meter of the gravel extracted and carried to the road ». When this venture came to an end, all the migrant workers brought from El Akbia went to Algiers where only one of them succeeded in becoming a skilled worker, a baker. The others indulged in various odd jobs, including black-marketing in the harbor of Algiers, an illegal commercial activity called locally by the English term « business ».

Prior to the arrival of these former students of the Koranic scholars of El Akbia, three other young men from this *douar* had preceded them to Algiers. Among them were two brothers, the sons of a cloth merchant-tailor from the village of Benihai ; they became highly proficient and successful modern tailors and established themselves permanently in Algiers. The third migrant worked as a peddler and black-marketeer. By the 1950's the city of Algiers had become one of the most significant centers, second only to eastern France, where many Akbis are working as recurrent migrant laborers.

TRANS-MEDITERRANEAN MIGRATION BEFORE 1950

(1) The following information is based on interviews with old migrant workers and checked with the French official census for the 1940.

El Akbis' trans-Mediterranean migration began as a result of a chance occurrence at the beginning of 1947 (1). This very significant migratory network was initiated by a former shepherd, Abdelrahman, the eldest son of seven children of a disinherited father. One day he felt he had had enough of being an ill-fed and badly clothed shepherd. He left the goats in the bushes and escaped to Skikda to look for work. But when two weeks had passed and he still had not found any work he walked to Constantine and there enlisted in the French army for four years. After one year of military training in Algeria he was transferred to France in 1938. A few months later the Second World War broke out. His regiment was at the front defending France. The « drôle de guerre » turned into a debacle and Abdelrahman was made prisoner by the Germans.

After about two years in German prison camps, he managed to escape and was immediately reintegrated into the ranks of the Free French Forces. His regiment made its way back to Germany. In 1945 he was released and sent back to the *douar* « to chase the flies off my face », to use his own expression. He tried working for one year as a *khammas*, but the returns on agriculture were so low that his *fellah* did not break even. So after the harvest of 1946, Abdelrahman had « had enough again with life in the miserable *douar* » ; he went to Skikda in search of employment as a wage laborer. One day while walking, he came across a man recruiting Algerian manpower for some French firms which were reconstructing the war-ravaged French economy, its urban centers and railroads ; he signed up without hesitation because he was told that he would be sent to work in Alsace where he had spent some time as a soldier. A few days later Abdelrahman embarked on a boat for France where he worked in Mulhouse for eighteen months in railroad construction, from the fall of 1946 to around May or June 1948. During this period Abdelrahman managed to send remittances to his father who started investing in livestock and agriculture. He bought a mule, an ox, and two or three plots of land for the purpose of cultivating more land for his large family. He also built a bigger tile-roofed house. It turned out that Abdelrahman won most of this money from gambling rather than from his minimal wages. Without gambling he would not have been able to save that sum of money at all. But he kept this fact to himself.

In the summer of 1948, Abdelrahman came back to the *douar* with two big suitcases containing fine suits, brand new shirts and ties, etc. The paupers of El Akbia were astonished and intrigued. Besides this apparent success of the migrant returnee, Abdelrahman spread all sorts of tales about how wonderful life was in France in contrast to El Akbia ; how much money a simple unskilled worker could earn ; how free sexuality was in France, etc. In fact, Rabah, a second cousin of Abdelrahman remembered that the latter had inflated his first experience as a migrant laborer in France :

I was told by Abdelrahman the year before I migrated that there were plenty of jobs offered by factories as well as good wages and amusements. But when I came here I found that he had exaggerated tremendously. To start with, there was no housing. He also said that he worked in a fine textile factor, but it turned out that he had never set foot in one. He was employed as an unskilled laborer in the construction of the French railway system, which is one of the most strenuous tasks one can perform. He also boasted that he dated very beautiful girls while he was in France, including the daughter of the director of the factory. This was also a lie. Upon my arrival here I realized quickly that no beautiful French girl would go out with an Algerian worker unless he was well-dressed and educated. I think that the purpose of distorting reality is to create a gross and false image of his past experience. Actually, what Abdelrahman was telling is this ; « Look ! I'm better than you. You are here still scratching your fleas in the *douar* and I'm working in France ! You are still wrapped in ragged clothes and I am wearing a brand new shirt, tie, suit and shoes. And besides all this I have money in my pocket ».

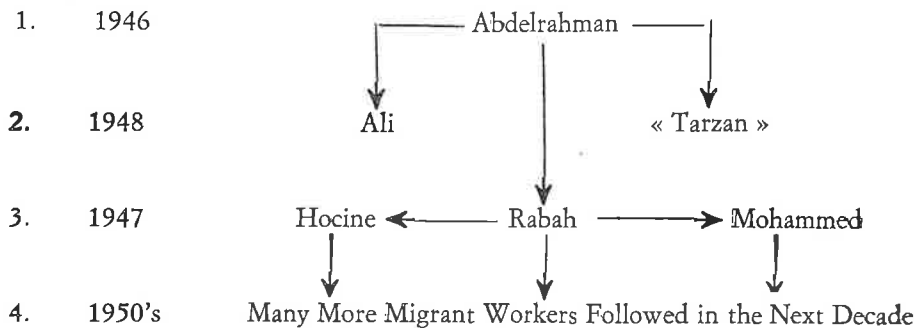
At any rate, when Abdelrahman returned to France after about two months many people wanted to go, and actually begged him to take them along. However, he took only two villagers, a relative of his and a single young man who pawned his land in order to be able to pay his trip and that of Abdelrahman, so that the latter would let him go with him to Alsace.

« Tarzan », one of the first three migrant laborers from El Akbia in France, explained to me in 1973 how and why he immigrated in 1948 :

When Abdelrahman came back to Algeria for the first time in 1948 I begged him to take me with him when he returned to France. I told him, « There is no employment here, I want to go with you to Alsace ». He said, « Alright then, Ali « Moul Askoush » wants to go too. He has money because he pawned his land and orchard to Mirouche ». On the eve of his return Abdelrahman told me, « I shall call you tomorrow morning before I leave ». But he sneaked out of the village early in the morning without calling me. When I woke up I called him and was told he had already left. I ran after him to El Milia. I had only 1500 old francs in my pocket. When I found him with Ali he smiled and asked me, « Oh, did you come ? » I replied, « Yes ». He then inquired whether I had any money. I retorted, « Not a single penny ». I was wearing only a *blouz*, a traditional peasant summer dress, and sandals. We took the bus to Skikda. When we arrived, we went to the center of town to get our boat tickets. I bought a used pair of trousers and a jacket with my 1500 francs which I did not tell them about until they had paid for my trip. In those days the fare to Mulhouse cost 6000 francs. We embarked for Marseille. It took about twenty-five hours to cross the sea. There were a lot of waves. When we arrived in Marseille, we went to the train station and took a train to Mulhouse. Upon arriving we went to the *caserne*, an old French military base, where the Arabs were living. This *caserne* was controlled by the Société Alsacienne. Abdelrahman knew some friends there from the Beni Khattab, they gave us some blankets and we slept on the floor. This place was not really suitable for housing ; it was a run-down building that had no heat and no running water. It was the winter and we were cold. As for employment we found it right away. The old workers told us about it.

