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ABSTRACT
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“Contested Terrain: Harki Collective Memory in France (2003-2008)”
(Under the direction of Donald Reid)

My thesis examines the creation, transmission, and contestation of the collective memory of harkis (Algerians who fought in the French Army in the Algerian War of Independence) and their descendants. It investigates how the harkis use various cultural carriers of memory (such as films and memoirs) and organizational carriers of memory (such as association websites) to communicate their memory to other members of their community and the rest of French society. Harki memoir writers and harkis writing on association websites share a general understanding of their history, but they emphasize different moments and offer contradictory interpretations of events, which often leads to conflicts within the community. Memoir writers, who are mainly daughters of harkis, construct a memory of victimhood that is highly personal and ambiguous. Sons of harkis writing on the association websites, however, promote a more unified and static version of the past that is essentially heroic.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In the post-WWII period, scholars have become increasingly interested in the phenomenon of collective memory.¹ Traumatic events such as the Holocaust and the Algerian War of independence have provoked scholars to study how societies choose to remember, or to forget, these crises. The collective experience of remembering and forgetting constitutes an important step in nation building.² Collective remembrance, however, never follows a fixed path, and depends on a number of factors, including who is creating and who is transmitting this memory. As historians of memory have found, each of these vectors of memory plays a fundamental role in shaping the national memory of an event.³

An instance of collective memory important for understanding the legacy of the Algerian War in France, and the way collective memory functions within communities, is that of the harkis. The term “harkis” refers to Muslim soldiers who fought in the French

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¹ Collective memory is a disputed term. The definition that informs this paper is, “the way the past is represented, managed, and understood by societies.” Jo McCormack, Collective Memory: France and the Algerian War (1954-1962) (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 3.


army during the war (1954-1962). The harkis were auxiliary troops, and unlike the colonial soldiers who were drafted into the French Army during World Wars I and II and the war in Indochina, the harkis voluntarily enlisted. Although there are disputes about how clear the French were that this was a voluntary decision when they were looking for recruits, the harkis are defined by their participation in this war and specifically by their decision to fight with the French against the Algerian nationalist group, the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN). The harkis were initially trained as self-defense units for their villages against the FLN. Later on in the war, they were attached to regular French units and were used as support in the field because of their familiarity with the terrain. They supplied the French army with information and acted as translators during interrogations. The harkis also played an important symbolic role in the war because the French needed the harkis in order to argue that they had the loyalty of the Algerian population. In the Evian Accords, signed in 1962, that officially ended the war, it was stipulated that the FLN would not carry out reprisals against the harkis for their actions during the war. President Charles de Gaulle ordered the immediate withdrawal of French Troops without the harkis, citing the Evian Accords as a guarantee that the harkis would not be harmed. Yet in the first few months following Independence, the FLN killed somewhere between 30,000 and 150,000 harkis and their families. Several French army officers went against orders and arranged ways for harkis to flee to France. It is estimated that between 20 and 40 thousand harkis and their families

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4 Other names include FMR (Français musulmans rapatriés), FMA (Français musulmans d’Algérie), FSIRAN (Français de souche indigène rapatriés d’Afrique du Nord), and RONA (Rapatriés d’origine nord-africaine). During the war, the French military referred to them as “forces supplétifs.” The name “harkis” has also been applied to all “pro-French” Muslims.

5 The exact figure is contested. Le Monde notes that the estimations vary from 30,000 to 100,000. “Harkis: Ils sont aujourd’hui 400 000” In “1954-2004: France, Algérie Mémoires en Marche,” Supplement to Le Monde, October 28, 2004. Some harkis state that the number is closer to 150,000.
came to France, where they were placed in internment camps. Although the French State originally intended for this to be a temporary measure while they protected the harkis from other Algerians in France (and hid them from the French public), most harkis remained there until at least 1975 (when they were officially released from the camps) and some continue to live there.

For over forty years, their former compatriots living in both Algeria and France have branded the harkis as “traitors” or “collaborators” for their role in this conflict. The harkis’ wives and their children have also carried the stigma by association. Within populations of North African origin in France, the term “harki” has now come to be used as a slur to designate anyone seen as collaborating with the French of European origin. The French State, in the context of a general national “forgetting” of the Algerian War, ignored the harkis because their existence aroused painful memories of the divisive conflict. Most harkis internalized this shamed identity and stayed silent for many years about their past.

Since 2003, however, the harkis have become more visible in France as second-generation harkis have begun speaking out about their experiences, and those of their parents, through memoirs and novels, scholarly texts, association websites, court cases and films. In contrast to their parents’ silence about their traumatic past, these harkis have actively worked to construct a harki collective memory and identity group. These expressive outlets have served as ways for harkis to explain their controversial past both to each other and to people outside their community. They have also, however, constituted sites of conflict as harkis disagree about how to best present their history. Their particular ways of remembering the

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6 This number is also contested. Some sources indicate as many as thirty thousand harkis came to France. In total, about 90,000 pro-French Muslims were repatriated in France. This number includes the harkis, their families, and various Muslim civil servants. “Harkis: Ils sont aujourd'hui 400 000” In “1954-2004: France, Algérie Mémoires en Marche,” Supplement to Le Monde, October 28, 2004.
past form the basis upon which second-generation harkis construct their identities and provide a platform from which to act as a group. Studying the history and nature of harki collective memory remains essential to understanding this community and how the phenomenon of collective memory functions more generally.

Historians examining collective memory on a national level have been interested in the various ways that societies transmit and regulate memories. Henry Rousso has made an important contribution to this scholarship in *The Vichy Syndrome*, in which he identified certain “carriers” of memory and described how they help shape the collective memory of an event. Rousso defined a “carrier” as “any source that proposes a deliberate reconstruction of an event for a social purpose.”

7 The various carriers he has identified can be grouped under four general categories: official carriers, organizational carriers, cultural carriers, and scholarly carriers. He explained that governments produce official carriers of memory, which include ceremonies, monuments, and other forms of commemoration. Organizational carriers of memory, on the other hand, are constructed by groups of people who “join organizations for the purpose of preserving and unifying the personal memories of group members. Groups sometimes become attached to a rather static image of the past, which they then promote actively as well as passively.”

8 Cultural carriers of memory present even more diversified views of the past, and express what appear to be highly individualistic memories through a variety of media, such as literature, film, and television. Rousso noted that since these carriers present their message in artistic form, this message is usually implicit rather than explicit. Finally, scholarly carriers of memory, including works of history, “reconstruct

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7 Rousso, *Vichy Syndrome*, 219.
8 Ibid, 221.
the facts and propose ways of interpreting them.”

Rousso explained that while scholarly carriers seem critically detached and objective, they are simply another way that people construct and transmit collective memory.

Although harki collective memory operates at a group, rather than a national, level, Rousso’s general categories constitute useful ways of organizing and understanding harki carriers of memory. Harkis rely on many of the same channels to make their memory public. Because the French State has officially recognized the harki past only to a very limited extent, the harkis mainly utilize scholarly, cultural, and organizational carriers.

Scholarly research developed as the first public carrier of harki collective memory. After participating in the general amnesia surrounding the Algerian War for nearly thirty years, French scholars began to study the harkis and their unique role in the Algerian War in the early 1990s. Their work coincided with a more general trend toward national memory studies in France, particularly those regarding the Vichy Regime and the Algerian War. These works have relied mainly on the Freudian tradition in memory studies, which uses Freud’s work on trauma and the subconscious to argue that the repression of memories has had negative consequences for French society. Since that time, there have been a number of significant works about the harkis, some of them written by scholars who are children of

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9 Ibid.

10 For many years, the harkis had no official commemoration. In 2001, however, the French State formally recognized the harkis’ contributions during the Algerian War in the form of a plaque in the Invalides in Paris and a national day of remembrance. The plaque reads, “La République française témoigne sa reconnaissance envers les rapatriés anciens membres des formations supplétives et assimilés ou victimes de la captivité en Algérie pour les sacrifices qu’ils ont consentis.” It was unveiled during the first ‘Journée d’hommage national aux harkis’ on 25 September 2001. This day has since become an annual commemoration. McCormack, Collective Memory, 23.


12 McCormack, Collective Memory, 4.
harkis themselves. Most scholars interested in the harkis have examined patterns of chronic forgetting regarding the harkis, with a particular emphasis on constructing a historical narrative of the harki past and rewriting them back into the French narrative of this war and its aftermath.\textsuperscript{13} Their work has been instrumental in bringing about official French awareness on the plight of the harkis.

Another group of scholars, mainly sociologists, have focused on the harkis themselves, studying the way memory is, or is not, transmitted within families.\textsuperscript{14} They have observed and carefully documented a causal relationship between the silence of the fathers regarding their past and the second-generation harkis’ move to activism.\textsuperscript{15} Their work has produced a general understanding of the oral transmission of harki memory, on a private, familial level. None of these works have examined the public formation and transmission of collective memory among the harkis.

More recently, cultural carriers of memory, in the form of memoirs, novels, and films have become important ways that the harkis present narratives of their past. These cultural


carriers provide testimonies of individual suffering, from the beginning of the Algerian War to the present day. Their audience appears to be the Euro-French community and non-harki Algerian immigrants, from whom they seek to evoke sympathy and understanding. Harki memoirs have constituted a popular form of cultural carriers, as evidenced by the fact that six personal memoirs and collections of testimonies were published in the three-year span between 2003 and 2006. One of these memoirs, *Leïla: Avoir Dix-Sept Ans Dans Un Camp De Harkis* (Leïla, Seventeen Years Old in a Harki Camp), was made into a feature film, entitled *Harkis*. It was shown at primetime on France 2, a major national television network in France, and is now available on DVD.16 *Harkis* was heavily advertised in major French newspapers before its showing and it has reached an even wider audience than the memoirs, making it arguably the most visible representation of harki collective memory in French society.17

All six of the memoirs were written by two daughters of harkis, Dalila Kerchouche and Fatima Besnaci-Lancou, and their works are best understood in the context of other second-generation memory work regarding the Algerian War. As the generation of people who lived through the war grows older, many of them want to free themselves from the burden of their past and to record their place in history. At the same time, younger generations want to uncover their origins and to know what role their father or grandfather played in this war. Scholars have observed this phenomenon among both French youth and

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16 *Harkis* was shown on Tuesday October 10, 2006, at 8:50pm on France2.

17 Harkis.info, http://www.harkis.info (accessed March 18, 2008). Posted by Anonyme on October 11, 2006 at 11:39, on the subject "« Débat chez moi autour du Film Harkis." « Mardi soir sur France 2, le téléfilm inédit Harkis avec Smaïn a été plébiscité plus de 6.22 millions de téléspectateurs, soit 26.2% de part de marché. La fiction française a particulièrement séduit les plus de 50 ans avec 40.2% de part de marché sur cette cible. La chaîne publique "se félicite" de ce succès qui permet de la placer en tête des audiences de la soirée. » In the footnotes, I have provided the original text and have not corrected the grammar.
youth of Algerian origin. As these memoirs demonstrate, it also occurs among harki children.

Second-generation harkis, predominantly sons of harkis, have also begun to form and join organizations dedicated to preserving the harki memory and to providing a platform for collective action. These associations have held a strong appeal for harkis and their descendants looking to participate in a community, and over five hundred harki associations exist in France today. Although some harki associations were formed as early as 1971, when harkis began leaving the internment camps, these early associations existed only on a local level. The organizations did not communicate with one another and therefore had limited audiences. Little is known about these associations, most of which disappeared by the end of the 1970s. The second generation of harkis, however, has carried out a “veritable revolution” in the realm of associations, creating new organizations, making them more public, and coordinating between them. Since 2006, harki associations have taken advantage of the opportunities offered by the internet to create websites on which they can express their views. The two most popular association websites are “Harkis.info” and the “Coalition Nationale des Harkis et des Associations de Harkis.” These websites have allowed the associations to reach a wider audience of harkis, as well as non-harkis. This has made them important carriers of organizational memory. The sites provide a forum open to anyone for discussions about the harki past and identity, and these organizations can thus

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18 Benjamin Stora, Cited in McCormack, Collective Memory, 48.


claim to represent more of the harki population than the cultural carriers, such as memoirs or films.

Websites also constitute a new type of source that is particularly useful for memory studies. Because of the public nature of discussions on the sites, historians can observe quite clearly the construction, and policing, of memory as a historical process. Website administrators establish on the site an official memory for the association, which they update through various articles expressing their official response to current events. Furthermore, they regulate what is posted on the discussion board forums by both removing offensive posts and by lecturing posters about the proper perspective on issues of collective memory and identity.

Collective memory studies have recently begun to examine conflicts in the production of cultural memory and the ways in which various carriers of memory can express different memories. Although the term ‘collective memory’ implies a consensus, the way the past is remembered is often disputed in societies. Minority groups frequently challenge official state memory and suggest their own historical narrative.\(^\text{21}\) In France, many of the groups radically opposed to one another during the Algerian War (such as the pieds-noirs, the FLN, and the harkis) now each have their own, often mutually hostile, memories. Divisions exist as well within the different groups about how to interpret the past or commemorate the war.\(^\text{22}\)

No one has, as of yet, examined the significant divisions that exist within the harki community with regard to their collective memory. The challenge has lain in uncovering these divisions. If one were to examine only scholarly and/or cultural carriers of memory, as


\(^{22}\) McCormack, *Collective Memory* 5.
some scholars have, then harki collective memory would appear to be a rather unified and uncontested entity. By looking at the organizations and their websites, however, a more complicated picture emerges, with various carriers strongly contesting the other vectors of collective memory.

Memoirs and association websites tell essentially the same history, but frame their narratives in distinctive ways. Although they share a general understanding of the history of the harkis, they emphasize different moments in the past and offer contradictory interpretations of events. Disagreements arise as a result of differences in the way these two carriers of memory function and who produces them. Even though both carriers are produced by second-generation harkis, memoir writers represent individuals and do not have the same motivations as organizational leaders, who act in the name of the collectivity. Furthermore, the forms of harki collective memory are gendered, as it is women who write the memoirs and predominantly men who join the associations and establish the websites. Harki is a male-coded category, since it was originally as soldiers that people become harkis, and their families become harkis by association with this male figure. Women writers, however, contest the designation “harki” in a way that men, even the sons of harkis, do not. Daughters are more interested than male descendants of harkis in exonerating their fathers and their families from the stigma of “traitors” by portraying the harkis as victims. Daughters of harkis also seek to form a larger collectivity with other people of Algerian origin in France. Harki sons, however, venerate their fathers. They categorically dismiss the traitor identity, valorize the harki experience, and maintain the distinction between the harkis and French of Algerian origin.

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Disagreements over framing have led to important, and often hostile, conflicts among harkis. These carriers of memory are competing for the same memory space within their community, but they are also competing to influence French memory of the harki past. Both memoir writers and harkis in associations react strongly to the exclusion they have experienced from the French and Franco-Algerians and therefore want to correct and influence the dominant understandings of their history. It is this experience of exclusion that unites them as harkis and forms the basis for their harki identity. All carriers of harki collective memory seek to rehabilitate the harki image to gain some form of integration and acceptance, and association harkis are particularly militant in their efforts to publicly denounce and revise what they see as “anti-harki” interpretations produced by non-harkis. Thus, harki collective memory functions within the context of French and Algerian national memories of the war and its aftermath, and seeks to integrate itself into these memories, not to create a separate memory community.