In fact, according to the 1948 census, only three persons from Douar El Akbia were reported as migrants in France, contrasted with thirty-three who were working in certain Algerian urban centers as temporary migrant laborers. In 1949, that is, a few months after Abdelrahman returned to Alsace for the second time with the two fellow villagers, Rabah and two friends departed on a boat from Skikda with Abdelrahman's address in their pockets. Thus a chain reaction migratory movement was initiated that led an increasing number of peasants to the French industrial conurbations in the following decades.

Unfortunately for Rabah and his companions, prior to their arrival in Mulhouse, Abdelrahman and his two comrades had left the city because they could not find any employment. They went to Metz where they began a second important network or center for other migrant workers from Douar El Akbia. By doing so, they widened the spatial dimension of the receiving radius or point of immigration. Thus, the geographer's hypothesis of chain-reaction migration is very well corroborated by this case. The chain-reaction migration can be diagrammed as follows :



Once Abdelrahman made the decision to migrate and carried his first sojourn in France to its ultimate success as a migrant worker, he paved the way for other migrant laborers who followed in his footsteps. Consequently, once the socio-economic causes underlying this out-migration from the *douar* have been elucidated, both the push-pull theory and the chain-reaction migration made a great deal of sense as explanatory concepts. Indeed, it was one person alone who initiated the first trans-Mediterranean migratory current emanating from El Akbia. When a contact receiving point was established in Mulhouse by Abdelrahman, it became possible for many paupers from El Akbia, who up to that time had not dared to leave Algeria, to migrate without much risk and without previous knowledge of the country of immigration. The first migrant workers clustered in Mulhouse and Metz. Subsequent immigrant laborers were taken care of on their arrival ; they were housed, fed, and clothed, and assisted in their quest for jobs by those who had already established themselves in France. By 1953 the situation was as follows :

TABLE 2
ORIGIN AND DISTRIBUTION OF MIGRANT WORKERS
IN FRANCE IN 1953

Village	French Departement	City or town	Occupation/Qualification	Number of Migrant Workers	Pop. of <i>Mechta</i> of Origin
Benihai	Haut-Rhin	Mulhouse	Unskilled	7	
	Moselle	Seremange	»	7	
	Bouches-du-Rhone	Fonteville	»	1	
	Ardennes	Blagny	»	2	
	(unknown domicile)		»	17	
Total				34	501
El Akbia	Haut-Rhin	Montreux	Unskilled	9	
	Moselle	Thionville	»	13	
	(unknown domicile)		»	21	
Total				43	690
Amdij	Moselle	Hayange	Unskilled	14	
	Meurthe-et-Moselle	Toul	»	1	
	Nord	Denain	»	1	
	(unknown domicile)		»	16	
Total				32	437
Grand Total				109	1628

Source : A.S.M.

In less than seven years from the beginning of trans-Mediterranean migration, the number of migrant laborers from El Akbia had not only increased rapidly but had also spread over three French *departements* scattered over various geographical

receiving points. By this time 6.69 percent of the total population, representing about 33 percent of the active people of the *douar*, was working across the Mediterranean. It must be noted that three migrant workers were already isolated from the various nuclei of migrant laborers who were working in France at that time. However, it could be also that people whose domiciles in France were declared unknown, were living closer or in the same cities and towns as those presumably isolated workers. At any rate, the fact that must be emphasized here is that migration became a very significant socioeconomic phenomenon in Douar El Akbia. As such it was bound to have a powerful and multifaceted impact on the traditional peasant communities of this rural district.

MIGRATION AND PETTY USURERS IN EL AKBIA

Between 1948 and 1954 trans-Mediterranean migration generated unprecedented usurious activity in the *douar*. About seven persons emerged as petty bankers who lent the money for the fares of migrant workers at a high interest rate. For instance, if a migrant worker borrowed 10,000 old francs, he would have to pay back, in less than three months, 15,000 old francs. In order to insure that the borrower would be forced to pay back his loan regardless of whether he found a job in France or not, a plot or several plots of land were pawned to the petty banker. This contract specified that if the sum of cash advanced was not paid back three months after the departure of the migrant, the land pawned would go to the lender for at least two consecutive years. The nature of this contract varied from one individual to another.

All of these petty financial speculators benefitted from such lucrative activity. Some were even former migrant workers. But only one speculator, a village tailor-cloth merchant and grocer, not only became a millionaire (in old francs, of course) but in 1952 after an economic recession in France as a result of which many migrant workers could not pay back their contracted debts, he acquired about one-fifth of the arable lands and orchards of his fellow villagers of Amdij. However, when the War of National Liberation broke out, he returned this property in a moment of generosity, to its original owners. Prior to this he had led a pro-French faction created by the Caïd and his *Khodja* against the Mouvement du Triomphe des Libertés Démocratiques (M.T.L.D.) ticket headed by the nationalist, Si Lakhdar. (These petty usurers disappeared completely in the post-independence period).

From the outset, and due primarily to its location in a mountainous region, the peasant population of Douar El Akbia came to be involved in the War of National Liberation. It is not an exaggeration to say that they all contributed in some way to the war effort. This brought them bombardments, destruction and military terror from the colonial army. In 1956 it was declared a prohibited zone and razed, but the population escaped to Douar Beni Telilan. However, by 1960 the bulk of the inhabitants, especially women, children and old people either were forced to flee to Constantine or were put into the *camps de regroupements* surrounded by barbed wire and guarded night and day by the French army. By 1962 when they were released after the cease-fire, 7 percent of the total population had been killed, 4 percent as civilians and 3 percent in the regular army of national liberation.

The economic activity of their district was completely disrupted by the war ; their orchards dried out and overgrown, irrigation ditches destroyed and all the houses eradicated, and all the livestock lost. In other words, every thing had to begin anew. The War of National Liberation appears to have accelerated the process of social change and the pace of out-migration and abandonment of agriculture.

THE POST-WAR SOCIOECONOMIC SITUATION

Although the Beni Kaïd, like all other Algerian mountaineers, played on the whole an active role in the struggle for national liberation, the post-independence economic life of the *douar* without migrant laborets working in France, Algiers Constantine, Annaba, and other localities, and sending remittances to their families, would have been intolerable. As one peasant put it, « We mountaineers are all living from migration. Our agrarian economy has been superseded by the economy of migration ». And another informant who had four brothers working outside El Akbia, two in France, one in Oran, and the fourth in Algiers, exclaimed, « I'm the only one who is bad because I stayed here ». The desire to migrate is so pervasively strong. In effect, for El Akbis, adequate employment opportunities, good education for their children, a good life which is synonymous with urban life (even in the shanty towns and slums located on the fringes of cities) with its electric lights, shops full of food and clothing and gadgets, paved roads, are elsewhere. In other words, any upward social mobility involves, for this rural population, a geographical mobility of some kind.

At the national level the post-war period was marked by an increasing tempo of rural-to-urban migration which resulted in one of the most rapid paces of urbanization in Africa. Indeed, between 1960 and 1970 the urban population of Algeria grew by 267,000 per year which amounted to an annual average growth rate of 6.1 percent. In 1960 only 33 percent of the total population was deriving its livelihood from non-agrarian economic activities. However, by 1970 the Algerian population engaged in the industrial sector represented 44 percent. Thus, the annual average rate of growth of the active industrial population amounted to 3.4 percent during this period. In April 1971 the total population of Algeria was estimated at 14,644,000, divided into 7,850,000 rural and 6,794,000 urban.

Table 3 shows the dynamics and magnitude of demographic growth and urbanization in Algeria as a whole.

TABLE 3
POPULATION GROWTH IN ALGERIA SINCE 1880
(in millions)

	Total Population	Percent Increase	Urban Population	Percent Increase
1880	3.2		0.5	
1910	5.5	71.8	0.9	80.0
1920	5.7	3.6	1.1	22.2
1930	6.4	12.2	1.4	27.3
1955	9.7	51.5	2.5	78.6
1964	10.0	12.4	3.6	44.0
1966	12.2	11.9	4.7	23.4
1971	14.7	20.5	6.8	47.7
1974	16.4			

Source : Samir Amin, *L'Economie du Maghreb*, vol. 1 Paris, Minuit, 1966, p. 35 ; and Nations Unies, Conseil Economique et Social, *La migration vers les villes*, 57^e Session, « Etude sur l'économie mondiale, 1973 », Rapport e/5486, première partie, pp. 149-155, publié par la Documentation Française, n° 249, January 10, 1975.

For a young man to remain « hidden behind in the hills of El Akbia » is considered by the local communities as a bad sign and is increasingly frowned upon by all the inhabitants. To get to the heaven of economic well-being, these people realized that they must pass over city pavement. Indeed, the disparity of the standard of living between the rural and urban population was and still is great and it will remain so for the coming decades. In 1973 the per capita income was 540 Algerian Dinars (A.D.) for the rural dwellers and 1,860 A.D. for the urbanites. Table 4 illustrates this state of affairs.

TABLE 4
PER CAPITA INCOME
(in Algerian Dinars)

Year	Whole Population	Urban Dwellers	Rural Dwellers
1967	1,000	na	na
1973	1,169	1,860	540
1977	1,560	2,300	780
1980	2,500	na	na

Source : Karen Farsoun, « State Capitalism in Algeria », *MERIP Reports*, n° 35, p. 20.

This disparity between the urban dwellers and the rural masses is to continue, according to the Algerian national planners who set the major goals of the 1970-77 plan. Although one of the goals of this plan is to raise the per capita income of the population, this increase was designed to be disproportionate. Thus the per capita income of the urban dwellers will be raised from 1,860 in 1973 to 2,300 in 1977 but that of the peasantry will be increased from 540 to only 780 during the same period.

This is, of course, one of the causes underlying the rural exodus from El Akbia to the cities in search of employment. Today (1974) Douar El Akbia is inhabited by 1,584 people (migrant workers outside the district excluded), living in 287 families. These households own 131 modern houses of two rooms each, and 440 *gourbis*. Eighty-five households, representing 29.6 percent of the total families, live exclusively on wages earned by migrant laborers outside the *douar*; 45 families comprising 13.9 percent live both from wages and horticulture, arboriculture and agriculture. In sum, 125 families representing 44.5 percent are involved in wage labor. (18.1 percent of the families are completely dependent of remittances from France). Only 85 families, comprising 29.9 percent of the households, are still eking out their livelihood solely from animal husbandry agriculture, horticulture and arboriculture. Twenty families, constituting 6.9 percent live from war pensions paid to them by the Algerian government because they lost one or more of their relatives during the war. These war pensions are accorded only to those families whose relatives joined the ALN or the militia and were killed in action. Therefore the relatives of the civilians killed during the war by the French troops are excluded. Nineteen families comprising 6.6 percent are living from petty trade, hoe-agriculture, horticulture and arboriculture. Thirteen families representing 4.5 percent are subsisting from artisanal activity. They are blacksmiths, traditional tailors, masons, etc. Six families, representing 2 percent, are destitute paupers whose main source of livelihood is begging. Three families or one percent are dependent on remittances sent by three of their members serving in the A.N.P. (National People's

Army). Finally, two families, or 0.7 percent, live on pensions given to them by the French government because the heads of these two households were wounded during the Second World War in Germany. The sources of subsistence of the remaining 5 percent of the families are not known.

The decline of agricultural activity is reflected in the following figures : in 1974 the Beni Kaïd cultivated their arable land with sixteen *jabdas* (pl. *jauabed*) or plowing teams, contrasted with seventy-one in 1869. Today all of the impoverished peasants are practicing only hoe-agriculture, horticulture and arboriculture. Agriculture and animal husbandry have been declining since the end of the nineteenth century as a consequence of the intrusion of French colonialism into the area. However, despite this, the economy of El Akbia remained tied to them until the post-World War II period, when an increasing number of impoverished peasants turned to wage labor. Today, as indicated above, only a few families are still practicing a full-time traditional agrarian economy based on the cultivation of fields by at least one full *jabda*. Most other households were forced to abandon agriculture as a way of earning a living. The cause underlying this rapid decline are revealed in the following statements made both by former full-time *fellahs* who have already abandoned agriculture, and by the remaining *fellahs* who are still struggling to eke out a livelihood from the soil.

A *fellah*-merchant exclaimed in 1974 :

I have twenty-four plots of arable land and about nine tiny plots in orchards but I stopped practicing agriculture two years ago. First I could not manage it ; second I had three successive bad harvests. At the moment I live from this store and the rent from land and some olive trees.

A second *fellah* stated :

I have five children, a wife, four *gourbis*, two plots of land in orchards and six plots of arable land, a cow, a calf, and a donkey. I live from part-time wage labor. For example, this year I worked for the worker's self-management committee in Arago. I used to live solely from hoe-agriculture (called locally *azla*), a few fruit trees and some olive trees. This year I did not till my land. When they started talking about the agrarian revolution I was afraid to cultivate any fields.

A seventy-three year old former *fellah* added,

I have six children, a wife, four *gourbis* full of rats, thirteen plots of arable land, four sheep, five goats with five babies, and a donkey. This year my family started living solely from hoe-agriculture because I had no more oxen, no more straw, and no more seeds to sow. Three successive years of bad harvest have brought about the destruction of these basic agricultural assets or capital. I had no choice but to turn unwillingly to the strenuous activities associated with hoe-agriculture which is a sign of a *fellah* and his family's increasing misery.

A fifty-eight year old former *fellah* explained :

I have five children and their mother to support. But I have only ten tiny scattered plots of arable land which I own by myself, and two other plots with heirs. All of them are very small parcels. I own three *gourbis*, a house, half of a cow and half of a calf. I stopped cultivating my fields with a plow because last year the harvest was so bad that I had to pay from my own pocket for the rent of an ox which I hired with another associate for plowing. I did not even harvest half of the seed sown.

A fifty-three year old *fellah* stated his situation :

I have four children, two *gourbis*, two tiny plots of land in orchards, and ten plots in arable land that I share with my brother ; eight sheep, eight lambs, sixteen goats, and one mule. I am cultivating my fields with a *jabda* but I have to rent two oxen for five *saas*, two and one half of wheat and two and one half of barley per year. I also rent some plots of land from other people for three and one half additional *saas*. Up to now my family has managed to subsist from these activities. In the future God only knows.