Memoir writers and association harkis, however, convey disparate self-understandings as harkis and disagree over whether they should be remembered as Franco-Algerians or as French soldiers, as victims or as heroes. As they fight negative interpretations of the harkis, the struggle between memoir writers and association harkis over the right of representation becomes even more significant. At stake is not only their parents’ legacy, but also their own self-identity and future place in French society.
CHAPTER 2: CONFLICTING MEMORIES

EMPHASIS

Although memoir writers and organizational websites construct fundamentally the same historical narrative, they emphasize different events in that narrative. The memoirs concentrate on describing the internment camps and articulating the injustices harkis suffered in France. For the harkis writing memoirs, an extremely significant part of the harki experience, and therefore a defining aspect of their identity, was growing up and living in the internment camps. They also provide examples of the continuing mistreatment of harkis by the French State and the psychological consequences these injustices have had on the harkis.

The first harki memoir to be published, written by Dalila Kerchouche in 2003, retraces her family’s journey from Algeria through the various internment camps they inhabited.24 Most of the text describes the deplorable living conditions in these camps and the blatant racism of the camp director and his wife toward the harkis as individuals of North African origin. While conducting the research for this memoir, Kerchouche encountered many harkis and recorded their stories in another work she published in 2003, Destins des Harkis. Like Kerchouche’s own narrative, many of the life histories in Destins stress the hardships of life in post-1962 France.

Kerchouche’s second memoir, *Leïla: Avoir Dix-Sept Ans Dans Un Camp De Harkis*, reconstructs her sister’s experiences growing up in harki camps, with a particular emphasis on events in 1972, the year Leïla was seventeen years old.\(^{25}\) It was around this time that the children of harkis began to protest against the conditions of the camps in which they were confined to live, eventually leading to revolts in several of the camps in 1975 and their dismantling in 1976.\(^{26}\) Some harkis remained in the other camps, however, having nowhere else to go. Living in these harki camps, which Kerchouche equates with imprisonment, robs the narrator of her youth and leaves her with anxieties and insecurities that are apparent even thirty years later. Reflecting on her relative luck in comparison to the fate of her childhood companions in the camps, the narrator laments, “How many children of harkis became shattered adults?...They self-destruct, ending the long work of undermining begun in the camps. In practically every harki family, a son has killed himself.”\(^{27}\) The theme of second-generation male harki suicide, a psychological consequence of a childhood spent in camps and amid both anti-harki discrimination and racism in France, reappears in each of Kerchouche’s works and reveals the continuing anguish these experiences have produced. Her older brother committed suicide when he was thirty-five years old and she tries to make sense of this event through reconstructing and reliving the harki past in these memoirs. This particular memoir, *Leïla*, suggests that even if harki history did not begin in 1972, it constituted a pivotal moment in their past.


\(^{27}\) Kerchouche, *Leïla*, 145. « Combien d’enfants de harkis sont devenus des adultes brisés… ?...Ils s’autodétruisent, terminent le long travail de sape commencé dans les camps. Dans quasiment toutes les familles de harkis, un fils s’est suicidé.»
The first feature film on the harkis, entitled *Harkis*, was based on this memoir. Like *Leïla*, the film takes place in 1972 in a harki camp and only occasionally references what the main characters (Leïla Benamar and her family) experienced before they arrived there. The film’s main antagonist is the head of the camp, who commits numerous injustices against the harkis. For example, when Leïla’s uncle writes a letter to a local official to complain about conditions in the camp, the head of the camp sends him to a special wing in a mental institution set up specifically for “crazy” harkis. He claims to have the harkis’ best interests at heart, but after Leïla’s father inquires about his brother, his pay is cut in half. When Leïla’s uncle finally returns home, he is completely mute and unresponsive. The head of the camp humiliates the harkis through his actions while continually espousing official State rhetoric about the French being grateful for their service. Thus, Kerchouche devotes significantly more time in her works to criticizing the French State than she does to condemning the FLN for the 1962 massacres that precipitated the harkis’ departure for France. She emphasizes that it was the French who treated them unjustly, and they share an experience of being mistreated with other Algerians living in France’s republican model of integration.

In contrast, for harki association leaders, the defining event in harki history occurred between April and September of 1962, when French troops pulled out of Algeria and left the harkis vulnerable to the exactions of the FLN. They disagree with the memoir writers about the number of harkis and their families killed in the reprisal massacres. The film *Harkis* states that between fifty and eighty thousand harkis and their families were massacred.²⁸

Website administrators, however, claim that one hundred and fifty thousand were killed.\textsuperscript{29} Also, unlike Kerchouche and Besnaci-Lancou, the website administrators refer to the massacres as the “harki genocide,” giving the event added gravity and significance.

The websites’ emphasis on the massacres is reflected in the chronology of events the associations post on their websites, in their association mission statements, and in their discussions about harki identity on discussion board forums. On “Le site de la communauté harkie,” website administrators have posted a timeline of events in harki history. They highlight in bold the entry, “\textbf{July: Algerian independence after 130 years of French presence – Beginning of the harkis massacres},” describe the harkis arriving in France and settling in camps, and then end their chronology in the winter of 1962.\textsuperscript{30} On “Harkis.info,” the site administrators do not mention the camps in their sections entitled “Who are the Harkis?” or “Why create this site?”\textsuperscript{31} Similarly, besides a vague reference to the mistreatment of four generations of harkis, the “Coalition Nationale des Harkis et des Associations de Harkis” [hereafter “Coalition Nationale”] website virtually ignores the internment camps experience in favor of descriptions and passionate denunciations of the “harki genocide.”\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{29} Coalition Nationale des Harkis, (accessed on October 16, 2008), « Benjamin STORA finise mais ne colorise pas l’Algérie » Posted by Khader Mouffi on 08-06-2006.

\textsuperscript{30} Harkis.org, « Histoire », http://www.harkis.org/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=3 (accessed April 15, 2008). « Juillet : indépendance de l’Algérie après 130 années de présence française - Début des massacres de harkis. » The website appears with a link on the word « massacres » to disturbing photos of harkis who had been massacred by the FLN.


\textsuperscript{32} Coalition Nationale des Harkis et des Associations de Harkis, « Bienvenue sur le site de la Coalition Nationale des Harkis » http://www.coalition-harkis.com/content/view/13/167/ (accessed April 15, 2008).
Website administrators explain that setting the film *Harkis* in 1972 is misleading because it occludes the events that came before, thus leaving the novice French viewer uninformed about the true “harki drama.” Furthermore, in response to efforts made by memoir writers and their associates to speak out about human rights violations in the camps, a post on “Harkis.info” reads, “On that day [in 1962], how many granddaughters did not have the privilege of going to the camps and were sent back to be massacred on the Algiers port? Where was the League of the Rights of Man then?” For these leaders, it is not the personal and psychological experience of the camps and French racism, but rather the collective experience of the massacres and abandonment that are most important. This renders members of the FLN, those who committed the “harki genocide”, as the clear antagonists in this narrative.

**THE CHOICE QUESTION**

Another difference between these carriers of memory is that the memoirs suggest the harkis had no choice but to fight on the side of the French and were simply victims of a tragic and futile historical situation. Memoir writer Fatima Besnaci-Lancou has served as President of “L’association Harkis et Droits de l’Homme,” an association that declares in its mission statement that “For the Association for Harkis and the Rights of Man, the harkis’ history is part of the global history of colonization and the harkis did not all make “the choice” of

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33 Coalition Nationale des Harkis, (accesssed on September 21, 2008). « Supercherie racoleuse sur France 2, Les Harkis n’étaient qu’un !!! » Posted by Khader Moufli on 11-10-2006, « que peut-on retenir de ce film qui débute, en 1972, soit dix années après la signature des Accords d’Evian, le 18 mars 1962, le "génocide harki" (plus de 150000 anciens supplétifs massacrés après le cessez-le-feu violé du 19 mars 1962 à 12 heures) et leur “exode massif” vers les "camps de concentration" et la "mort sociale programmée et maintenue" grâce à la République Française ? »

France. This position is fundamentally different from the dominant idea.”\(^{35}\) The memoir writers wonder, after all, why harkis would have “chosen” to fight for France “despite the abandonment, the massacres, the internment, the forgetting, the contempt and the humiliation.”\(^{36}\) They demonstrate that this “choice” was not made under normal circumstances and that, contrary to popular understanding, the harkis lacked any agency or any viable alternatives.

In the memoirs, second generation harkis seek to understand why their parents would have chosen to fight with the French. This question drives Kerchouche’s memoir, Mon Père, Ce Harki, and she begins by writing, “I am the daughter of harkis. I write this word with a lowercase ‘h’, as in honte [shame]. During the Algerian War, my father, an Algerian, fought in the ranks of the French army against the FLN, the National Liberation Front of the country. How could he support colonization against independence, preferring submission to liberty? I don’t understand. He has never spoken to me about it.”\(^{37}\) Since she has learned from her French and Franco-Algerian peers to be ashamed of her harki identity, she struggles to understand why her father committed the shameful act of defending the colonizer. A woman Kerchouche interviews for Destins de Harkis expresses a similar, yet even more forceful, sentiment. “I hold a grudge against my father and my mother for having entangled


\(^{37}\) Kerchouche, Mon père, 13. « Je suis une fille de harkis. J’écris ce mot avec un petit ‘h’, comme honte. Pendant la guerre d’Algérie, mon père, un Algérien, s’est battu dans les rangs de l’armée française contre le FLN, le Front de libération nationale du pays. Comment a-t-il pu soutenir la colonisation contre l’indépendance, préférer la soumission à la liberté ? Je ne comprends pas. Il ne m’en a jamais parlé. »
us, their children, in this history. They made us into children of traitors. I hate the word ‘harki,’ with all my being. It’s an intolerable guilt. I am ashamed to be a harki. I hold a grudge against my parents for having chosen France. When I speak to my mother about it, she responds that they didn’t have a choice.” Second generation harkis thus raise the question of choice and demand a justification for this fateful decision.

The first generation responds to their children in these memoirs by explaining that the dominant narrative, which portrays the harkis as having “chosen” France, deceptively implies that other viable options existed. The most common justification these harkis give for fighting with the French is that their families were caught between the violence of the French army and the FLN. They explain that very often the only way of protecting their families from both sides was to join the French. In Fatima Besnaci-Lancou’s memoir, part of the definition she gives for harkis is “[Algerians who were either] former soldiers or became harkis to protect their families from exactions of the French army or from those of the FLN.” Besnaci-Lancou also collected life histories from thirteen, now elderly, harki soldiers in Treize Chibanis Harkis. One of these harkis states that he would never have fought with the French if he had not been “caught between two fires.” He describes these fires as “that of independence fighters who persecuted us at night and that, during the day, of French soldiers who did not hesitate to search, imprison, and torture, often leading to death.”

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Besnaci-Lancou addresses in her memoir the dilemma of whether the harkis can be condemned for having fought with the French if they were acting out of necessity to protect their children. She says, “A question haunts me: Just how far must one fight for a country? Is it better to defend one’s children or one’s land?”

She concludes that while the FLN members were good independence fighters and Algerian nationalists, the harkis had no choice if they wanted to be good fathers. This sentiment is echoed in the film *Harkis*, during a powerful scene in which Leïla questions why her father would fight for the French and calls him a traitor. Her mother responds by saying that her father always did what was best for the family and deplores the misery of the situation in Algeria. Thus, the harkis were not traitors to their country, but rather victims of its complicated history.

In the memoirs, this same lack of control and agency continues to plague the second generation. Kerchouche explains in *Mon Père, Ce Harki* that her brother changed his name, Abdelkader, to Paul, a move she originally saw as a second betrayal. “After the father’s betrayal comes that of the son. One betrayed his country, the other his origins. Now, looking back, I understand that both of them perhaps didn’t have a choice.” Her brother had decided to change his name in order to escape French discrimination towards immigrants of North African origin and thus be able to get a job. Finally, the title of one collection of memoirs, *Destins de Harkis*, reflects the idea that the fate of harkis is a matter of providence.

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40 Besnaci-Lancou, *Treize Chibanis*, 59. « pris entre deux feux », « Celui des indépendantistes qui nous persécutaient la nuit et celui, de jour, des militaires français qui n’hésitaient pas à fouiller, emprisonner et torturer, parfois jusqu’à la mort. »


One daughter of a harki explains that although she would like to move away from the internment camp in which she grew up, she feels paralyzed and unable to act. She confesses, “I blame my mother for having wasted my life. She responds that nothing could be done, that it’s the harkis’ fate. Like my father, I was stuck, I didn’t have a choice.”

Like many other harkis, of both generations, she feels resigned to her fate as a harki.

The association websites, however, present a different image of harki agency. “Harkis.info” describes the harkis as “those who chose to remain French,” thus emphasizing the fact that they made a choice. The website administrator states that claiming the harkis did not make a conscious political choice for France is “an insult to our ancestors.” This site also declares in its mission statement that one of the reasons for its creation is that they wanted “a place where we could tell our Harki brothers that we did not make the wrong choice, contrary to what Mr. B. Stora [Benjamin Stora, a historian of collective memory on the Algerian War] has said.” Many of the people posting on the websites do not question why their fathers became harkis. As one harki writes on the discussion board forum, “we no longer ask ourselves this question because we know that our parents made the right choice.”

They therefore assert that not only did their parents make a choice to defend

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44 Kerchouche and Gladieu, Destins de Harkis, 93. « Je reproche à ma mère de m’avoir gâché la vie. Elle me répond qu’elle n’y est pour rien, que c’est le destin des harkis. Comme mon père, j’étais coincée, je n’avais pas le choix. »

45 Harkis.info, « Qui sont les harkis ? » « ceux qui ont choisi de rester français. »

46 Harkis.info, (accessed on September 18, 2008) « Harkis ou Harki? » Posted by Massai on 17 octobre 2006, « nos représentants auto-proclamés continuent à insulter la mémoire de nos anciens en les faisant passer pour des imbéciles sans courage »

47 Harkis.info. « Qui sont les harkis ? » « Un endroit où nous voulons dire à nos frères Harkis que nous n’avons pas fait le mauvais choix, contrairement aux déclarations de Monsieur B. STORA. »

48 Coalition Nationale des Harkis, (accessed on February 18, 2008). Posted by Sylv on May 19, 2006 at 18:07, on the subject « Identité » « nous ne nous posons plus cette question car nos parents ont fait le bon choix. »
France and French values, but they made the correct choice. According to one harki, “you cannot say that the Harkis are simply mercenaries. They fought for their families, their villages and their security. And they loved this country that was France.” This interpretation argues that no one forced the harkis to fight, but rather they courageously rose to the occasion and fought to defend both their families and their country.

For people participating on these sites, a central aspect of the harki identity is the ideological decision to defend France. One harki lyrically explains that harki means “being of Algerian origin, being French and having made a humane, responsible choice.”

Another harki proudly states, “I am the direct descendant of a community that sacrificed its land, its life, its identity for an ideology.” According to these harkis, sharing common ideas provides a stronger basis for group identity than coming from the same the same land. This choice binds them to one another and to the “native French” far more tightly than their incidentally mutual place of birth ties them to other Algerians.