Moreover, the amount of rent this poor fellah is paying to others to keep his family enterprise going is too high to let him survive an eventual drought.

A seventy-four year old *fellah* who is married to two women and has eleven children and their mothers to support stated :

I have two houses with two rooms each, a *gourbi*, two plots of land in orchards and four plots in arable land, two cows, two calves, ten sheep with ten lambs, one mule and two oxen. For my family's subsistence I cultivate my fields and those I am renting from absentee land owners who migrated to Constantine city with their families, with a *jabda*. The pension my second wife receives on her first three children whose father was killed in action during the war provides us with some badly needed cash money.

A sixty-three year old *fellah* put his case in the following terms :

I have two plots of land in orchards, seven plots in arable land, two cows, two calves, one mule, one donkey and two oxen. I cultivate my land and that which I rent either from my brother who charges me 200 A.D. per year or from other people. The fourteen persons making up my family live from this agriculture and my son's wages from France.

Although his older son has his own separate hearth, their economic life is still organized corporately. They pool their resources in order to protect themselves from the natural hazards involved in agriculture.

A seventy-two year old former *fellah* regretfully explained his case :

I still have two cows, one mule, five sheep, two plots of land in orchards and fourteen plots in arable land. I gave up agriculture last year because I had no more familial manpower. My older sons who are married refused to work the land with me. The yields kept falling to the point that two years ago when my younger son left me alone struggling with agriculture, I employed other workers to cultivate my fields. However their wages amounted to 1,000 A.D. for that year alone on top of which I had a bad harvest. My total agricultural yield amounted to only three *saas* of grain which represented less than the quantity of seed I had sown. Last year I decided to stop practicing agriculture altogether. It is the fault of my sons who gave up agriculture for wage labor. My older son has been working in France since 1963 and the second one has been working in a factory in Algiers for some years now. The third tried to work with me as an associate but the poor returns we had finally discouraged him. What can we do ! In the old days I used to harvest up to a total of ninety *saas* of grain-barley, wheat, lima beans, and chick peas - from the cultivation of a single *jabda* ! Nowadays one can hardly harvest the seeds he sows. At the moment I live from renting my land to other people and from olive and fruit trees.

Finally, a sixty-seven year old *fellah* on the verge of bankruptcy described his situation as follows :

I have nine plots of arable land. I used to cultivate them with a *jabda*. But last year I had the worst returns in my life as a *fellah*. Therefore this year I had no choice but to find another associate, a *fellah* from Ghardiba, because I did not have a single ox of my own. I had been renting oxen since 1962 to cultivate my fields for four *saas* a year. My livestock was decimated by the colonial army during the war. This year I could not take the risk of renting two other oxen, instead I rented only one in order to set a half-*jabda* with this partner. We are cultivating our combined fields together on a fifty-fifty basis. My sons do not want to work the land any more. My oldest son was killed in action during the war, leaving me his three children and their mother. The government officials refused to accord them a pension like all the other war orphans. I spent over one thousand dinars simply trying to establish the necessary papers but I was finally disgusted, so I gave up. My second son is married but he left his wife here in this *gourbi* beside my house and went to work in France last year. Beside all this, this year I started buying gas for cooking our food because there is no more wood in this area. We are forced now to live as in the cities with a countryside income.

He appeared crushed and defeated by the whole rapid change around him. By general consensus of the villagers this man, Mahrouk, had been one of the most dynamic *fellahs* in the district.

An often-heard peasant expression in El Akbia adequately describes the desperate attempt by many impoverished fellahs who are clinging to their increasingly unrewarding ancestral patterns of subsistence : « We milk animals, and we are thirsty for milk ; we plow fields, and we are hungry for *kisra* ». An impoverished peasant who practices only hoe-agriculture and gardening for the subsistence of his family exclaimed :

There is no capital to invest in fulltime agriculture with ploughs. I am doing only hoe-agriculture in order to avoid starvation. If I had money to buy two oxen, a mule, and some straw and hay for feed, I would do it. If the government does not organize us into a cooperative we are doomed to misery. However, last year the party came to consult with us about the possibility of organizing a cooperative in El Jiza (a potentially good agricultural area), but we could not agree on the eventual division of the yield. One said, « I have five hectares and they have only a little, how can they share equally with me ? » Others shouted, « We have at least some plots of land there; how about those who possess none ? Are they also going to join the cooperative and claim a share of the produce ? » Finally we were not even asked whether we would consent to organize a cooperative. The party officials, confronted with the initial hostility from some of us, abandoned the project. I am one hundred percent for the organization of a cooperative. The party should have resorted to coercion rather than back down like it did because this area is so parcelled into small plots and most of them are abandoned uncultivated at the moment.

The decline of agriculture is paralleled by that of animal husbandry. Most oxen rented by the active *fellahs* belong to the families of migrant workers who use the grain paid for the rental to complement their cash revenues. As a whole, livestock which traditionally formed an important component of a rural economy have not yet been reassembled after total decimation during the war, despite a relatively increasing cash flow into the district. After 1962, according to several official censuses taken by the administration for tax purposes and my own of May 1974, which aimed at quantifying as accurately as possible the entire socioeconomic reality of the douar, the following facts presented themselves.

TABLE 5
THE SOCIOECONOMIC SITUATION OF EL AKBIA

Year	Total Population	Donkeys	Goats	Cattle	Mules	Sheep	Parcels of Land	Percent of Depopulation	Total Households	Average size of Household
1954	1726									
1966	1632	26	126	184	18	467	na	5.4	na	
1969	na	na	304	82	na	401	na		na	
1970	na	na	276	94	na	470	na		na	
1971	na	na	288	115	na	271	na		na	
1972	na	49	216	67	17	498	na		na	
1973*	na	26	125	137	17	377	na		na	
1974**	1584	94	347	342	36	465	1552	2.9	287	5.5

*The source of figures for 1973 and earlier is Archives de la Commune de Sidi Marouf. These figures were established by the administration for tax purposes and therefore are not quite accurate because after 1971 the poorer peasants who owned only a few animals were exempted from taxes on their livestock by a governmental decision. These figures should be contrasted with those taken in 1974.

**This census was taken in May 1974 in the course of my field work. Its accuracy is beyond doubt.

If figures in Table 5 are compared with those of 1869, considered above, the decline of animal husbandry in El Akbia becomes a striking economic fact. However, a slight increase in livestock per capita occurred between 1966 and 1974 as a direct result of population decrease (from 1954 to 1966 the population decreased by 5.5 percent, and from 1966 to 1974 by 2.9 percent). Indeed, donkeys increased from .16 per head to .6 ; goats from .077 to .22 ; cattle from .11 to .21 ; mules from .011 to .023 ; and sheep from .28 to .29. Upon further examination of the details pertaining to the socioeconomic differentiation of the population of El Akbia in 1974, either on the basis of the per capita per family parcels of land or the per capita livestock, the misleading nature of a per capita economic analysis is revealed. Indeed, 114 households out of 287 which represents 40 percent of the total families, do not own any livestock. As can be seen in Table 6, the rest of the households own from to fifty-two head of livestock.