THE “INDEPENDENCE” NARRATIVE

The memoirs and websites also present conflicting narratives about Algerian independence. The memoirs suggest that most Algerians, including the harkis, wanted to

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50 Harkis.info (accessed March 12, 2008). Posted by zozo on October 19, 2006 at 20:04, on the subject « Être un(e) enfant de harki » « Car Harki, / C'est être d'origine algérienne, / C'est être français, / C'est avoir fait un choix humain assumé. »


52 Harkis.info, (accessed March 12, 2008). Posted by Massai on October 20, 2006 at 13:56, on the subject « Être un(e) enfant de harki » « il ne suffit pas d'une terre ou d'un pays pour forger une identité mais plutôt un ensemble d'idées, de pensées de points communs. »
achieve independence, just not in the brutal way the FLN went about it. For these harkis, the real culprit in this story is French colonialism. One harki soldier declares, “It is the injustice done to Algerians, for 130 years, that is responsible! We walked with bare feet and were starving throughout all the years that Algeria was French.”\textsuperscript{53} Without colonialism, there would have been no independence struggle to begin with. Thus, Besnaci-Lancou declares in the preface to her memoir that France’s colonial history made her the “daughter of a harki.”\textsuperscript{54}

By positing colonialism as a common enemy for both the harkis and the FLN, the memoirs convey the sense that the majority of Algerians were in favor of an independent Algeria. Kerchouche provides a figure in one of her memoirs that, according to a report by the UN from 1962, there were “263,000 pro-French Muslims” during the whole war.\textsuperscript{55} This implies, therefore, that the other 9 million Algerians were, in some way, anti-French. Besnaci-Lancou corroborates this implication by presenting the testimonies of numerous harki soldiers who explain that they were generally in favor of Algerian independence. As one harki explains, “Of course I wished for Algerian independence. Only, I refused the violence, especially toward civilians.”\textsuperscript{56} Moreover, in the film \textit{Harkis}, Saïd Benamar declares that even though he fought with the French, he wasn’t “for French Algeria.”\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{53} Besnaci-Lancou, \textit{Treize Chibanis}, 19. « C’est l’injustice faite aux Algériens, pendant 130 ans, qui est responsable ! Nous marchions pieds nus et nous ne mangions pas à notre faim pendant toutes les années où l’Algérie a été française »

\textsuperscript{54} Besnaci-Lancou, \textit{Fille de harki}, 13. « L’histoire coloniale de France a fait de moi une fille de harki. »

\textsuperscript{55} Kerchouche, \textit{Mon père}, 23.

\textsuperscript{56} Besnaci-Lancou, \textit{Treize Chibanis}, 17. « Moi, l’indépendance de l’Algérie, bien sur que je la souhaitais. Seulement, je refusais la violence, surtout sur les civils »

The websites offer a very different version of this historical narrative and posit their history as “the true History of the Harkis.”\textsuperscript{58} In her memoir, Besnaci-Lancou begins her chronology of harki history in 1830 with the “Conquest of Algeria by France.”\textsuperscript{59} The chronology on “Le site de la communauté harkie,” however, declares that in 1830 “France takes the city of Algiers” and in 1834, “France gives the name Algeria to its African possessions and decides to stay there.”\textsuperscript{60} This distinction is significant because harki association leaders argue that “Algeria” did not exist before the French arrived there. The moderator of the “Coalition Nationale” website, Khader,\textsuperscript{61} revises the narrative that the memoirs support, writing “Concerning Algeria…France unified, constituted and developed this country that did not exist before 1830 and that was, beforehand, under the domination of the Ottoman Empire!!! The falsification of History resides precisely in considering Algeria as a sovereign and constituted country that was invaded and occupied by a colonial power.”\textsuperscript{62} Carrying this argument even further, Massai, the moderator of “Harkis.info,” writes, “Algeria was a French creation. Before that there was Algiers, a port that practiced pirating. The


\textsuperscript{59} Besnaci-Lancou, \textit{Fille de harki}, 123. « Conquête de l’Algérie par la France »


\textsuperscript{61} The moderator of the “Coalition Nationale des Harkis ” is Khader Moulfi. Since he uses the name Khader on the website, that is the name I will use to refer to him.

\textsuperscript{62} Coalition Nationale des Harkis, (accessed on February 18, 2008). Posted by Khader on October 17, 2006, on the subject « Le film "Harkis" avec Smaïn diffusé sur France 2 » « Concernant l’Algérie,…la France a unifié, constitué et développé, ce pays qui n'existait pas, avant 1830 et, qui était, auparavant, sous la domination de l'Empire Ottoman !!! La falsification de l'Histoire réside, justement, dans le fait de considérer, l'Algérie, comme un pays souverain et constitué, qui fut envahi et occupé par une puissance coloniale. »
prisoners, often Christians, were resold as slaves.” His negative perception of pre-colonial Algiers indicates that he is far more favorable toward colonialism than the memoir writers.

This point of view is shared by Khader, who argues that the harkis and their families were not victims of French colonialism, but rather “victims of decolonization,” as carried out by the FLN. All of their suffering came from this process. According to Khader, the harkis are not the only ones to have suffered more from the actions of the FLN than from the French presence. As he writes, “I’ll repeat again that Algeria’s ‘misfortunes’ aren’t the result of ‘colonization’ but of its ‘decolonization,’ which was ruined by the corrupt FLNist dictators.” He argues thus that Algerians today have the FLN, and not France, to thank for their current misfortunes.

Furthermore, the websites’ narrative of independence conveniently contends that the harkis could not have been traitors to Algeria, because the nation did not exist before 1962. As Khader explains, “First of all, you say: ‘why did my father volunteer in the French army?’ I answer you, simply, it’s because Algeria was France, one and indivisible!!!”

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64 Coalition Nationale des Harkis (accessed September 21, 2008), « Attention une pro-harkis prémouée peut c » Posted by Khader on 04-11-2006 in response to the article « Les Harkis Vs Les Marianne de la Diversité et le FLN !!! », « Or, les harkis et leurs familles sont, en réalité, des "victimes de la décolonisation" puisque le "drame harki" (génocide de 150000 harkis après le 19 mars 1962, parage dans des camps de concentration, mort sociale programmée et maintenue, ...) a commencé, à partir de la fin de la pacification et, de la remise "clé en main", de l’Algérie, au FLN. »

65 Coalition Nationale des Harkis, (accessed October 16, 2008), « Les Kabyles sont hétérogènes ! », Posted by Khader Moulfi on 06-10-2007 in response to the article “L'Ennemi Intime : un film de propagande à la sous-Rambo !!! », « Je persiste et signe que les "malheurs", de l'Algérie, ne résultent pas de la "colonisation" (sur lequel il me faudrait un très long débat objectif pour développer mon analyse) mais, exclusivement, de sa "décolonisation" ratée et spoliée par les "satrapes flnistes corrompus" !!! »

66 Coalition Nationale des Harkis. (accessed on February 18, 2008). Posted by Khader on May 19, 2006, on the subject « Identité » « Tout d'abord, tu dis : "pouquoi mon père s'est-il engagé dans l'armée française ?". Je te répondrai, simplement, parce que l'Algérie c'était la France une et indivisible !!! »
fought with the French because Algeria was France and, according to this logic, they were therefore defending their own country from terrorists. Massai writes, “Algeria was born in 1962; before it was France. And those who loved this region loved France. Those who wanted to change it to have more equality also loved France. Those who wanted to change it to put in place a Stalinesque power and to repress the Kabyle identity hated France but hated equally Algeria because it was not a country composed solely of Arabs and Muslims.”

The website administrators in fact contest the name “Algerian War” given to the conflict by the French State in 1999, because this would imply a war between two nations. Instead, they prefer the term “pacification efforts” that was originally used by the French to describe their counterterrorist efforts in the region.

The websites, therefore, challenge the idea that most Algerians favored independence. The moderator of “Harkis.info”, Massai, warns, “don’t let yourself be seduced by the popular myths of the Algerian revolution spread by the FLN and all the Algerian people. The Harkis, far more numerous than the members of the FLN, are the proof that this myth is false and that’s what bothers them. Know that up until ’61, everyone was behind France.”

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68 Coalition Nationale des Harkis (accessed September 21, 2008), « STORA vers la rédemption ?” Posted by Khader on 04-10-2007 in response to the article « L’Ennemi Intime : un film de propagande à la sous-Rambo !!! »

69 Stora, La gangrène et l’oubli, 13.

argues that “no one had this notion of independence” and that, out of ten million Algerians, only a few thousand decided to act in favor of it. The “Coalition Nationale” website explains, “With the enlisted and the volunteers in the regular regiments, the Muslim soldiers were four times more numerous in the French ranks than in those of the ALN [the military branch of the FLN], of which almost the entirety were stationed outside the (Algerian) borders!”

TONE

Finally, the memoirs and websites provide differing interpretations on the nature of the harki past. In the memoirs, the authors present not only their own narratives, but also numerous other stories, which demonstrates the diversity of harki experiences. For them, being a harki, or the child of a harki, is a very individual experience, full of complexities and contradictions. As Amar Assas observes in the post-face of one of Besnaci-Lancou’s works, “this question of ‘choice’ can only find its answer in each individual story. As we know, there was no autonomous and organized system of Harkis.” Each narrative tells a story with certain aspects of the harki narrative (threat of massacre, abandonment, time in internment camps, discrimination), but not everyone had or describes all these experiences.
Moreover, many harkis, even within the same book of memoirs, have differing perspectives on their lives. Thus, instead of arguing that there was a single harki past, the memoirs present multiple interpretations of the past, and the overall effect is a very heterogeneous understanding of the harkis.

One personal narrative in the collection assembled by Besanci-Lancou that demonstrates the extreme complexity of the harki past is that of a harki soldier who explains that his father was killed by the French soldiers because he was a member of the FLN. Therefore, he says, he is both a harki and the son of an Algerian martyr.\(^74\) In *Nos mères, Paroles blessées*, Besnaci-Lancou presents the varied stories and experiences of thirteen wives of harkis. These women express views that range from gratitude toward France to hatred of the country. One woman believes that she and her family are fully integrated in France and two others claim they are happy to be in France because there is running water and their children have access to education. Another harki wife avoids criticizing the way France treated the harkis and their families because she is simply grateful to have been saved from the massacres. Some of the testimonies, however, present more ambivalent attitudes toward the French and the FLN. One woman says she just wants to be accepted in France; another admits that although the French looked after her and her family in the camps, they did not care for them well. A third blames both the French and the FLN equally for her misfortune. Finally, two of the women place all of the blame for their tragic lives and their unhappiness on France.\(^75\)


In general, both the French and the Algerian FLN play the antagonists in the memoirs and personal narratives. These works place blame on the French for their violence in Algeria and their treatment of harkis in France, as well as on the FLN for its violence against civilians and the post-independence massacres. Sometimes they are blamed equally within the same narrative. In *Mon Père, Ce Harki*, Kerchouche writes that “I was as disappointed in France as I was in Algeria. The two countries betrayed their ideals.”76 Another harki writes that as a harki, during the war, he saw many horrors. Whether it was among the soldiers, the harkis, or the independence fighters, there were men who behaved like savages. He was most disgusted to discover the alliance of certain settlers with the FLN. These settlers gave money to the independence fighters who, in return, did not bother them. “War drives people crazy,” he writes. 77 Before he enlisted in the army, he witnessed the death of a man by his own brothers because he was a French functionary and refused to step down. He explains that many people on both sides behaved in shameful, dishonorable ways during the war.

By making public the diversity of harki experiences, the memoir writers are denying the existence of a harki collective experience. In response to the negative perception of harkis held by many Euro-French and Franco-Algerians, they refute the idea that “harki” means any one particular thing. They generally present the harkis as victims, but they want to educate as many people about the harki past as they can, and therefore they leave room for other interpretations. On the website for Besnaci-Lancou’s association, “L'association Harkis et Droits de l'Homme,” she provides information on all works about the harkis without disparaging or endorsing any of them.

76 Kerchouche, *Mon père*, 250. « Je suis déçue par la France autant que je le suis par l’Algérie. Les deux pays ont trahi leurs idéaux. »

77 Kerchouche and Gladieu, *Destins de Harkis*, 100. « la guerre rend fou »
The websites, on the other hand, present a far less nuanced version of the past. The association leaders are more opinionated and want to educate harkis and non-harkis on the “right” version of history. Each site provides a unified explanation of who the harkis are and a single understanding of their history. This narrative serves as the basis for their “apolitical and militant collectivity” and allows little room for variation.\(^78\) Their interpretation entails a rigid, Manichean understanding of the past in which the harkis are the heroes, and members of the FLN are the evil forces. As one post explains, “the reasons why our parents enlisted in the French army were, as most of us on this site know, the barbaric acts of the FLN toward our brave parents, who took up arms to avoid falling into the yoke of despotism.”\(^79\)

Although harkis present a range of views and interpretations on the discussion board forums, each site has a moderator who regulates what people post. These moderators reserve the right to remove posts (usually made by visitors to the site) that they find offensive.\(^80\) One contentious interaction that was not removed took place between a person calling himself “de Gaulle” and the moderator Massai on “Harkis.info.” “De Gaulle” attempted to start a dialogue about General de Gaulle’s responsibility for the harki massacres, arguing that it was not necessarily his fault that the FLN did not honor its promise to uphold the Evian Accords protecting the harkis. Massai’s response was swift and harsh, stating that “If you wish to


\(^{79}\) Harkis.info, (accessed March 12, 2008). Posted by harki62 on March 2, 2006 at 14:06, on the subject « Mohand HAMOU Mou » « les raisons de l'engagement de nos parents dans les rangs de l'armée française, qui sont comme nous le savons pour la plupart d'entre nous sur le site, les actes de barbarie du FLN à l'égard de nos valeureux parents qui ont pris les armes pour ne pas tomber sous le joug du despotisme. »

\(^{80}\) Coalition Nationale des Harkis, “Forum” http://www.coalition-harkis.com/component/option,com_fireboard/Itemid,194/ (accessed April 15, 2008). Coalition Nationale des Harkis provides a symbol “signifying that this forum is moderated: new messages are examined before they are published.” « Signifie que ce forum est modéré ; les nouveaux messages sont examinés avant la publication. »
participate in this forum, then stop your paternalism and quit acting like we’re morons.”

“De Gaulle” retorted that he had hoped there would be more freedom of discussion and openness toward non-harkis on the site, but another harki posting on the site congratulated Massai for regulating the nature, substance, and tone of the site.

Website administrators also regulate the views and memories that harki members present. Massai, for example, occasionally warns people posting on the site not to believe other interpretations of the harki past, which he sees as FLN propaganda. When one harki daughter expresses a view that contradicts the website’s official narrative of harki engagement, and says she does not believe that “our fathers and grandfathers” fought for love of France or out of contempt for Algeria, Massai is quick to correct her. He responds, “You fall into the trap set by those who want to make people believe that there were two countries, France and Algeria, to correspond with their thesis of one country occupying another. That helps them make the analogy to the occupation of France by the Nazis.”

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82 Harkis.info, (accessed September 21, 2008). Posted by deGaulle on 11-10-2006 at 16:55 on the subject “Débat sur le FILM "HARKIS" et De Gaulle », »Est-ce interdit de discuter librement sur votre forum ? Car si on possède l'honnêteté de dire de quelle origine on est on se fait tomber dessus... 😞 Je pensais que vous vouliez davantage d'ouverture avec les non-harkis ! »


84 In order to become a member, you must register with the site. Visitors, however, can still post on the forum.

85 Harkis.info, (accessed March 12, 2008). Posted by TITI on May 12, 2006 at 00:22, on the subject « [Résolu] - kerchouche Delila » « Non nos pères ou grand pères ne se sont pas battu par amour de la France ou mépris de l’Algérie loin de ça ! non je n’y crois pas une seconde! »

86 Harkis.info. (accessed March 12, 2008). Posted by Massai on May 15, 2006 at 12:04, on the subject « [Résolu] - kerchouche Delila » « Tu tombes dans le piège de ceux qui veulent faire croire qu'il y avait deux pays la France et l'Algérie pour faire coïncider leur thèse d'un pays occupant un autre. Ça leur sert à faire la parallèle avec l'occupation de la France par les Nazis. »
demonstrates the risk of conceding any truth to anti-harki interpretations and helps explain why the associations are so militant about preserving a single harki memory and image. This particular, heroic interpretation best allows for a righteous harki identity to develop in the face of discrimination by both Euro-French and Franco-Algerians. The most common refrain on these websites is, “I am the son of harkis, and proud of it.”

Lastly, website administrators control the discussions so that they do not undermine the focus of the militant harki cause. When an anonymous posting referred to the role of the Kabyles in the harki past, the moderator Khader strongly denounced the issue of an Arab/Kabyle divide among harkis as off-topic and suspicious. As he explained, he sees this site as “a place of information and militancy, in favor of the Harkis and their Families, and not at all a place for group therapies of any kind.” The harkis are a unified identity group and the site is only available for discussion on their common issues. He writes, “We won’t let people take over our site who just want a forum (that is very popular among internet users) and who want to launch debates that have nothing to do with our profession of faith.” Furthermore, he warns the anonymous poster, “don’t try to claim freedom of expression because when someone insults my parents and me in the street, I would rather correct him


89 Ibid, « Ce site est un lieu d'information et de militantisme, en faveur des Harkis et leurs Familles et, aucunement, un endroit de thérapies de groupe (de toute nature) »

90 Ibid, « Nous ne permettrons pas, également, le « parasitage », de "coalition-harkis.com", par des opportunistes cherchant une tribune (très fréquentée par les internautes) et, voulant lancer, des débats sans rapport, avec notre profession de foi. »
than discuss with him, and it's the same thing on this site."\textsuperscript{91} Thus, the forum is available for only a particular, limited discussion.

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid, « Et, que l'on ne vienne pas nous invoquer, la liberté d'expression, car quand un quidam insulte, dans la rue, mes parents et moi-même, j'ai plus envie de le corriger que de discuter avec lui 😎 et, c'est la même chose sur ce site !!! »
SIGNIFICANCE

CONTESTED REPRESENTATION

These conflicting memories and interpretations demonstrate that harki collective memory is a contested terrain, which has important implications for their community. Both carriers of memory are breaking the forty years of silence surrounding the harkis, and are trying to revise the historical narrative that had portrayed them as traitors. Much is at stake as the first generation of harkis begins to die and the second generation struggles to establish their parents’ memory and integrity. Pierre Nora, in his seminal work *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, argues that the importance of memory grows as those who experienced the event disappear.92 Furthermore, as both the Halbwachsian and pluralist theories of memory postulate, second generation harkis’ own futures rely on constructing a common memory narrative with which they can identify, and which can form the basis of collective action.93 Gérard Noiriel also notes in his history of French immigration that writing their narrative into French collective memory provides minority groups with a legitimate place in French society.94 Therefore, the harkis must incorporate their own history into the dominant narrative of the Algerian War if

92 Nora, 7.
they wish to be accepted as French. Harkis writing memoirs and harkis in organizations disagree, however, over how to explain their past and are competing vectors for the same memory space. The differing narratives and interpretations provoke a tension that is most visible in how the websites respond to the memoir writers.

Harkis writing on the websites often vehemently denounce the memoir writers. For example, in referring to Kerchouche’s memoir, *Mon Père, Ce Harki*, one harki writes in a sarcastic tone, “I see that you have read this shameful book, so…we the HARKIS can sleep soundly knowing we are defended by this kind of people.”95 Another harki refers to “the worthlessness of (Kerchouche’s) representation among the harki and pieds-noirs.”96 The moderator of the “Coalition Nationale” expresses similar distaste for Kerchouche’s books, calling them “anti-harkis.”97 The websites also complain about having Besanci-Lancou represent the harkis, saying, she hates the harkis98 and accusing her of carrying out an anti-harki crusade.99 They know that these memoir writers have more influence on French society, since their works have been published by major French presses and their individual stories are more accessible to outsiders who want to understand the harki past. These harsh

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95 Harkis.info. (accessed March 12, 2008). Posted by Anonyme on April 5, 2006 at 15:26, on the subject « [Résolu] - kerchouche Delila » « je vois que ta lus se livre de la honte, alors…nous les HARKIS en peu dormir tranquille en on est bien défendu par cette espèce de gans. »


97 Coalition Nationale des Harkis, (accessed on February 18, 2008). Posted by Khader on October 17, 2006, on the subject « Le film “Harkis” avec Smain diffusé sur France 2 ».


99 Ibid, « croisade anti-harkis ». 

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critiques that contest the memoir writers’ right of representation reflect the high stakes the websites perceive as they compete for influence in the dominant French narrative.

The disagreements over emphasis, the question of choice, and the independence narrative demonstrate that the websites contest the memory, or version of harki history, that the memoirs articulate. They also, however, object to the way the memoirs present this history. As cultural carriers of memory, the memoirs and films offer highly individualistic memories and leave their past open to interpretation. This conflicts with the function of organizational carriers of memory, which is to actively promote a unified and static image of the past. Moreover, the fact that the memoirs are written by women who portray the harkis as victims vexes the sons of harkis writing on websites who want to valorize the harki experience. Thus, the various ways in which the memoirs deviate from the websites’ archetypal image of harkis as collective, male and proud lead to vehement denunciations of these memoir writers as representatives.

To begin, harkis writing on websites challenge the ability of an individual to represent their collectivity to greater French society. When one harki posts about her father’s memory, which dissents from the websites’ official memory, the moderator replies, “You conflate all the harkis in reducing it to your particular case. But you are on a Harki site and your History is ours. We have all experienced what you yourself have experienced.” The organization leaders fear that presenting contradictory interpretations threatens the integrity of the harki memory and identity as a whole. The moderator goes on to write, “You don’t have the right to say, in taking the example of your father, that the Harkis did not fight out of love for France. You also don’t have the right to speak in their name. Everyone knows the

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motivations of one another, whether it be for love of France, for reasons of security, through necessity. We don’t have the right to minimize their engagements or their sacrifice.”¹⁰¹ The image of the harkis sacrificing themselves for France reigns supreme over any individual experience that may undermine that of the collectivity.

Similarly, the association leaders object to the title of the film *Harkis*, calling it “pretentious” to use the name “Harkis” in the plural since it is the story of a single family. The memoir upon which the film was based had the more specific title, *Leïla: Avoir Dix-Sept Ans Dans Un Camp De Harkis*. In an article entitled “Harkis or Harki?” Massai deplores the fact that the only feature film on the harkis is “simply an extended version of Kerchouche’s "Mon Père, ce Harki" and not the history of all the Harkis!”¹⁰² The association leaders thus reject outright the individualistic memories expressed in the memoirs and films.

The websites also observe, and consequently denounce, that the memoir writers are “using” this collective history for their own personal interests, such as money or fame. On “Harkis.info,” one harki writes that contrary to the memoir writers, “We don’t have anything to sell. No novels, no conferences, no phony films. Nothing to sell, anyway, to make dough off the 150,000 Harkis slaughtered.”¹⁰³ On the “Coalition Nationale,” a harki writes that Kerchouche “does not care about the struggle of harkis and their families because her only

¹⁰¹ Harkis.info, (accessed March 12, 2008). Posted by Massai on May 15, 2006 at 12:04, on the subject « [Résolu] - kerchouche Delila » « Tu n’a pas le droit de dire en prenant l’exemple de ton père que les Harkis ne se sont pas battus par amour de la France. Tu n’as pas le droit non plus de parler en leurs noms. Tout le monde connaît les motivations des uns et des autres, que ça soit par amour de la France, pour des raisons de sécurité, par nécessité. Nous n’avons pas le droit de minimiser leurs engagements ou leur sacrifice. »

¹⁰² Harkis.info, (accessed on September 18, 2008) « Harkis ou Harki? » Posted by Massai on 17 octobre 2006, « c’était bien la prolongation de "mon père ce Harki" et non l'Histoire de tous les "Harkis" ! »

goal is to get publicity to sell even more copies of her bad book!!"\textsuperscript{104} Khader calls Kerchouche and Besnaci-Lancou "unscrupulous social climbers" who take advantage of the "harki drama" to benefit personally.\textsuperscript{105} Finally, a harki sums up their critique of the memoir authors by saying that the problem with these “megalomaniac characters (Dalila KERCHOUCHE, Fatima BESNACI-LANCOU, ...)” is that they will do anything to get people talking about them and to satisfy their ego.\textsuperscript{106} Harki organization members condemn the misuse of their collective memory by harki “celebrities” looking to satisfy their egos and their wallets.

The fact that these harki “celebrities” are women is also problematic for the websites. They question the ability of women to represent the male-coded category of “harki.” These harkis deplore the fact that the film \textit{Harkis} is told from the perspective of a young woman because the harki history is used as a background to a “coming of age” film. The film documents her teenage rebellion and depicts her acting “French” by smoking, flirting, and reading adolescent magazines, which they find unsettling since they claim their sisters would never have done those things.\textsuperscript{107} Her romantic interlude with a young Frenchman in the film is distasteful for these harkis because they feel it has no place in their serious history.\textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{104} Coalition Nationale des Harkis, (accessed February 18, 2008). Posted by Khader on October 17, 2006, on the subject « Le film "Harkis" avec Smaïn diffusé sur France 2 » « elle se fichait du combat des harkis et leurs familles puisque son seul but était de venir faire de la promo afin de vendre son mauvais bouquin et rien de plus !!! »

\textsuperscript{105} Coalition Nationale des Harkis (accessed September 21, 2008), « KERCHOUCHE et FBL » Posted by Khader on 14-10-2006 in response to the article « Amères Patries” sur France 5, le service public versus les harkis ? », « de ces "arrivistes sans scrupules" qui instrumentalisent, le "drame harki", à des fins personnelles !!! »

\textsuperscript{106} Coalition Nationale des Harkis, (accessed February 18, 2008). Posted by Khader on October 23, 2006, on the subject « L’émission "ESPRITS LIBRES " du 21/10/2006 » « Le problème avec ce genre de personnages aussi mégalomanes (Dalila KERCHOUCHE, Fatima BESNACI-LANCOU, ...) est qu'ils sont même prêts, pour satisfaire leur "ego démesuré" »
Moreover, the fact that a woman is representing the harkis is especially problematic because of the way she challenges her father’s authority. Harkis on the websites observe that throughout the film, Leïla is continually disobeying her father by going behind his back to confront the head of the camp, having a romantic relationship with a Frenchman, and eventually running away. To make matters worse, during one scene in the film she questions why her father fought with the French and declared that he must be a traitor. Khader writes, “can you imagine that the daughter of a harki would dare shame her father by misbehaving in front of the whole camp…and by denouncing him to her own mother as a coward and a traitor?” Massai points out the hypocrisy he sees in the fact that Saïd’s daughter “treats him like a coward and a traitor (to his religion and his brothers) between two cigarettes and a flirt.”

Interestingly, however, this conflict is not centered on religion. When denouncing Leïla’s adolescent behavior in *Harkis*, the website harkis do not describe her as betraying the Muslim faith. They do not criticize the fact that unlike her mother, she does not wear a hijab in the film. In general, neither the memoir writers nor the harkis writing on the websites...

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107 Coalition Nationale des Harkis, (accessed on September 21, 2008) « Les Harkis Vs Les Marianne de la Diversité et le FLN !!! » posted by Khader Moulfi on 03-11-2006, “Combien de filles de harkis (élèvées avec des principes moraux très forts) avaient-elles le temps et les moyens financiers, entre 1962 et 1972, de fumer, flirter et lire des magazines pour ados, alors que la plupart étaient les « secondes mamans » débordées par les tâches ménagères et la gestion familiale, au quotidien, d’une vie très difficile ?


109 Coalition Nationale des Harkis, (accessed on September 21, 2008) « Les Harkis Vs Les Marianne de la Diversité et le FLN !!! » posted by Khader Moulfi on 03-11-2006, « Peut-on s’imaginer, un seul instant, qu’une fille de harki aurait osé faire honte, à son père, en se comportant comme une « caillera », devant tout un camp, en parlant telle une « rappeuse » d’aujourd’hui (véritable anachronisme) et, ensuite, de le qualifier, auprès de sa propre mère, de lâche et de traître ?

evoke religious sentiment as part of their identity as harkis. This may reflect either their successful integration into the French model of secular republicanism, or their desire not to alienate the rest of Euro-French society, which adheres to this model.

Leïla’s use of the word “traitor” to describe her father, and her constant questioning of the choices he makes, is typical of the memoir and films’ interpretation of the past. The female memoir writers offer a more negative view of their fathers’ actions; harkis on association websites see this as a form of betrayal to their fathers and the harki past. One harki posts with regard to Mon Père, Ce Harki that “this book is shameful. She doesn’t give a damn about her father.” Sons of harkis, however, appear far more loyal to their fathers’ memory, because they proclaim their pride at being the sons of such men on the websites. This difference demonstrates a certain rebellion on the part of these women and shows the extent to which they are able to act independently from their fathers.

The websites also contest the right of harkis to represent the collectivity if they do not proudly affirm their harki identity. Harkis posting on the association websites frequently declare their pride at being harkis or children of harkis. As one daughter of a harki writes, “to me, my father is the man with the most integrity, the most honest and courageous that I know and how could I repudiate him, since he has taught me honor, and has given me everything? In fact, I think that what bothers [the French and Franco-Algerians], all of them, is that we, children of Harkis, we are proud of our parents and ready to sacrifice in order to render them the homage they are owed.”

111 Harkis.info, (accessed March 12, 2008). Posted by Anonyme on April 4, 2006 by 00:39, on the subject « [Résolu] - kerchouche Delila » « se livre c'est une honte. elle son fou de son père »

112 Coalition Nationale des Harkis, (accessed February 18, 2008). Posted by cleopatre on November 11, 2006, on the subject « La pression des Algériens sur nos pères est là ! » « pour moi, mon père est l'homme le plus intégre, le plus honnête et courageux que je connaisse et comment pourrais-je le renier alors qu'il m'a appris
This woman and other harkis on the websites critique harkis who are ambivalent about their past. Ambivalent harkis do not denounce the “traitor” label and they do not proclaim the honor of their fathers. Khader says that “We know that Dalila KERCHOUCHE is ashamed of being a “harki’s daughter”,”113 and calls she and Besnaci-Lancou the representatives of the “Harkis against our will.”114 He explains that Besnaci-Lancou, for example, was behaving like an ambivalent harki when she said on France 3115 that the harkis were enlisted through force, by which she called into question the patriotic enlistment of the harki soldiers.116 The “Harkis against our will”117 concede too much to the “FLNists” and other anti-harki individuals. By not proudly affirming the harki identity, the ambivalent harkis give in to the external, imposed identity of harkis as traitors. One harki complains about Kerchouchou speaking in the name of the harkis, since she is playing the game of the

113 Coalition Nationale des Harkis, (accesssed on September 21, 2008). « Supercherie racoleuse sur France 2, Les Harkis n'étaient qu'un !!! » Posted by Khader Moulfi on 11-10-2006, « On sait que Dalila KERCHOUCHÉ a honte d'être une "fille de harki". »

114 Coalition Nationale des Harkis (accessed September 21, 2008), « Encore une donneuse de leçons !!! » Posted by Khader on 29-10-2007 in response to the article « Supercherie racoleuse sur France 2, Les Harkis n'étaient qu'un !!! », « dans le livre de Dalila, stipulant que son père Harki aurait donné des armes et des munitions, au FLN et, franchement, je doute de la vérité, de ces informations qui ne tiennent pas la route et qui, d'après moi, avaient pour but de s'inscrire, dans la lignée des "Harkis malgré-nous" représentée, par Fatima BESNACI-LANCOU. »

115 A major French television station.

116 Coalition Nationale des Harkis (accessed September 21, 2008), « Attention une pro-harkis présumée peut c » Posted by Khader on 04-11-2006 in response to the article « Les Harkis Vs Les Marianne de la Diversité et le FLN !!! », « Quand Fatima BESNACI-LANCOU dit, dans un sujet sur France 3, le 25/09/2006, que les harkis étaient, très souvent, enrôlés de force, elle fait, sciemment, un amalgame fallacieux et scandaleux, à partir d'un cas marginal… Elle se permet même de mettre en doute l'engagement patriotique des anciens combattants Harkis. »

117 “Harkis malgré-nous” is a reference to the “malgré-nous,” a group of Alsatians who were drafted into the German forces during World War II. See Sarah Farmer, Martyred Village: Commemorating the 1944 Massacre at Oradour-sur-Glane, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.
harkis’ enemies. The danger is that the FLN and other anti-harkis use Kerchouche’s book to call into question the patriotism and loyalty of the harkis to the “mother country.” On the association websites, harkis make a clear distinction between the harmful memory work that Kerchouche and Besanci-Lancou perform, and what they themselves are doing on these sites. As one harki writes, “We could behave like some and ask forgiveness from the executioners, or we could behave in a manner worthy of our fathers.” For them, the only way to fight exclusion and anti-harki discrimination is to publicly embrace their harki history.