TABLE 6
FAMILIAL OWNERSHIP OF LIVESTOCK

Livestock per Family	Number of Families	Total Livestock	Livestock per Family	Number of Families	Total Livestock
1	20	20	16	2	32
2	38	76	17	3	51
3	19	57	18	2	36
4	20	80	19	3	57
5	6	30	21	1	21
6	6	36	22	3	66
7	7	49	23	1	23
8	5	40	24	1	24
9	4	36	25	3	75
10	3	30	27	2	54
11	3	33	33	1	33
13	2	26	35	1	35
14	2	28	52	1	52
15	3	45			

Worst of all, seventy families, comprising 24.4 percent of all households, turned out to be completely landless. Today they still own only the spots of land upon which their houses or *gourbis* are built and therefore their main source of livelihood is wage labor which can be found only outside the district. Furthermore, there is a great differentiation in the number of parcels of land owned by individual households, which reflects, on the one hand the pattern of landholding fragmentation, and on the other, the staggering disparity in familial land ownership. Table 7 illustrates this point.

Since on the average the size of the parcels owned by these families is generally equal, these figures can be used as indicators of socioeconomic stratification. However, since the productivity of the soil has declined, according to the remaining few cultivators of El Akbia, it is not feasible to classify statistically the peasants of this *douar* into various social strata representing classes. The range of differentiation is too broad to warrant the attempt. Moreover, there are two wide social categories : the heads of the landless families are completely proletarianized ; and

the owners of four or more plots can still be considered either as full-fledged peasants or half-peasants and half-proletarians. Indeed, there are many El Akbis who are seasonal laborers or underemployed workers who spend some time cultivating their gardens and attending their small orchards and olive trees during the harvest season. Therefore they have one foot in the countryside and the other in the urban centers, to use their own expression. As a result, the economy of El Akbia today is too diversified and too complex to be categorized. It is characteristic of rural communities in the final phase of transition from an agrarian self-subsistence economy based on the family as a productive unit owning its means of production : land, animals and tools, to one geared to wage labor, which involves migration.

In addition, the size of the households of contemporary Beni Kaïd exhibits a varying range which, of course, complicates the analysis further. It must be noted however, that the family size does not correlate in any way with the quantity and quality of land or livestock possessed by any individual household. Table 8 summarizes the varying range of household composition. It indicates that some families are clearly more hard-pressed economically as a result of their large size than others, due to the continuous noticeable demographic growth in this district.

TABLE 7
DIFFERENTIATION IN LAND OWNERSHIP AND PARCELMENT

Parcels Owner	Number of Families	Percent of Total Families	Total Parcels
0	70	24.4	0
1	9	3.1	9
2	14	4.9	28
3	15	5.2	45
4	13	4.5	52
5	15	5.2	75
6	16	5.5	96
7	11	3.8	77
8	9	3.1	72
9	15	5.2	135
10	4	1.4	40
11	15	5.2	165
12	4	1.4	48
13	5	1.7	65
14	4	1.4	56
15	1	0.3	15
16	1	0.3	16
17	3	1.0	51
18	2	0.7	36
21	2	0.7	42
26	1	0.3	26
33	1	0.3	33

TABLE 8
SIZE OF HOUSEHOLDS

Number in Household	Number of Families	Percent of Families	Total in Group	Percent of Population
1	14	4.8	14	0.9
2	19	6.6	38	2.4
3	34	11.8	102	6.4
4	30	10.4	120	7.5
5	43	15.0	215	13.5
6	34	11.8	204	12.8
7	47	16.3	329	20.7
8	19	6.6	152	9.6
9	4	1.4	36	2.3
10	12	4.2	120	7.5
11	4	1.4	44	2.8
12	1	0.3	12	0.7
13	4	1.4	52	3.3
14	1	0.3	14	0.9

THE STRUCTURE OF THE POPULATION

Since my 1974 field census did not record the demographic structure in its details pertaining to age group composition, the official government census of 1966 of the Commune of Sidi Marouf, to which Douar El Akbia belongs, will be analyzed below in Table 9, in order to elucidate the intricate nature of the demographic structure. The striking characteristic of the population of this commune is its youth : 8,901 out of a total of 13,629, comprising 57.9 percent, are under nineteen. This category is subdivided into four age groups. From age 0 to 4 amounts to 1,248 males and 1,251 females, a sex ratio of 0.99. This age group totals 2,499 or 18.3 percent of the population. From 5 to 9 makes up a total of 1,889, divided into 935 males and 954 females, a sex ratio of 0.98, and represents 13.8 percent. The 10 to 14 age group has 1,010 males and 1,004 females, a sex ratio of 1.066 ; this sub-category amounts to 2,014 individuals comprising 14.8 percent. The 15 to 19 age group is divided into 960 males and 739 females, a sex ratio of 1.028, totalling 1,499 and representing 11 percent of the total population of the commune.

The demographic structure of the adult population can be divided into two broad categories : from 20 to 44 and from 45 to 65 and over. The first amounts to 3,834, comprising 28.1 percent of the population. It is subdivided into the following age groups : from 20 to 24 there are 468 males and 432 females, a sex ratio of 1.083, totalling 900 individuals comprising 6.6 percent ; from 25 to 34 there are 826 males and 920 females, a sex ratio of 0.897, totalling 1,746 or 12.8 percent ; and finally the 35 to 44 age group is composed of 560 males and 628 females, a sex ratio of 0.89, totalling 1,188 or 8.7 percent. The 45 to 65 and over category is made up of 898 males and 993 females, a sex ratio of 0.903, totalling 1,891 persons, comprising 14 percent of the total population under investigation. It should be remarked that in the age group 15 to 24 there are more males than females. This discrepancy is due to two sociological factors : the girls are married

at a younger age than the boys, and there is an increasing tendency for the girls to be married to city-dwellers where the rate of polygyny has appeared on the increase in the post-revolutionary war period. This fact will be noted again in the case of Douar El Akbia below.

TABLE 9
DEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE OF THE COMMUNE OF SIDI MAROUF : 1966

Age Group	Males	Females	Sex Ratio	Total in Group	Percent of Population
0 - 4	1248	1251	0.99	2499	18.3
5 - 9	935	954	0.98	1889	13.8
10 - 14	1010	1004	1.006	2014	14.8
15 - 19	760	739	1.028	1499	11.0
20 - 24	468	432	1.083	900	6.6
25 - 34	826	920	0.897	1746	12.8
35 - 44	560	628	0.89	1188	8.7
45 - 54	385	438	1.278	823	6.0
55 - 64	308	294	1.047	602	4.4
65 & over	205	261	0.785	466	3.4
Not declared	1	2		3	
Total	6706	6923		13,629	

Source : Archives de la Commune de Sidi Marouf.

Both the population explosion of El Akbia and migration of an increasing number of young people in search of employment opportunities in European or Algerian industrial centers have drastically altered the structure of the current population of the *douar*. The sex ratio among the adult population is

$$\frac{\text{male } 222}{\text{female } 349} = 0.64.$$

Out of the 1,548 total population of the district, 1,013 individuals comprising 64 percent, are under twenty years old. The sex ratio among this age group is

$$\frac{\text{male } 528}{\text{female } 485} = 1.09.$$

As noted above, the only plausible explanation for this demographic anomaly is that the girls, on the average, are married at the age of eighteen while the average age of marriage for boys is at least twenty-three.

The migrant families who live either in the Algerian cities or in France prefer to find a bride for their sons in the *douar*. The balance of women exchange between the cities and the *douar* appears to be in favor of the urbanites. For instance, in the hamlet of Ghardiba only eight men brought their wives from outside compared with fifteen women married outside, a deficit of seven. Up to now, no girl has been brought from the cities to the *douar* as a bride. It is a well-known fact that El Akbi girls strongly prefer to marry either young migrant workers or city boys from El Akbia or elsewhere. This attitude reveals that urban life and

wage labor are more valued and more desired by the villagers than traditional agrarian pursuits, which is not surprising because employment outside the district, even on a seasonal basis, has become, according to the villagers, more remunerative than any form of agriculture in the district.

As a forty-three year old man from village Benihai put it :

I have five children and a wife to support on nine small plots of arable land that I share with my six brothers. I own a donkey and three *gourbis*. We have been subsisting from gardening, olive trees and hoe-agriculture. Recently I had to turn to part-time wage labor in order to make ends meet. Let me tell you this, subsistence from agriculture is over. He who is not occupying a wage job has no life or income.

The falling prestige of the traditional agrarian non-monetary economy is eloquently expressed by an eighteen year old boy who still lives with his old mother, practicing hoe-agriculture, gardening and animal husbandry :

We are born into darkness in this place and if we stay here we shall be thrown in the darkness of the tombs without ever having a chance to see any light of life. How can you garden all day long and then go in the evening to the store without a single penny to purchase even cigarettes for example.

This young man was so disgusted with the kind of life he has led ; he is eager to get out of El Akbia. He went on to relate the story of Messaoud, a migrant returnee, who left El Akbia in the 1930's but had to return to the district in 1948 because of some family problems :

Messaoud Ben Ahmed worked all day erecting fences around orchards, cactus flowers, and gardens. When he finished one afternoon he went to Si Tayeb's store to buy a package of cigarettes. Upon entering the shop he asked, « Would you give me a package of cigarettes, please ». « No, sir », replied the store owner. « You must first pay your debts on the previous cigarettes you have already purchased on credit ». Since Messaoud had not a single penny in his pocket he went back quickly to the place where he had worked all day. He destroyed all the fences he had erected. When he finished destroying the fences he immediately left this district. Since then he never returned again. Today he is doing fine, he has a job, an apartment on the sea front, wife and children in Algiers. One of these days I am going to do precisely the same thing.

Thus, the erosion of the material base of these peasant communities has brought about the drastic decline of the traditional subsistence patterns. This resulted, in the long run, in the decline of the traditional peasant rustic ideology — values, norms and attitudes — toward land, rural economic pursuits and social life. Even the family structures and marriage patterns are undergoing certain changes.

CHANGES IN THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Since the kernel of the traditional social and economic organization of El Akbia was the extended or joint family (*ayla*), functioning as a productive unit, it is of utmost importance to examine it first, in order to determine whether it survived the impact of colonialism and the steady and gradual proletarianization of the male population of the district. Despite the fact that the Algerian family remains one of the most conservative social institutions in the country it could not withstand the economic pressures exerted upon it. Every family was under the patriarchal authority of a senior kinsman. According to the traditional pattern of landholding, the domestic unit was usually either a corporate joint or extended family. Every family was and still is a member of a patrilineage. However, North African peasant villages such as those of El Akbia are, in the words of Schorger,

Neither closed corporate communities nor entirely non-corporate open communities, but both, at different times and in relation to clearly defined circumstances... marriage and descent ties were (and still are) generally overtly regarded as linking nuclear or extended families, rather than lineages. The latter no longer retained any corporate reality, but all ceremonial occasions drew the entire descent group together (1).

(1) William D. Schorger, « The Evolution of Political Forms in a North Moroccan Village », *Anthropological Quarterly* 42 (July 1969), p. 279.

Usually marriage within or between families was decided upon by the elders both males and females, sometimes in formal consultation with the two people concerned.

Marriage in El Akbia, as elsewhere in rural Algeria was mostly endogamous and virilocal ; though exogamy existed traditionally in El Akbia its frequency prior to the 1930's was low. However, exogamous marriage is on the rise. Out of 245 recorded marriages in El Akbia, 95 are *douar* exogamous comprising 38.8 percent. This means that 95 males from El Akbia brought their wives from outside their own district, contrasted to 150 *douar* endogamous marriages which total 61.2 percent. Prior to the 1920's village endogamy within the *douar* itself used to be prevalent. Today there is a great deal of inter-village women exchange in El Akbia which confirms the decline of endogamy. Due to virilocality many wives are not only strangers in the patrilocal joint or extended family but also in the village.

In 1974 there were 252 nuclear families representing 88.8 percent who lived in households made up of a husband as the bread-winner and a wife as the guardian of the hearth, and eighteen extended families comprising 6.3 percent of the households. Families are considered extended in this sense if they consist of at least two couples and three generations living under the same roof. Fourteen economically corporate families with their separate hearths but joint economic activities constituted only 4.9 percent of the total number of households ; and three extended polygenous families comprising one percent. The last were formed by levirate marriages. In all three cases, after the death of the husband, the wife was left with children. If she were to go back to her relatives in order to get married, her children would be estranged from their own patrilineage. The alternative solution was for the brother of the deceased husband to marry the widow in order not to aggravate the orphan status of his nephews and nieces.

The question to be tackled at this point is that pertaining to the distinction between the causes underlying the atomization of the extended and joint families in El Akbia and the reasons given by the villagers for the split of the younger marital dyads from the original patrilineal virilocal extended family. Usually the atomization process consists of progressive steps ; the marital dyads living in a traditional patriarchal extended family under constant tension generated by inter-dyad conflict over resources, work, or psychological personality incompatibilities, are forced to form different households, living in separate hearths and separate houses. The term used for this rearrangement is *itfriqo*. But, since their landholdings and livestock remain together, these households maintain a corporate economic life. All members pool their labor and resources together for agricultural production. However, some adult males may seek external employment to supplement the declining agrarian economy of the joint family. When the joint family increased in number without being able correspondingly to expand its land base for cultivation the economic situation of the joint family became so precarious as to cause a division of all property among the various marital dyads and their offspring. The term used for this split into elementary independent nuclear families is *kasmo* (they divided). Therefore this kind of division is usually caused by pressure on resources.

However, this division which appears at first to some members of the joint family as a more efficient and rational way of improving the management of scarce resources in order to maximize the welfare of the members of their eventual independent families, is in actual fact, bound to aggravate the economic condition of everyone involved. Although the division seemed originally an attractive alternative to growing scarcity, it has not achieved anything in terms of practical amelioration of the family standard of living. It actually worsened the economic situation of every family through fragmentation of land and other property. The cause of the division is usually attributed to the supposed inherent inability of women either in the joint or extended family to get along together. For instance, before 1973 two migrant brothers were both married and living in an extended family with their mother. That year they decided that one would go home and the other work for six months ; after six months they would exchange. But Mohammed went home and stayed more than six months. Foudil waited until six months was finished and went back to Algeria. His brother still did not want to return to France. After the eighth month both had contracted debts and this led to a quarrel and split of the families into separate units, each with his own wife. Not until the ninth month did Mohammed come back, but he had contracted debts and had even to write for the money for the trip to be sent from France. As Amar put it, « the newly married Mohammed liked to be in the heat ». Foudil also came back with huge debts and also had to write for money for the trip. Foudil, who is quite temperamental and does not forgive and forget, still swears and damns the gods when he remembers what his brother did, saying « we could minimize our separation with our families by each staying here six months ». This discussion about the two brothers led to the often-repeated argument that it is women who do not get along and that is why the extended families are broken up as fast as they are formed. But the truth of the matter is that the women channel and express the frustrations of the entire family. And their quarrels are used as a pretext by the males to split up.