Finally, they object in particular to Mon Père, Ce Harki because its narrative runs completely counter to the image of the heroic harki. In this memoir, Kerchouche retraces her family’s past in an effort to determine why her father became a traitor to Algeria, only to find that he had actually been aiding the FLN as well. Responding to this work, one harki says that Kerchouche has “declared, with pride…THAT HER HARKI FATHER HAD BETRAYED HIS COUNTRY, FRANCE, IN GIVING ARMES, AMMUNITION AND INFORMATION TO THE FLN!!! Which makes him, in this context, A REAL TRAITOR, BUT TO FRANCE BECAUSE HE DOUBLE-CROSSED THEM!!!” Website harkis assert that Kerchouche’s father is not representative of them and complain that as a result of this memoir, people conflate her personal history with that of the harkis more generally. Khader writes, “I have nothing personal against Dalila KERCHOUCHE, but I argue that she


120 Coalition Nationale des Harkis, (accessed on February 18, 2008). Posted by Khader on October 17, 2006, on the subject « Le film "Harkis" avec Smaïn diffusé sur France 2 ». « déclaré, avec fierté… que SON PERE HARKI AURAIT TRAHI SON PAYS LA FRANCE EN DONNANT DES ARMES, DES MUNITIONS ET DES INFOS AU FLN !!! Ce qui fait de lui, dans ce contexte, un VRAI TRAITRE MAIS A LA FRANCE CAR IL JOUAIT DOUBLE JEU !!! »
brings disgrace to the community of harkis and their families by her positions and her unorthodox life because the media has the tendency to conflate her history with ours.”  

Furthermore, Kerchouche argues in her memoir that, “Like my father, nearly 40% of the harki soldiers, according to Michel Roux [a historian who has studied the harkis], helped the FLN fighters.”  

One harki responds, “I know very few harkis (in fact, none at all), despite my constant presence in the field, who gave information, arms, and ammunition to the FLN, since their principle reason for enlisting, was precisely to fight these mafia, bloodthirsty terrorists.”  

Repeatedly on the forums, the harkis stress the degree to which this memoir falsely represents their own views and experiences.

These denunciations of the memoir writers are so fierce because the website administrators know their works have much more influence outside the community. These websites constitute an important voice among self-identified harkis, but Kerchouche and Besnaci-Lancou, through their memoirs (with major publishers and reviews in the national press) and feature film, are far more influential. Khader deplores the fact that people read Kerchouche but not “our writings here or on harkis.info or harkis.org to know what we think.” Massai expresses frustration over the fact that “our associations do not have any say

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121 Coalition Nationale des Harkis, (accessed on February 18, 2008). Posted by Khader on October 17, 2006, on the subject « Le film "Harkis" avec Smaïn diffusé sur France 2 » « Je n'ai rien de personnel, à l'encotre de Dalila KERCHOUCHE mais, je soutiens qu'elle porte atteinte, à l'ensemble des harkis et leurs familles, par ses positions et son vécu peu orthodoxes, car la presse et les médias ont tendance à amalgamer son histoire avec la nôtre.»


123 Coalition Nationale des Harkis, (accessed on February 18, 2008). Posted by Khader on October 17, 2006, on the subject « Le film "Harkis" avec Smaïn diffusé sur France 2 ». « Par exemple, je connais très peu de harkis (en fait aucun), malgré ma présence constante sur le terrain, qui ont donné des informations, des armes et des munitions, au FLN, alors que la raison principale, de leur engagement, était, justement, de combattre, ces terroristes mafieux et sanguinaires. »
Another harki asked scornfully whether one had to make a film in order to be heard. Thus, the association leaders’ writings belie a level of frustration that they are marginalized while they try to compete for influence.

Not only have Kerchouche and Besnaci-Lancou produced the most visible carriers of harki collective memory, but they have been selected as representatives by French media. These women represent harkis at conferences and colloquiums on the Algerian War, and are most frequently interviewed on television and in print media about the harkis. There is a tradition of North African women, rather than men, gaining acceptance as representatives of their identity group for French society. The website administrators note this phenomenon and Khader describes the situation as “The Harkis and their Families Vs The Mariannes of Diversity and the FLN !” He deplores what he believes these women have had to do in order to get this prestigious position of acceptance. According to Massai, the media only gives voice to harkis who “have atoned for their ‘faults’” and ambivalent harkis who are not proud of themselves like “real Harkis.” Thus, for the website administrators, the catch-22 is that the only harkis authorized to speak do not represent them well.

Furthermore, the websites believe that these harkis, as the “Mariannes of Diversity and the FLN,” agree to marginalize the harki history in order make the French feel better about their past. The association leaders think that this undermines their militant struggle for recognition and policies of reparation. For example, they claim that because the film *Harkis* has a “happy ending” and the viewer can turn off their television feeling satisfied that all has

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125 Harkis.info, (accessed on September 18,2008) « Harkis ou Harki? » Posted by Massai on 17 octobre 2006, « nos médias ont donné la parole à des "Harkis" assez gauches rendant inaudible celle de tous les vrais Harkis, fières d’eux qui assument leur identité et qui rêvent non pas de demander pardon à la clique à Boutef mais plutôt de leur régler leur compte. »
been resolved for the Benamar family, the viewer “will retain only that image and will forget the large number of Harki families and their children who were the victims of failed socialization programs.” Furthermore, the harkis on the websites deplore the “sordid realism” of the *Harkis* film that encourages sympathy rather than solidarity. They acknowledge that the “harki drama” is painful, but they think that the emotions expressed in this film should stay private. This “indecent voyeurism” makes a spectacle of the harkis and demonstrates that Kerchouche is instrumentalizing the RONA to create a “tear-jerker.” Worst of all, this action ends up “caricaturizing us, which discredits the ‘real militants of the harki cause’ in the eyes of the nation.”

There are some harkis writing on the websites who have a more positive view of this film and Kerchouche’s efforts to make any version of the harki history known. As one woman describes it, “it has the advantage of being the only film to deal with our history;

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126 Harkis.info, (accessed September 21, 2008). Posted by Massai on 12-10-2006 on the subject “Débat sur le FILM "HARKIS" et De Gaulle », « Elle termine par un Happy End malvenu car le téléspectateur retiendra que cette image et oubliera qu’un grand nombre de famille de Harkis et de leurs enfants ont été désocialisé et leurs échec programmés. »

127 Ibid, « Ce film n’a aucune valeur pédagogique mais fait preuve d’un insupportable misérabilisme. Rien n’est dit sur leurs engagements et sur la dette Française envers eux. »

128 RONA stands for “Repatriates of North-African Origin” and is an official French term for the harkis.

129 Coalition Nationale des Harkis (accessed September 21, 2008), « Amères Patries” sur France 5, le service public versus les harkis ? », Posted by Khader Moulfi on 13-10-2006, « Bien entendu, le "drame harki" est douloureux et incurable, sous tous ses aspects mais, fallait-il nous faire passer, une fois de plus, pour des "pleurnicheurs quémendeurs", en piégeant les "interviewés" qui ont exprimé, en toute bonne foi et sous le coup de l’émotion, des "sentiments intimes et refoulés d’ordre privé" qui devaient le rester (privés) ! La "télé-poubelle" (dixit Patrick SEBASTIEN) a-t-elle voulu, au nom d’un "voyeurisme indécent et racoleur", instrumentaliser, les RONA, dans la perspective, d'une part, de faire "pleurer dans les chaumières", essentiellement, la très convoitée "ménagère de moins de 50 ans" (et plus) et, d'autre part, de manière plus insidieuse, nous caricaturer afin de nous discréditer, les "vrais militants de la cause harkie", aux yeux de la Nation (commençant à s’interroger, au plus fort, sur la perfidie de l’Etat français de l'époque envers les anciens supplétifs et leurs familles) ? »
what is more, it was shown in primetime.”¹³⁰ She also explains that the film participates in “the transmission of our history” as it offered a way for her nine year old son to learn about his family’s past, and she was moved when it made him cry.¹³¹ Another woman posting on the site said that the film provided an occasion for her father “to break his silence of forty years” and finally speak about his past, and that he recognized himself in the character of Saïd Benamar, Leïla’s father.¹³²

The website moderators respond to these observations by explaining that poor representation is not necessarily any better than a lack of representation. As Massai writes, “Certain people, just happy to hear the word "Harkis" on TV, think that it’s better than nothing. I would answer that ‘better than nothing’ isn’t much.”¹³³ This film portrays the harkis as melodramatic and defines them as victims of suffering in these internment camps. Massai proclaims that “No, the Harkis are worth more than that.”¹³⁴ He and other association harkis want acknowledgment of the fighting their fathers did to defend France and the injustices they have suffered as a consequence. Thus, the image of harkis that French officials will retain from this film is potentially more damaging than if there had been no film

¹³⁰ “Harkis.info, (accessed September 21, 2008). Posted by Anonyme on 10-10-2006 on the subject “Débat sur le FILM "HARKIS" et De Gaulle », « il a le mérite d être le seul film traitant de notre histoire, qui plus est,diffusé a une heure de grande écoute. »

¹³¹ Ibid, « Moi il m a plu et mon fils de 9 ans a insisté pour le voir,c est peut etre aussi ça la transmission de notre histoire,il en a pleuré et j en ai été ému. »

¹³² Harkis.info, (accessed September 21, 2008). Posted by Anonyme (zohra) on11-10-2006 « Débat chez moi autour du Film Harkis », «aprés le film mon père s'est mis à pleurer et à me raconter son histoire. je n'avais pas conscience d'une telle souffrance. ce film a permis à mon père de briser le silence qui dure depuis 40 ans et il s'est totalement reconnu dans le rôle du Saïd Benamar tenu par smain. »

¹³³ Harkis.info, (accessed on September 18,2008) « Harkis ou Harki? » Posted by Massai on 17 octobre 2006, « Certains, tout heureux d'entendre le mot "Harkis" à la TV pensent que c'est mieux que rien. Je répondrais que mieux que rien c'est pas grand-chose. »

at all.\textsuperscript{135} As Massai explains, “We have no need for pity or charity. We are reclaiming the truth and the exploitation of which we have been victims. We are reclaiming our rights as French citizens that we have been denied since...well before Napoleon III.”\textsuperscript{136} In sum, they do not want the pity this film inspires; they want official recognition and compensation.

Since harkis on the websites find the memoir writers’ representation of the harkis and their cause to be problematic, and even counterproductive, they exclude them from the harki cause and community. One harki declares that “We must no longer give the right to speak to this type of person who discredits us more than they bring anything positive to our cause.”\textsuperscript{137} They regret the fact that these women have not admitted on their own that they do not represent the harkis. Khader writes, “If FBL had any conscience she’d stop usurping the name “harkis” [for her association “L’association Harkis et Droits de l’Homme”] which has nothing to do with our fight in the general interest of RONAs, but serves only her personal interest.”\textsuperscript{138} They see this as further proof that they are just trying to profit from the harki cause. Therefore, Khader proclaims, “don’t hesitate to drive them out of our combat, in the general interest, so they stop acting like parasites who will commit any ‘moral and behavioral

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid, « Ce ne sont pas les masses populaires qui ont déjà oublié ce téléfilm qui dirigent ce pays. »

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid, « Nous n'avons besoin ni de pitié ni d'aumône. Nous réclamons la vérité et la spoliation dont nous avons été victimes. Nous réclamons nos droits de citoyens Français qu'on nous refuse depuis... bien avant Napoléon III »

\textsuperscript{137} Coalition Nationale des Harkis, (accessed February 18, 2008). Posted by cleopatre on October 23, 2006, on the subject « L'émission "ESPRITS LIBRES " du 21/10/2006 » « On ne devrait plus permettre de laisser un droit de parole à ce type de personne qui nous discrédite plus que nous apporter vraiment du positif à notre cause. »

abjection’ in pursuit of their dark ‘schemes’!!!’ In fact, he declares that “we should revoke [Besnaci-Lancou]’s RONA status to make her a ‘beurette’ she loves them so much!!!” With these women denied representation, one harki laments that he is “impatiently waiting for another person who will really defend the Harki cause and participate in writing the real Harki drama.”

“WAR OF MEMORIES”

The harkis writing on association websites are concerned not only with correcting the claims made by members of their own community about the harki past, but also with policing interpretations of this past produced by non-harkis. The reason representation is so important and contested is that harkis writing on the websites perceive they are engaging in a battle with the FLN over the interpretation of harkis in French collective memory. The historian Benjamin Stora has used the term “war of memories” to describe the current debate in France over the history of colonialism and decolonization. He argues that groups such as harkis, pieds-noirs, descendants of slaves, and grandchildren of colonial subjects each have their own memories and interpretations of this past, and are fighting to get some sort of

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139 Coalition Nationale des Harkis (accessed September 21, 2008), « KERCHOUCHE et FBL » Posted by Khader on 14-10-2006 in response to the article « Amères Patries” sur France 5, le service public versus les harkis ? », « Honte à ces gens et, n'hésitons pas à les désavouer et à les bouter hors de notre combat, dans l'intérêt général, qu'ils s'évertuent de parasiter en ne reculant devant aucune "abjection morale et comportementale" en vue de réaliser leurs sombres "desseins" !!! »

140 Beurette is a name for women who are second generation French of North African origin.

141 Coalition Nationale des Harkis (accessed September 21, 2008), « L'instrumentalisation de la cause harkie », Posted by Khader on 02-12-2006 in response to the article « Procès FRECHE, le Seigneur de Septimanie "porté disparu” !!! », « Quant à FBL, on devrait pouvoir lui retirer sa "licence de RONA” pour en faire une "beurette" comme elle les aime tant !!! »

142 Coalition Nationale des Harkis (accessed September 21, 2008), “…” Posted by azur on 15-10-2006 in response to the article « Amères Patries” sur France 5, le service public versus les harkis ? », « J'attends avec impatience une autre personne qui prendrait le relais et défendrait réellement la cause des Harkis en participant à l'écrit de l'histoire vraie des Harkis de leur drame. »

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recognition and reparation. These conflicts over the memory of colonialism cause divisions within French society and he notes that some people fear the effects of these practices on national unity. The harkis writing on the websites perceive this conflict (the moderator of “Coalition Nationale” has even referenced Stora’s argument) and are determined to get recognition of their version of the past.

It is in the context of this “war of memories,” then, that these harkis think they are perpetually fighting the FLN’s view of the harkis as traitors and their overwhelming influence in politics (since they have the backing of Franco-Algerians, who are becoming an important electorate). They see this “war of memories” as their primary struggle, and if certain harkis (like Kerchouche and Besnaci-Lancou) weaken their fight, then they are denounced in favor of the greater good. One woman posting on the website, who described herself as the granddaughter of harkis, questioned this logic. She wrote, “Isn’t there more intelligent action than fighting amongst harkis?” She defends Kerchouche by saying, “she doesn’t pretend to be a historian, she simply relates the story of her family without hiding anything. I find that rather honorable and it allows an understanding of the complexity of this period. It wasn’t good vs. evil in Algeria before ’62. I learned a lot about the history of my family through reading this novel, even though there are differences, and each family has its own history. I think that if the harkis were more united between themselves, they would succeed in finally being heard.”