The traditional Algerian extended family is geared to an agrarian life but this population of the *douar* is in the final phase of proletarianization now. Demographic pressures led in the twentieth century to the overuse of land which provoked soil depletion, and the war resulted in the complete eradication of both capital and the means of production, such as oxen, mules, etc. So the post-war economic life of the *douar* is generally geared to the outflow of cash from migrant workers both in France and Algeria. How could the two women who have nothing to do all day get along together ? Traditionally all members of the extended family were permanently busy in cultivating, harvesting and attending their flocks. The roles were defined clearly ; every individual knew what to do and what is the goal of the corporate family unit. With cash, individualism appears, and quarrels about how much each member spends increased. But despite this sociological fact, the males view is that it is all the fault of the women who do not get along. And even the women themselves agree with this assertion. A middle aged lady stated emphatically :

People do not live any more in extended families because with the spread of wage labor women want to buy many consumer goods and gadgets of various kinds, jewelry such as golden bracelets, skirts, and transistor radios. It is women who deliberately provoke the split up of the big families because they feel that they are strangers in them and they think that once they form their own independent households they will have the whole income of their husbands for themselves. It is women not men who cause trouble and division of the large family.

A son who moves out of his paternal household to form his own after his marriage is referred to as *amal dar wahdo* (he has established his own house).

While the father is alive he cannot inherit anything except the plot of land upon which his house is located. However, if he remains on good terms with his father he can garden and cultivate at least a plot of arable land.

The atomization or the break-up of the traditional economically corporate joint or extended household provoked in most cases, a total separation of all landholdings and all joint economic activities. The emergence of the nuclear family brought about by the various economic, fiscal and demographic pressures analyzed in the preceding chapters, resulted in the reorganization of kinship behavior and interaction. Thenceforth once the members of the nuclear family, stripped of the social and economic support and solidarity traditionally provided by the corporate joint or extended family, resorted to the rearrangement of wider relationships of friendship and kinship, extending to the neighboring communities, towns, and cities, and even as far as eastern France with a large number of other independent individual families. These networks are utilized to resolve the basic social and economic problems of the members of the nuclear families. All of these kinship and personal friendship ties are activated for different functions such as marriage, money-lending, job sponsoring, provision of money for the fares for the trip, etc.

Most adult males leave their dependents in the *douar* and go to work either in Algerian urban centers or French industrial conurbations in order to eke out the livelihood of their families. In the absence of the husbands the wives automatically become head-of-household. As a consequence, two striking features in kinship behavior, gynocentricity and matrilineal bias, have emerged in a traditionally male centered, patriarchal, patrilineal and virilocal society. Gynocentricity of kinship behavior is the tendency for females to be more emotionally involved and active in kinship interaction than are males. Matrilineal bias refers to the tendency for interaction with kinsmen to be more frequent and intensive with the female side of the marital dyad.

The emergence of this kinship behavior in El Akbia was brought about by the fact that when the husband is absent the wife turns to her own primary kinsmen for certain services rather than to his. In the course of field work I have observed that almost all the wives of the migrant workers are relying heavily on their own relatives for help and comfort. In the long run, even if the husband returns home either temporarily or permanently this state of affairs will go on as before. However, this did not lead to the interruption of social interaction and cooperation with the agnatic kin group. In the new situation all the kinship and friendship ties with the affines, cognates, agnates and friends are activated and all these *de jure* as well as *de facto* kindreds constitute the so-called networks. These kindreds of cooperation constitute a chain of overlapping collections of interlocking or interwoven individuals and families. The patriarchal, virilocal, male-centered joint and extended form of family organization is disappearing gradually from El Akbia, the sub-stratum of the web of kin, which comprises formally patrilineal ties as well as matrilineal and affinal links has emerged as the most significant systematic feature of kinship.

Thus these wider kinship and friendship networks are developed and activated as a logical substitute for the large patrilineal corporate joint or extended familial domestic kin groups living socially together and working as productive units which managed traditionally to satisfy the primary social and economic needs of the members. The emergence of the nuclear family resulting in the division and therefore fragmentation of landholdings and other property, have further stimulated the process of pauperization analyzed above, which has generated the dissolution of traditional patterns of social relations and the emergence of these new organizational forms.

This entailed organizational and attitudinal changes, at least at the family level. Indeed, with the diversification and the widening of social relations, traditional kinship obligations regulated by an ethic of absolute loyalty to one's kinsmen regardless of whether one is on good or bad terms with them, has been superseded by a friendship ethic which induces the person to assist only those kinsmen who are capable of developing and maintaining friendly relations with one. For instance, if the father, uncle or father-in-law of a migrant workers has been kind and helpful to his wife and children left in *douar*, he can count on the migrant for occasional pocket money and clothing ; otherwise he receives nothing whatever from his younger kinsmen abroad. In short, the erosion of the material base of the extended or joint corporate family has brought about on the one hand its decomposition into independent nuclear family units and on the other, the atomization or fragmentation of social relations. Thenceforth, every unit in order to survive, must, out of economic necessity seek its own separate interests. This forced it to balance out the exchanges of material resources and social favors. In other words, within the traditional extended family Sahlins' generalized reciprocity principle prevailed. However, with the emergence of the nuclear family, the principle of balanced reciprocity among even closely related kinsmen has become prevalent. This change is reflected in the relationships between the people in the *douar*.

It appears that migration is putting an end to the traditional social and economic relations based on mutual aid. Today no one renders any service to anyone else without being paid for it. Since migrant workers started hiring people either to garden, build or repair their houses and *gourbis*, even the old people who cannot work any more have now to resort to this new pattern of monetized social and economic relations introduced into the district by the migrants. As an old villager expressed it, « If one helps you today to put a burden on the mule he would try to get paid for his assistance. If you tell him 'God bless your parents for your help', he would reply, 'God damn my parents, pay me' ». Every aspect of social relations has become monetized. Money is used for everything in the district ; only digging graves or serious accidents such a fire have remained in the realm of collective work based on mutual cooperation. Traditionally anyone building a house or a *gourbi* used to request anyone to assist him without any expectation of pay under any form, and the people never failed to come to his help. An old proverb stated that « If the people do not cooperate no one in the community can achieve anything ». This reveals the strong emphasis on mutual aid and cooperation. The decline of the cooperative spirit is more pronounced among the youngsters. It is accompanied by a breakdown of the traditional mores and authority which has provoked a conflict between generations.

THE GENERATION GAP

Relations between the elders and the youngsters are intensely antagonistic ; communication between these age categories has become so difficult because of the rejection by the young of the cherished values and symbols of the old. The youngsters consider the « turbanized » old men as awkward, backward and stubbornly conservative. The elders with all the certainty of their belief look on the mounting generations as bewildered, misled, insolent and no good because they have not only abandoned the traditional mores but also rejected the authority of the elders over them. It is true that the old mores were (and still are) used by the elders as social devices designed to socially control both the youngsters and the women.

The elders are astounded by the rapid change of cultural and social norms and values. Traditional mechanisms of social control such as the notions of honor and shame are becoming obsolete and ineffective as a result of sexual laxity spreading in the district among the younger generation. When several stories about illicit sexual affairs and adultery were checked, they were all confirmed. Four pregnancies were reported to the court of El Milia ; two cases were reported as a result of illegal abortions. Two marriages by elopement, which is still considered a serious matter, occurred in the late sixties and early seventies in the *douar*. One of these involved a woman married to a migrant laborer who was working in France. Finally, a pauper of the district gave his young daughter to a local married merchant to be taken to Constantine as his concubine for sexual pleasure when he goes there. « The Koranic rules and precepts », exclaimed the old blacksmith of the *douar*, « are in the process of being completely abandoned. Why are twelve year old girls becoming pregnant ? One of them is in the hospital at the moment as a result of an illegal abortion ». Another middle aged man sighed and stated, « The old people are fed up but there is nothing they can do. Our religious principles are being abandoned. A young man has just beaten up his old mother ». These problems appear to be also caused by changes in the traditional childrearing practices.

Migration and modern education have caused the discontinuity of traditional child-rearing practices which were geared to the needs of a subsistence peasant economy based on agriculture and animal husbandry. The children of migrant workers are notoriously known in the *douar* as misbehaved brats. They exhibit a patent lack of discipline and good manners. A migrant returnee, father of three children, remarked, « I can tell by just observing children playing outside if they belong to a family whose male head is working outside the district ». Indeed, traditionally, it was the father who disciplined the children, the authority of the mother over her children was loose and constantly defied without any risk of punishment. When the children misbehaved the mother threatened that she would inform their father when he came home. The father was frequently around the home. He supervised the division of labor which was organized along sex and age lines. The decline and disruption of the traditional economy have not only driven the father out of the *douar* but have left most children with nothing to do.

When universal modern mixed education was introduced into the *douar* in the 1960's it further accentuated the sharp conflict of generations discussed above. All the teachers are either urban or newly urbanized sons of migrants who were sent back to teach in the countryside because of their familiarity with the life-ways of the peasantry. Education in the two modern schools emphasizes modernization, skills, techniques and other secular values and attitudes associated with Algerian « socialism » and rapid industrial development. Thus, all migrant returnees, teachers and state officials on a tour of duty in the district disseminate and reinforce the already emergent urban patterns and life styles in the *douar*.

Unfortunately, education is far from being universal, since the parents have not only to properly clothe their children for school but also to purchase text books, pens and pencils for them. Most of them still cannot afford to send their children to school and the state does not, of course, compel them to do so. Therefore, only about 50 percent of the school age children were attending school in 1974. Unfortunately I managed to acquire only the statistics pertaining to the school of Ghardiba which may reveal the attitudes of the parents regarding the education of girls. These are presented in Table 10.

TABLE 10
THE NUMBER OF BOYS AND GIRLS IN SCHOOL IN GHARDIBA

Grade	Boys	Girls	Sex Ratio	Total
1	0	0	0	0
2	22	5	4.4	27
3	22	6	3.6	28
4	22	0	0	22
5	19	0	0	19
6	15	1	15	16
Total	100	12		112

The resistance against the education of girls is still quite stiff. One hundred boys to twelve girls implies that the Algerian women still have a long way to go before achieving educational equality with men. However, I noticed that the mixed school of El Akbia had a higher number of girls than this one. Most of the girls attending school are daughters of migrant workers though they stop them at the age of thirteen. Many families who cannot afford materially to send all their children to school prefer to send only the boys. They are still considered as potential economic assets. Nevertheless, compared to the only two girls who were sent to the Koranic schools prior to 1954 in the entire *douar*, there is definite progress. Only one pupil from this school passed his sixth grade exam and went to high school in the city. This fact contradicts the policy of the Algerian government which aims at achieving the emancipation of women solely through education. If the prejudices against women are not eradicated from the Algerian society by a concrete and unambiguous civil rights bill, families will cling to their obsolete and outmoded customs to prevent the girls from having an education.

At any rate, the political pronouncements of the Algerian leaders stress the training and intellectual development of the youth ; President Boumedienne went as far as stating that the older generations must be sacrificed for the benefit of the coming generations. And this was bound to sharpen the antagonism between the young and the old.

The split is so complete that in 1973 every generation was using its own standards and symbols to judge the social behavior of the others. Most young men do drink beer, even in front of the elders in the *douar* and the majority of them are not practicing Muslim religion. A young man one day in the coffee house of village El Akbia exclaimed in front of several old men that the ancient dictum which states, « whoever obeys his parents will not only succeed in life but will go to paradise » is a goddamned lie. We are far from a patriarchal peasant society when the parents were considered « holy ». A forty-four year old migrant workers ascertained that life in traditional patriarchal extended family contained colonial power relations.

Nowadays no one wants to live under this familial arrangement. The elders think that they are not respected anymore, but life has advanced. Colonialism is the same even if it is organized by one's father. This generation does not like colonialism including the patriarchal type. My father once kicked me while I was sleeping naked with my wife, because he woke up early in the morning and went out to pray and when he came back he found us still sound asleep. He beat both of us. It is alright for him to kick me because I am his son. But my wife resented it. Is this not parental colonialism ? One used to live with all his parents, brother, and their wives without any privacy whatsoever.

However, the rise of the nuclear family may have created « privacy » for the young but it surely generated a great deal of anxiety for the old people who are literally abandoned to die alone. The old folks are neglected by their children who used not only to take care of them in their old age but to remain under their authority. Economic and social insecurity felt by the aging people has caused senility as a mental illness to appear among some neglected old people of both sexes. Even those that are kept in the houses of their children and are provided for materially are now denied any say in the management of the household. A seventy-two year old woman whose old age weakness has made her so dependent on her sons explained, « I had enough of bearing life under the dominance of other women ». Her older son has been receiving her pension from the government because her husband was killed in the war, for over two years without giving her any pocket money. Worse than that, he sent her to live with his younger brother's wife. The daughter-in-law, of course, blamed the old woman for letting her son receive the whole pension. There are many such instances of abuse of this kind against old people which engenders tensions and anxiety in the minds of the older folk.

The problems analyzed in this section are obviously caused by the impact of colonialism, accentuated by the political and military upheavals associated with the war of national liberation, and finally aggravated to the extreme by migration. As a result, the pre-colonial socioeconomic organization has been disrupted. The integration of these rural communities into the capitalist market system appears to have generated the atomization of social relations.

Since the period of field research the process of rural depopulation through migration has taken dramatic proportions. Mostly women, old people and children have remained in the district. Even those active adults that have stayed are involved in wage labor, usually in construction. The outmigration of families has further increased. No young man envisages a future there ; as soon as they become adults they depart. And no agrarian revolution, especially under its present form, could prevent them from doing so, despite the fact that the district has an agricultural potential, especially in arboriculture and vegetable growing.