This post elicited a very hostile and defensive response.

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144 Ibid, 45.

from the moderator, Khader. In addition to denouncing the poster’s “inept critiques” and “dime store Manichaeism,” he wrote, “I want to remind you that we’re not in a melodramatic episode of *Little House on the Prairie*, but at the heart of a ‘very arduous combat’ in which our detractors are ready to do anything to stifle the active militant movements.”

As another harki explains, if the harkis are not vigilant, and do not denounce anyone whose interpretations are against “the general interest”, they “will lose everything.”

This “war of memories” exists, according to the website administrators, because the French State and national education have not done their job in establishing an official memory of the harkis and their participation in the war. Since, “excluded memories don’t wait for historians to make them heard,” the survivors and descendants of both sides are mobilizing their own versions of history. Like the Frenchmen Stora references, these harkis deplore the threat this practice poses for national unity. Khader explains that this “war of memories” is also a war of propagandas and nationalisms, initiated by foreign and bi-

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146 Coalition Nationale des Harkis (accessed September 21, 2008), “Débat stérile voire puéril” Posted by Khader on 09-11-2007 in response to the article “Supercherie racoleuse sur France 2, Les Harkis n’étaient qu’un !!! », « Par ailleurs, je vous indique que nous ne sommes pas, dans un épisode mélodramatique de "La petite maison dans la prairie" mais, au cœur d’un "combat très ardu" (doux euphémisme en l’occurrence !), dans lequel nos détracteurs sont prêts à tout pour "étouffer" les mouvements militants actifs », « vos critiques ineptes et de votre "manichéisme de prisunic" !!!! »

147 Harkis.info, (accessed on September 18, 2008) « De faux Harkis contre les Harkis » Posted by Abdelkader Hamiche on February 7, 2006, “Il arrivera un moment où, s’ils ne sont pas vigilants, les Harkis perdront tout. »

148 Coalition Nationale des Harkis (accessed September 21, 2008), “…” Posted by yannick on 04-10-2007 in response to the article “L’Ennemi Intime : un film de propagande à la sous-Rambo !!! », « Le problème, c’est que les mémoires exclues n’attendent pas la bénédiction des historiens pour se faire entendre, et ce d’autant plus que le temps presse: les témoins disparaissent peu à peu, les survivants et les descentants se mobilisent: c’est dans l’ordre des choses et c’est un phénomène connu. »
national immigrants. These “bi-national immigrants,” namely Franco-Algerians, are trying to influence how history is written, and are consequently undermining the unity of the Republic. Khader proclaims that “we’re on the brink of the disintegration of the republic” and fears that “soon history will be revised by polls and ‘pressure lobbies’ who make demands,” as he sees this already happening in the United States. For Khader, this is evidenced by the fact that “there is a Franco-Algerian intelligentsia, a ‘beurgeoisie’ who is placed, thanks to its important networks, in our ministries, our administrations, our places of influence, which contributes to the FLNisation of attitudes in our own country!!!” The harki narrative that the website administrators support is presented as the true history, not as the memory of a special interest group, and they regret the fact that they must participate in this “war.”

Harkis writing on the websites recognize that scholars act as important weapons in this memory battle. Stora notes that historians have started to play a vital role in this “war of memories” and are increasingly called upon by the media and politicians to provide their “expert” opinions. These harkis therefore crave recognition of their history by scholars who can in turn represent this history in the public debate. However, they are suspicious of non-harki scholars, such as Stora himself, constructing the harki narrative because they fear

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150 Ibid, « Bientôt, l'Histoire sera révisée, via des sondages et des "lobbies de pression", en fonction des "exigences", de chacun. »

151 Ibid, « De plus, n'oublions pas qu'il existe, également, une intelligentsia franco-algérienne que, je qualifierais de "beurgeoisie" et, qui est implantée, grâce à ses réseaux très importants, dans nos ministères, nos administrations, nos lieux d'influence, ... Ce qui contribue, davantage, à la FLNisation des esprits sur notre propre territoire !!! »

152 Stora, La Guerre des Mémoires, 89.
the influence of the FLN’s interpretation. As one harki writes, “it’s scandalous that non-harkis are in charge of harkis. Our history is our own and no one has the right to modify it.”\footnote{Harkis.info, (accessed March 12, 2008). Posted by zalabia on October 4, 2006 at 12:51, on the subject « Exposition de 13 chibanis » « Tu a raison c’est scandaleux que des non harki s’occupent des harki. notre histoire est à nous et personne ne doit la modifier. »} Therefore, the most acceptable scholars for their collective memory are other children of harkis.

One such scholar is Mohand Hamoumou, the son of a harki, a doctor of sociology, founder of the association “AJIR pour les Harkis” and the author of numerous books and articles on the harkis. The website “Harkis.info” calls him “a member of the elite of the Harki community”\footnote{Harkis.info, (accessed September 21, 2008). “La Loi du 23 Février 2005 : La gestion "coloniale" des Harkis par la presse » by Khader Hamiche, Posted on January, 6 2006 by Actus.} and on “Coalition Nationale” he is referred to as one of the RONA’s “well-known intellectuals.”\footnote{Nationale des Harkis (accessed September 21, 2008) « Colloque de Lyon : Mohand HAMOUMOU frappé de censure !!! » Posted by Khader Moulfi on 22-06-2006.} Yet Hamoumou’s narrative does not always coincide with the website administrators’ heroic interpretation of their past. For example, his treatment of the question of choice more closely resembles the perspective of the memoir writers, since he describes a diversity of experiences and motivations. He writes, “The ‘pressures’ of the French army and the injustices committed by the FLN were the major ‘causes’…of the [harkis’] enlistment.” Other “motivating factors” in their decision to enlist include “the economic situation, the sense of honor in rivalries between clans, and even membership in a confraternity.”\footnote{Mohand Hamoumou, \textit{Et ils sont devenus harkis}, 189. “Les ‘pressions’ de l’armée française et les injustices commises par le FLN furent les “causes” majeures, sous des formes multiples et variées, des engagements de supplétifs. Pourtant, elles ne peuvent rendre compte de tous les « facteurs déclenchant ». La situation économique, le sens de l’honneur et ses rivalités claniques ou encore l’appartenance à une confrérie ont pu favoriser des engagements. »}

Harkis on the websites, however, do not denounce Hamoumou or his work as they do that of the memoir writers. This indicates that they are willing to make
concessions for a scholarly narrative, since it is so important to have that kind of representation.

Perhaps precisely because the harkis make these concessions, they are especially offended when they think Hamoumou is being discriminated against as a member of their community and is not being perceived as an objective historian. Khader is outraged when Hamoumou is excluded from an important colloquium on Franco-Algerian history in Lyon, supposedly because he is too “engaged” in the harki community. He includes a letter from Hamoumou to the journal *Le Progrès de Lyon* accusing the conference organizers of not allowing him to participate because they do not want him to mention the harki massacres and are afraid of having a real debate. Hamoumou responds to their accusation that he is too “engaged” in his subject matter by arguing in favor of objective, non-ideological research and by citing the many scholars who praise the scientific quality of his work. Harkis writing on the websites are frustrated because they think that despite his status as a scholar, Hamoumou’s influence in the public debate about the role of the harkis in the Algerian War

157 Nationale des Harkis (accessed September 21, 2008) « Colloque de Lyon : Mohand HAMOUMOU frappé de censure !!! » Posted by Khader Moulfi on 22-06-2006. « Comme si tous ces beaux esprits, si sûrs d’eux même lorsqu’ils ne sont qu’entre eux , avaient peur du débat contradictoire en direct. Peur d’entendre qu’il y avait d’autres voies pour émanciper l’Algérie, peur d’entendre parler des massacres des messaliste par le FLN, des massacres de civils Oran par les moujahdins, des massacres des Harkis désarmés par les « combattants » fn de la 25 ème heure Peur d’entendre que le FLN s’est imposé face au peuple par la violence, tuant plus de « Musulmans » que d’Européens, plus de civils que de militaires »

158 Ibid, « S’il faut tourner la page de cette histoire douloureuse, il ne faut pas la réécrire, la falsifier en mentant effrontément ou par omission. Oui, il faut souhaiter une relation franco algérienne apaisée et les historiens peuvent y contribuer par un travail factuel, objectif et non idéologique. Car on ne bâtit rien de durable sur le mensonge. » « M Abécasis, que je ne connais pas,( ce qui normal puisqu’il n’est pas connu comme spécialiste de la guerre d’Algérie mais des dangers de la route en Egypte !) dit qu’il n’a pas retenu ma proposition d’intervention sur les Harkis car il préférait quelqu’un de moins engagé. En l’occurrence un étudiant menant une recherche sur les harkis (en a-t-il seulement rencontré un ?) plutôt qu’un chercheur confirmé, docteur de l’EHESS, ayant fait sa thèse avec Lucette Valensi, historienne de renom, ex rédactrice aprèS Braudel de la revue des Annales et Dominique Schnapper sociologue comme son père Raymond Aron. J’ai publié plusieurs ouvrages et des articles dans des revues prestigieuses ( Les Annales, Esprit, etc ) et bon nombre d’universitaires et journalistes (Benjamin Stora, Daniel Rivet, Gérard Noiriel, Nicole Lapierre, André Laurens, Paul Thibaud, etc) ont salué la qualité scientifique de mon travail. »
is being diminished because he is a member of the harki community. This means they must fight even harder against the FLN’s interpretation.

Since they recognize the significance of scholars in this “war of memories,” the harkis writing on the websites feel they must contest the work of historians they perceive as having an ideological lean towards the left (synonymous with pro-FLN to them). The main object of their critique is Benjamin Stora, who they see as siding with the FLN. They repeatedly denounce him as “anti-harki” and call him “our official FLN historian.” Their first piece of evidence for this claim is Stora’s statement in an article on afrik.com, where he said that the harkis “chose France and they lost.” One harki posting on “Harkis.info” saw this article as perhaps the debut of a justification of the harki massacres. Khader agrees, explaining that Stora’s statement suggests that by making the choice to fight for France, the harkis deserved the consequences, namely their genocide and their current marginalized place in metropolitan France. Khader further extrapolates from Stora’s comment to argue that by saying the harkis chose their camp, Stora tries to “justify the unjustifiable,” suggests that “the harki genocide was (almost) ‘normal’,,” and implies “that they deserved the massacre.”

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159 Coalition Nationale des Harkis (accessed September 21, 2008), « SARKOZY sait-il que le principal crime colonial fut la décolonisation ? » Posted by Khader Moulfi on 30-07-2007, «M. SARKOZY, me font penser, dans la forme, à celles de Benjamin STORA (notre storien officiel du FLN). »

160 This forum is significant because the harkis believe he is addressing himself to the Algerian population.


162 Ibid, « Nous ne savons peut-être pas lire ou bien c’est le début d’une justification du massacre des Harkis.”

interpretation is a falsification of history and a misrepresentation of the chronological context. According to the websites’ narrative of the independence struggle, “When the harkis engaged, Algeria was French and decided to stay that way, so harkis are neither traitors nor vulgar “mercenaries” but Frenchmen enlisted in the national army.” Thus, “the only [choices] in the conflict were France on one side (including Algeria) and the FLN on the other (which had no legitimacy among the Algerian people and acted out of terror and forced enlistment).” Therefore, for the websites, the choice of France was clearly the right one, and deserves to be rewarded through official recognition, not through massacres and injustices, as they claim Stora suggests. The websites also contest Stora’s use of the term “Algerian War” to describe what they see as the “pacification efforts” in Algeria. Even though the websites occasionally slip into using this term themselves, they proclaim it to be a “revisionist and negationist term,” “a purely political and ideological intervention” whose use is unbefitting for an objective historian.

implicitly, que : “ ils n’ont eu que ce qu’ils méritaient en se faisant massacer, par le FLN et les marsiens, après le cessez-le-feu entré en vigueur le 19 mars 1962 à 12 heures ” !!!


165 Ibid, « Tout d’abord, il convient de rappeler que lors des appels, de la France, envers les algériens arabo-musulmans, à s’engager dans les forces supplétives, à compter de 1954, l’Algérie était française et, résolument, décidée à le rester (cf. le discours à Alger en 1958 du Général DE GAULLE) !!! Donc, les "harkis" (selon le terme générique) étaient ni des traîtres ni de vulgaires "mercenaires" mais des Français enrôlés dans l’armée nationale !!! »

166 Ibid, « les seuls camps en conflit étaient, d’une part la France (incluant l’Algérie) et, d’autre part, le FLN et lui-seul (qui ne détenait aucune légitimité du peuple algérien et qui agissait par la terre, le racket, l’enrôlement forcé des algériens musulmans, ...) ! »

167 Coalition Nationale des Harkis (accessed September 21, 2008), « STORA vers la rédemption ?” Posted by Khader on 04-10-2007 in response to the article « L’Ennemi Intime : un film de propagande à la sous-Rambo !!! », «le terme révisionniste et négationniste de “Guerre d’Algérie”…incompréhensible voire indigne, de la part de tout historien intègre et objectif, car la guerre d’Algérie, est une pure invention politicienne et idéologique »
Furthermore, they see another of Stora’s statements, that France was not responsible for the harki massacres, as “anti-harki.” Stora has said that “it was in Algeria, not France, that the harkis were massacred, so I don’t see what France has to do with it…what is certain, however, is that the harkis were poorly welcomed in France.”168 Khader’s response to this is that while “it is undeniable that the FLN was the only perpetrator of the harki genocide on the Algerian soil,” “France is an accomplice in this genocide for having decided to leave, understanding perfectly well the consequences of this” and not giving them a choice as French soldiers whether to stay in Algeria or to be repatriated in the metropolis.169 Therefore, Khader argues, it seems legitimate that France would recognize both its responsibility in the abandonment and its inhumane treatment of repatriated harkis and their families.170

For Khader, another frustrating aspect of Stora’s denial that France abandoned the harkis is the fact that it clears Charles de Gaulle of any blame for having ordered the French troops to leave the harkis behind. Khader claims that he heard Stora “alleges with conviction that General de Gaulle didn’t abandon the harkis, just underestimated the gravity of the

168 Harkis.info, (accessed September 21, 2008). « B. STORA, les Harkis : la France ‘reconnaissante’ mais pas ‘responsable’ » Posted by Actus on November 8, 2004, «Ce n’est pas en France que les harkis ont été massacrés, ils l’ont été en Algérie. Je ne vois pas ce que la France a à y voir…. Ce qui est certain, par contre, c’est que les harkis ont été mal accueillis en France. »

169 Harkis.info, (accessed September 21, 2008). « Harkis : la France ‘reconnaissante’ mais pas ‘responsable’ » Posted by Khader on October 28, 2005 in response to the article « B. STORA, les Harkis : la France ‘reconnaissante’ mais pas ‘responsable’ », « En revanche, la France est la complice tacite, de ce génocide, pour avoir décidé de laisser, sciemment et en parfaite, connaissance de cause, les harkis (leurs anciens soldats), désarmés (exigences notoires du FLN afin de prévenir toute tentative de coup d’état des anciens suppléants) puisque, en leurs qualités d’anciens combattants français instrumentalisés et trahis, par leur propre pays, au nom de la déraison d’Etat, il ne leur avait pas été soumis la capacité de choisir soit de rester en Algérie soit de se faire rapatrier en métropole !! »

170 Ibid, « En conséquence, il me paraît légitime que la France reconnaissa sa responsabilité dans l’abandon meurtrier et sanguinaire, des harkis mais, également, dans son traitement inhumain et dégradant, des survivants rapatriés et leurs familles, lors de leur arrivée en métropole, à l’origine d’une mort sociale programmée et maintenue depuis 1962 à nos jours !!! »
situation."\textsuperscript{171} Khader contests the idea that De Gaulle could have actually believed the FLN would honor the protection of the harkis stipulated in the Evian Accords given “the well-known bestial ferocity of the FLN and ALN”.\textsuperscript{172} The harkis perceive Stora as downplaying the role of France and de Gaulle in their abandonment, thereby undermining their efforts to get public recognition for the injustices they had suffered.

These objections are significant because they believe Stora has much influence over French memory of the Algerian War. In one article, Khader proclaims that some of Nicolas Sarkozy’s public statements on the harkis have reminded him of Stora’s comments.\textsuperscript{173} For example, he claims that in public Sarkozy says, “the Harkis were victims of a genocide…” but in front of a “FLNist” audience, he says that “the Harkis chose their camp and they lost…” (meaning they deserved what they got!).\textsuperscript{174} For the harkis writing on the websites this comment echoes closely Stora’s opinions.

Consequently, these harkis feel the need to denounce Stora’s lack of objectivity and refute his version of history on their websites. Khader claims that “his sources are too


\textsuperscript{172} Ibid, « Quand on connaissait, la « férocité bestiale de notoriété publique », du Front de Libération Nationale (et de l’ALN, son bras armé) »

\textsuperscript{173} Coalition Nationale des Harkis (accessed September 21, 2008), « SARKOZY sait-il que le principal crime colonial fut la décolonisation ? » Posted by Khader Moulfi on 30-07-2007, «M. SARKOZY, me font penser, dans la forme, à celles de Benjamin STORA (notre storien officiel du FLN). »

\textsuperscript{174}Ibid, « en fonction, du public, en face de lui, dira, tantôt, que : "Les Harkis étaient victimes d'un génocide..." et, devant un "auditoire flniste", que : "Les Harkis ont choisi un camp et ils ont perdu..." (sous-entendant, qu’ils avaient mérité leur sort ! »
unilateral to tell the absolute and definitive “truth” on history.” He calls on Stora to renounce his role as an objective historian and to take his place openly as a "quasi-militant pro-FLN et anti-harkis" so as not to mislead the French public. He also encourages other harki associations to renounce Stora and to try to counter some of his influence.

Khader does this because he sees himself and other harkis in associations as participating in a dialogue with historians and therefore believes they are capable of influencing their interpretations. One harki posts that he thought he recognized some of Khader’s ideas in Stora’s writings, when, “contrary to his pervious writings,” Stora rejected any comparison between the Vietnam War and the Algerian War. Khader responded that he was very happy to see Stora was “inspired” by his analysis. Moreover, Khader conveys optimism about the association websites’ influence when he observes that “since the creation of the Coalition Nationale des Harkis et des Associations de Harkis (including the contribution of your humble narrator!), on the Net and on ‘the ground’, things seem to be evolving in the right direction, because a number of ‘ideologist historians’ begin,

175 Harkis.info, (accessed September 21, 2008), « Benjamin STORA nous remet cela dans Le Monde !!! » Posted by Khader Moulfi on November 28, 2005, “l’Histoire n’est pas une ” science exacte " et que ses " sources d’information " sont trop aléatoires et unilatérales pour être la " vérité " absolue et définitive !!! »

176 Ibid, « Enfin, je recommande, très vivement, aux présidents d’associations de RONA (plusieurs centaines dans toute la France), d’abandonner, sine die, les salons mondains et les ” réunions politcardes ”, en vue de s’occuper, sérieusement et rapidement, du ” dossier STORA “, dans la perspective d’une éventuelle action judiciaire collégiale car on ne peut pas le laisser, éternellement et impunément, nous ” cracher dessus ” sans la moindre réaction de notre part !!! »


178 Coalition Nationale des Harkis (accessed September 21, 2008), « STORA vers la rédemption ?” Posted by Khader on 04-10-2007 in response to the article « L’Ennemi Intime : un film de propagande à la sous-Rambo !!! », «Plus sérieusement, je prends acte, avec joie, que le Sieur STORA s’inspire, en quasi-totalité, de mon analyse (publiée dans l’article ci-dessus avant son interview au Nouvel Obs) rejetant tout rapprochement recevable entre la Guerre du Vietnam et la "pacification algérienne (contrairement à ses écrits précédents) »
little by little, to modify their antiquated, dubious positions.” He concludes by reminding the association harkis that one must always remain “vigilant and reactive.”

One explanation for Khader’s perception that he is engaged in a dialogue with Stora lies in a minor media battle that the websites publicize. Two left-wing newspapers wrote articles reacting to Khader’s critiques of Stora. La Tribune, which Khader describes as “one of the numerous FLN newspapers,” wrote an article saying that Stora was the target of the harkis. Khader responded to this with an article entitled “When the FLN comes to the rescue of Benjamin STORA!” L’Humanité also wrote an article against Khader in response to his comments on Stora, rejecting Khader’s critiques and referring to him as a “sad character.” Although Khader appeared outraged over these articles, they demonstrated to Khader and other harkis on the websites that people are reading his writings, which probably encouraged them to continue fighting perceived defamations by historians representing the FLN.

Besides their representation by historians, harkis are also concerned with their representation in films. Films are one of the most influential carriers of French collective memory of the Algerian War and the years 2006 and 2007 saw an influx of films dealing with this subject. The most popular of the six films to come out in this two-year span was the film Indigènes (in English, Days of Glory), about soldiers of North African origin who fought for the French in World War II. This film was nominated for several awards and created a stir in France as it brought recognition to these soldiers who had been forgotten and

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179 Ibid, « En l’espèce, force est de constater que, depuis l’arrivée de la Coalition Nationale des Harkis et des Associations de Harkis (incluant la contribution de votre humble narrateur!), sur le Net et le terrain, les choses semblent évoluer, pianissimo, dans le bon sens, car de nombreux “historiens idéologues” commencent, peu à peu, à modifier leurs positions trop douteuses d’antan mais, il nous faut rester, constamment, vigilants et réactifs, car comme le dit si bien l’adage : Chassez le naturel et il revient au galop !!!”. »

180 2006: Harkis, Indigènes, Mon colonel, La Trahison, 2007: L’Ennemi intime, Cartouches gauloises

181 Indigènes sold over 3 million tickets at the box office, making it the 9th most successful film in France in 2006. Stora, La Guerre des Mémoires, 55.
had still not received their pensions. It caught the attention of Jacques Chirac who was reportedly very moved by the film and responded by ordering that full pensions be paid to these soldiers.

Although the attention and support given to French soldiers of North African origin would seem to bode well for the “harki cause,” harkis writing on the websites were suspicious of the film from the start and ended up denouncing it as a “Trojan Horse of the FLN.” Khader admitted that he believes it is both good and necessary to have a film that rehabilitates the history of soldiers in World War II who came from the former colonies, and notes that his father was one of these soldiers. Moreover, a film that sheds light on this period in French history could benefit the harkis because their participation in earlier wars (such as World War II and Indochina) demonstrates their patriotism. And yet, Khader did not even see the film before he began denouncing it. The problem for him was that this film was made by a French-Algerian director, had bi-national actors, Algerian and Moroccan silent partners, and was the Algerian (aka FLN) submission at the Cannes Film Festival.

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183 Coalition Nationale des Harkis (accessed September 21, 2008), « Les Indigènes sont venus coloniser la journée des Harkis !!! » Posted by Khader Moulfi on 29-09-2006, « Et, les désinformation et propagande diffusées, par le réalisateur franco-algérien, les acteurs binationaux et les commanditaires étrangers (Algérie et Maroc), de ce long-métrage (financé par de l’argent public tricolore mais, présenté, étrangement, au Festival de Cannes, dans la sélection du FLN alors que c’est le royaume chérifien qui a apporté toute l’aide logistique). »
Therefore, he knew without even seeing it that it would be a vehicle for the “misinformation and propaganda” of the FLN.¹⁸⁴

The particular problem that Khader perceives in this film is that ‘certain ‘sad revisionist and negationist’ (anti-harkis racists)” are trying to distinguish, arbitrarily, between supposed “just wars” (such as World War II) and the “pacification efforts” in Algeria between 1954 and 1962 against the FLN.¹⁸⁵ He uses the terms “revisionist” and “negationist,” which are typically ascribed to Holocaust deniers, to emphasize the injustice of this interpretation. Massai notes that the makers of Indigènes fabricated a myth, which was then accepted and perpetuated by the media, that Algerians spontaneously joined the army to liberate the Mother Country (France) from Nazism.¹⁸⁶ And yet, he explains, people still do not believe that the harkis joined the army to liberate the Mother Country. When he overhears spectators contrasting the indigènes in WWII and harkis in the “Algerian civil war”, he responds by saying, “What are these people suggesting? That Algeria became independent in 1954? That the indigènes are patriots for having defended France from the Nazis and that the Harkis are traitors for having chosen the side of French Nazis?”¹⁸⁷ Thus, he argues that this film proclaims the bravery of the FLN, not the soldiers who fought loyalley.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, « les désinformation et propagande diffusées »

¹⁸⁵ Coalition Nationale des Harkis, (accessed on February 18, 2008). Posted by Khader Moulfi 2006/05/27 in response to the subject "Indigènes".

¹⁸⁶ Harkis.info, (accessed September 21, 2008). « La journée d'hommage… des indigènes ! » Posted by Massai on September 28, 2006, « le film indigène multiplie les clichés ainsi que les élan patriotiques ne craignant ni le ridicule ni les non-sens : les indigènes se sont portés "volontaires" et ont traversé la mer pour venir sauver "la mère patrie" du nazisme. Fichtre ! c'est bien la première fois que j'entends cette version de l'Histoire de l'armée d'Afrique de la part d'Algériens ou de Marocains. »

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, « Qu'est-ce qu'on doit en déduire ? Que l'Algérie est devenue indépendante en 1954 ? que les Harkis n'ont rien à voir avec ce film et que sa promotion le jour de la journée des Harkis est une coïncidence ? Que les indigènes sont des patriotes lorsqu'il fallait défendre la France des nazis et que les Harkis sont des traîtres pour avoir choisi le camp des nazis Français ? »
for France. Therefore, it is a “Trojan Horse of the FLN,” or as one harki put it, “a new ‘thumbing your nose’ at the harki community by the little immigrants from the banlieues.”

The harkis also see this film as an insult because it was released on the “national day of homage to the harkis,” September 25, 2006. Khader declared that it was shocking and indecent that this day was chosen, and when the Defense Minister evoked the film during his speech that day, Khader perceived it as essentially “snubbing” the harkis by excluding them from their own commemoration. Talking about the “Indigènes” took attention away from the harkis on this day. Khader was especially upset that Chirac made an official announcement about the film that day because it let people wrongly believe that it concerned the “harkis”, thereby creating more trouble and confusion in public opinion. His main contention, then, was that Chirac and his government, either through ignorance or malice, did not make a distinction between the harkis who chose to fight for France and the indigènes who were forced to.

The harkis writing on the websites, therefore, see the film Indigènes as a weapon of the FLN in the “war of memories” because the uneducated public will not learn the true

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188 Harkis.info, (accessed September 21, 2008). Posted by jk8826 on 26-05-2006 on the subject "Indigènes", “Sur fond de vérités, ce film est un nouveau pied-de-nez à la communauté harkis de la part de petits immigrants de banlieues. »

189 The “national day of homage to the harkis” was instituted by Jacques Chirac, and was first held on September 25, 2001.


191 Ibid, « En outre et quand bien même les "doléances ", des susvisés anciens combattants, seraient-elles compréhensibles, il semble, néanmoins, choquant et indécent d'avoir choisi, sciemment, la semaine, de la "journée d'hommage national aux harkis ", du 25 septembre 2006, pour la sortie de ce film et, surtout, pour l'annonce officielle, par le Chef de l'Etat et son gouvernement, des mesures en leur faveur, afin de venir jeter le trouble et la confusion, dans l'opinion publique, tout en laissant croire, à tort, que le "dossier harki " était, désormais, résolu à l'origine d'une véritable "escroquerie morale étatique et médiatique " ! ! ! »
history of the harkis. They will either confuse the indigènes with the harkis and think that
their history is resolved by Chirac honoring the soldiers and giving them their pensions, or
they will get the FLN’s message and contrast these “patriotic figures” with the harkis.
Khader proclaimed that by letting their day of homage be hijacked by Indigènes, Chirac is
continuing the tradition of the French State cheating and betraying the harkis. His actions
prove that “the French State doesn’t care about the harkis, even during their own celebration,
and is more concerned with serving “other interests.” He sees, then, the increasing
influence of the FLN behind this affront. He deplores this as “a FLNist propaganda film
[that] also knows how to be a chameleon because it created an ‘opportunistic and unfair
amalgamation’ with the Harkis, as they ‘colonized’ our own ‘national day of homage.’” In
response to this affront, Khader called for the harkis to boycott this day of homage that has
become “a day of national hypocrisy against the harkis.” Furthermore, he reminded the
harki “collective” to stay hostile to the “competition of memories and prejudices” taking

192 Ibid, « De plus, Jacques CHIRAC, s’évertuant à “mimer ”, le Général de Gaulle, vient de commettre, à
l’encontre des harkis et leurs familles, depuis 1995, des “trahisons d’Etat en série ”, qui lui vaudrait le
titre de ”serial cheater against RONA ” et, une fois de plus, le ”monarque élyséen ” ternit l’image de la
France. Il convient de remémorer que ”Jacquot 1er ” n’a, toujours, pas daigné répondre à notre lettre
ouverte du 03 août dernier, ayant conduit à la réitération de notre ”boycott ” qui vient de démontrer, à
nouveau, son ”bien-fondé salutaire ”, puisque tout prouve que l’Etat français méprise, les harkis, même
dans leur propre célébration, afin de servir les intérêts d’autrui, C.Q.F.D. ! ! ! »

193 Coalition Nationale des Harkis (accessed September 21, 2008), « L’OVNI DU MOIS : ”Indigènes” un film
binational et caméléon !!! » Posted by Khader Moulfi on 27-01-2007, « Ce ”film de propagande flniste” sait,
aussi, être ”caméléon ”, en ayant créé, sciemment, un amalgame opportuniste et déloyal, avec les Harkis,
afin de ”coloniser”, le 25 septembre 2006, notre propre ”journée d’hommage national” que nous avions
boycottée, à très juste titre, pour ”cause d’hypocrisie étatique incontestable” !!! »

194 Coalition Nationale des Harkis (accessed September 21, 2008), « Les Indigènes sont venus coloniser la
journée des Harkis !!! » Posted by Khader Moulfi on 29-09-2006, « Il est temps, pour les RONA et leurs
sympathisants, de se réveiller sous peine de devenir les ”punching-balls universels ”, de tous les racistes
anti-harkis de la Terre. Décidément, notre coalition a été, derechef, très ”visionnaire ”, en ayant anticipé
sur la réalité, de cette ”journée d’hypocrisie nationale envers les harkis ” et, nos contradicteurs
devraient, dorénavant, faire ”profil bas ” mais, surtout, s’abstenir de nous donner des ” leçons ” car ils devraient se
borner à apprendre avant d’alléguer des inepties ! ! ! »
place and to not “just accept passively what we are given.” 195 Khader rallies the harkis and promises that they will not surrender in their battle with the FLN over harki memory.

The following year, these harkis were offended again when the feature film *L’Ennemi Intime* was released in theaters during the same week as the “national day of homage to the harkis.” 196 This film is a dramatic account of the psychological effects of the Algerian War on French soldiers and is implicitly critical of French military actions, including those of the harkis, in this war. One harki posting on “Coalition Nationale” declares that *L’Ennemi Intime* has the Manichaeism of an American film and deplores the fact that the two harkis in the film are presented as contemptible underlings while the FLN fighters are portrayed as heroic and dignified. 197 One of the harkis in the film, as she explains, is a former member of the FLN “who doesn’t hesitate to put his family in danger in order to get information.” 198 The other harki in the film is a veteran of the battle of Monte Cassino “who risks his life for his superiors but who is treated in return as less than nothing…We even see him kill a prisoner by shooting him in the back.” 199 In contrast to these harkis the film depicts “dignified FLN combatants” who pray before being killed by the French and one who

195 Ibid, « Enfin, notre collectif demeure hostile, à la “concurrence des mémoires et des préjudices” mais, sans accepter, passivement, que l’on vienne nous prendre “le pain de la bouche” en commettant, de tels “hold-up” de nos propres acquis. Et, nous promettons, dans un futur très proche, de s’actions d’envergure et sans précédent, afin de rappeler tout le monde à l’ordre et/ou à ses responsabilités. »

196 *L’Ennemi Intime* was released in theaters on October 3, 2007.

197 Coalition Nationale des Harkis, (accessed October 16, 2008), « ennemi intime », Posted by salim on 31-03-2008 in response to the article “L’Ennemi Intime : un film de propagande à la sous-Rambo !!! », « Dans ce film pseudo américain dans le sens où il y a des méchants et des gentils sans aucune subtilité, les harkis sont présentés comme des sous-soldats méprisables et le fln comme les défenseurs des atrocités commis par l’armée française et défenseur de la dignité des algériens. »

198 Ibid, « le premier un ancien membre du fln devenu harki qui n’hésite pas à mettre en danger sa famille pour soutirer des renseignements.Un homme qui ne sait pas dans quel camp il est qui finit par retourner avec le fln. ». 

199 Ibid, « le deuxième, un survivant de la bataille de Monte Cassino,qui risque sa vie pour ses supérieurs mais qui est traité en retour comme un moins que rien...On le voit même abattre un prisonnier d’une balle dans le dos. »
lectures a harki saying, “you are no longer an Algerian, you will never be French.” Harkis writing on the websites deplore the clearly biased portrayal of harkis in the film.

Khader again denounced the film before even seeing it, this time because the screenplay was written by Patrick Rotman, who he describes as pro-FLN. He bases this accusation on the fact that Rotman also wrote the screenplay for the film Nuit Noire about the massacre of Algerians in Paris on October 17, 1961, which is an event of great historical significance for Algerians and immigrants of Algerian origin. Moreover, since Rotman is a historian and L’Ennemi Intime is based on a book and documentary that Rotman had written, Khader endeavors to contest the film’s historical and journalistic value. He denounces Rotman’s research methods, proclaiming that “Interviewing the draftees does not constitute the ‘truth’ if the ‘harnessing of individual memories’ is not supported by authentic and proven facts. That’s where these very dangerous derivatives begin, these famous ‘memories’ because they only call on ideologies, misgivings, and ‘subjective slices of life.’”

Khader is especially concerned with contesting the film’s historical objectivity when he sees that an article in Le Figaro declares that the film has “the moderation and impartiality of a well-researched documentary.” He fears the film’s interpretation of harki

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200 Ibid, « En parlèle de cela, nous voyons des combattants du fln digne, au moment de la mort faire leurs prières, être abattus d’une balle dans le dos et aussi faire la morale à un harki : l’histoire de la cigarette "tu n’es plus un algérien, tu ne sera jamais français". »

201 Coalition Nationale des Harkis (accessed September 21, 2008), « L'Ennemi Intime : un film de propagande à la sous-Rambo !!! » Posted by Khader Moufli on 02-10-2007 at 16:56. « la participation, de Patrick ROTMAN (auteur d’un livre et d’un documentaire homonymes ayant inspiré le projet et le scénario de ce navet présumé), est censée être, à tort, la "valeur ajoutée historique et journalistique", de ce film mais, de qui se moque-t-on ? Interviewer, des appelés du contingent (proches, en général, de la FNACA communiste et pro-FLN), ne constitue, en rien, la "vérité", si la "captation de mémoires individuelles" n'est pas recoupée, avec des faits authentiques et prouvés et, c'est là, que débutent les dérives très dangereuses, de ces fameuses "mémoires", car elles ne s'appuient, exclusivement, que sur des idéologies, des états d’âme et des "tranches de vie subjectives". »
participation of the Algerian War will influence “the very vulnerable targeted public” who are uninformed of the harki history and who will mistake the film as historical. He condemns *L’Ennemi Intime* as a “total misjudgment of the ‘History of France’” and compares it to “a toxic product,” saying that if it is used improperly (seen as historical instead of entertaining fiction), it could be dangerous. Finally, he challenges Rotman and the director of the film to a debate about the real, factual history of harki participation in the Algerian War.

These harkis received help in denouncing this film from their allies in the “war of memories”, French military officers. General François Meyer, who wrote a book honoring the harkis, posted a response to Khader’s article on *L’Ennemi Intime* agreeing that the film falsifies history. Meyer writes that “It’s a militant untruth, disguised as a concern for morality, a fiction passionately hostile and unjust for French troops.” Furthermore, the

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202 Coalition Nationale des Harkis, (accessed October 16, 2008), « le Figaro gaulliste s'y met aussi ! », Posted by Khader on 04-10-2007 in response to the article « L'Ennemi Intime : un film de propagande à la sous-Rambo !!! » « la sobriété et l'impartialité d'un documentaire nourri d'informations. »

203 Coalition Nationale des Harkis, (accessed October 16, 2008), « Voir le film n'est pas grave en soi ! » Posted by Khader on 05-10-2007 in response to the article « L'Ennemi Intime : un film de propagande à la sous-Rambo !!! » « En revanche, que se passera-t-il, réellement, dans la tête très vulnérable, du public ciblé, par la production et, méconnaissant, totalement, cette "Histoire de France" (On ne dit pas merci à l'Education Nationale !), hormis la propagande du FLN, de ses porteurs de valises et héritiers de tous horizons (bobos, tiersmondistes, ...), en l'occurrence : les 12/25 ans (dont une majorité sera franco-algérienne et/ou d'origine Nord Africaine et sub-saharienne, ...) ? »

204 Coalition Nationale des Harkis (accessed September 21, 2008), « L'Ennemi Intime : un film de propagande à la sous-Rambo !!! » Posted by Khader Moulfi on 02-10-2007 at 16:56. « En conséquence, si le trio SIRI - MAGIMEL - ROTMAN, entendaient poursuivre, sa très mesquine entreprise de falsification de l'Histoire unilatérale, je leur lance un défi, d'ores et déjà, ici-même, pour un vrai "débat contradictoire et circonstancié" avec moi-même !!! »

Circle for the Defense of the Combatants in French North Africa (CDCAFN) wrote a letter to Rotman detailing their objections to the film, which Khader posted on “Coalition Nationale.” The letter said that the presidents of these associations decided unanimously that the film is “oriented preferentially against the French army and is manifestly harmful to France for the way it incites racial hate.” They explain that showing scenes of the French army massacring a village, and other acts of military misconduct, causes conflicts between the grandchildren of both sides living together in France now. They demand specific examples of such massacres if Rotman wants to claim this film is based on historical truth.

These former officers also defend the harkis in particular, claiming, as the harkis do, that they are unfairly portrayed in a negative light. They declare that having actually fought with the harkis, they can say definitively that they “were good soldiers, good Frenchmen incapable of committing these crimes that you attribute to them in the film.” Moreover, they explain that the harkis “wouldn’t have just accepted killing women and children; they weren’t stupid or cowardly and you insult them by treating their wartime behavior that

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207 Coalition Nationale des Harkis, (accessed October 16, 2008), « Lettre ouverte du Général GILLIS à ROTMA » Posted by Polo on 23-11-2007 in response to the article “L'Ennemi Intime : un film de propagande à la sous-Rambo !!! », « Les Présidents de ces associations, après avoir vu, séparément, le film "L'ennemi intime" et pris le temps de la réflexion, estiment de façon unanime que le scénario est orienté préférentiellement contre l'Armée Française et manifestement nuisible à la France par l'incitation à la haine raciale qu'il suinte »

208 Ibid, “En retour, nous qui avons réellement combattu en Algérie avec des harkis et des appelés, nous affichons notre conviction : les appelés, les harkis, les sous-officiers et les officiers subalternes de l'encadrement de contact de ces troupes étaient de bons soldats, de bons Français incapables de commettre ces crimes que vous mettez complaisamment en scène. »
Thus, the military officers act as the harkis’ protective allies in the “war of
memories.”

IDENTIFICATION

The fervent struggles over representation and non-harki interpretations reveal the
harki identity’s fragile and contested nature. The term “harki” does not correspond to an
ethnicity, and identity does not reflect, in this instance, some basic and internal sameness.

“Harki,” rather, represents a community of memory, with individual members united by a
common past and a shared present. Thus, identity functions here “to highlight the
processual, interactive development of the kind of collective self-understanding, solidarity, or
‘groupness’ that can make collective action possible.” The conflicting memories carried
by the memoirs and websites, however, demonstrate that the harki identity does not
necessarily imply a consensus about that past or about how to pursue collective action, or
even a unified self-understanding. They reflect the various ways that people identify
themselves as harkis: as traitor, victim, hero, Algerian, French, etc. Each of these harki
identities has different political, social, and personal significance for the people who evoke
them.

Algerians and the French have also, however, imposed the harki identity on Muslim
soldiers who fought during the Algerian War and their children. By categorizing the soldiers

209 Ibid, “Ils n’étaient ni stupides, ni lâches et vous les insultez en traitant ainsi leur comportement dans la
guerre. »

210 Identity remains an ambiguous concept that scholars have invoked in myriad ways, including
unproblematically. Rogers Brubaker has argued that in order for identity to preserve its conceptual utility,
scholars need to specify and historicize their terms and to avoid reifying the groups they study. Rogers

211 Ibid, 34, 44. This is one of the uses Brubaker offers for the concept of identity.

212 Ibid, 34.
and their families as harkis, these non-harkis have created an identity and a community through exclusion. Scholars of French national memory have shown that both the Euro-French and immigrants of Algerian origin benefited from forgetting this group. As Jo McCormack writes, “Forgetting divisive elements of the past once again goes hand in hand with nation building. Obviously though this nation is inherently exclusionary and built on unsure foundations.”

Algerians, on the other hand, have actively remembered and denounced the role of the harkis in the Algerian War of independence as a way of unifying their national identity. Benjamin Stora explains that this memory of the harkis as traitors has been transmitted most effectively through Algerian schools. One textbook writes that “Some groups of people preferred to sell themselves to the enemy and fight their own brothers, beginning with the first revolts during the 19th century, in exchange for money, goods, and titles. These groups of harkis were responsible for the worst repressions of Algerian civilians and they were in charge of the French Army’s dirty work, such as burning villages, interrogations, torture and assassinations.”

Since nearly all harkis have experienced various forms of exclusion by Algerians, Euro-French, and Franco-Algerians, this experience constitutes the most unifying force for their community.

Both memoirs and websites describe being actively rejected by their Franco-Algerian and Euro-French peers. Kerchouche, in her memoir Mon Père, explains that “Because he had ‘chosen’ France, my father was thereafter considered as a traitor by the Algerians, and

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213 McCormack, Collective Memory, 113.

214 Stora La Guerre des Mémoires, 59, “Des groupes de personnes ont préféré se vendre à l’ennemi et combattre leur propres frères, déjà lors des premières révoltes au XIXe siècle, en échange d’argent, de biens, de titres. Ces groupes de harkis ont été responsables des pires répressions contre les civils algériens, ce sont eux qui ont été chargés de brûler les villages, des interrogatoires, de la torture et des assassinsats, donc de la sale besogne de l’armée française.”
was suspected of becoming one by the French.” She also describes the taunting she used to receive from Algerian immigrants when she was growing up, who yelled insults such as “Go away, you stupid hick, you harki!”, and writes that “In front of me, these exiles used the word ‘harki’ as an insult.” Many other harkis in the memoirs describe similar experiences of name-calling and rejection. One harki posted on an association website that although she did not experience the harki camps, she is familiar with both the anti-harki discrimination and the racism against French of North African origin in general: “I recall a period of my childhood when I was rejected by the “100% French” (to simplify) children because my last name wasn’t French and my hair was not straight; but at the same time I was also rejected by the children of Algerian immigrants (whose parents weren’t harkis) because my first name was French (my father wanted his children to have French first names).” On the websites, harkis commiserate about this continuing discrimination against their “community,” with one harki alerting the others that she had discovered a website from which harkis were “banned.” The harki identity remains relevant for even the third generation because of this anti-harki discrimination. Besanci-Lancou writes that “Being harki is not hereditary. Alas, the unhappiness is transmitted (from one generation to the next).” Her son, the grandson of

215 Kerchouche, Mon père, 23. « Parce qu’il a ‘choisi’ la France, mon père est considéré, depuis, comme un traître par les Algériens, et suspecté de devenir par les Français. »

216 Kerchouche, Mon père, 29. « Espèce de plouc, harki, va! », « Devant moi, ces exilés utilisaient le mot ‘harki’ comme une insulte. »

217 Harkis.info, (accessed March 12, 2008). Posted by tongwoman on October 17, 2006 at 23:43, on the subject « Etre un(e) enfant de harki » « Mais la discrimination et le racisme, je connais : je me rappelle une période de mon enfance où j’étais rejetée par les enfants ”100% Français” (pour simplifier) car mon nom de famille n’était pas français et que mes cheveux n’étaient pas raides; mais en même temps j’étais aussi rejetée par les enfants issus de l’immigration algérienne (dont les parents n’étaient pas harkis) parce que mon prénom lui était français (mon père voulait que ses enfants portent des prénoms français). »

harkis, has experienced forms of rejection in school. Despite their disagreement about their past, then, this perpetual exclusion binds them as harkis.

The harki identity imposed by the French and Algerians is that of the harkis as traitors. Leaders in Algeria and France have also invoked a historical analogy between harkis and the Vichy collaborators in WWII. In 2001, the Algerian President (and veteran of the War of Independence) Abdelaziz Bouteflika announced during a visit to France that the time was not yet right for the harkis to return to Algeria to visit. “It is exactly as if,” he continued, “one were to ask a French resistance fighter to shake the hand of a collaborator.”

Besanci-Lancou declares in her memoir that she had essentially forgotten that she was the daughter of a harki until the Algerian President’s remarks. Another harki, this one posting on an association website, expressed indignation over these remarks and Bouteflika’s misuse of this weighty analogy. This harki writes, “He who recently, after having named the survivors of his slaughter ‘collaborators’, relapses into equating the French presence with that of the Nazis. What nerve on the part of these ruffians to compare themselves to the French resistance. His History teachers need to explain to him that our resistance never massacred villagers, let alone babies, children, women and the elderly, to impose its dictatorship. On the contrary, when the war was barely finished, the resistance did its best to restore democracy.”

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220 « Les conditions ne sont pas encore venues pour des visites de harkis. (...) C’est exactement comme si on demandait à un Français de la Résistance de toucher la main d’un collabo »

221 Besnaci-Lancou, *Fille de harki*, 16.

traitors/collaborators,” imposed on them by others, has been for their understandings of themselves as part of a collectivity.

This shared experience of exclusion, however, has produced different forms of self-understanding, divided along memoir/website lines. Self-understanding is used here as “situated subjectivity: one’s sense of who one is, of one’s social location, and of how (given the first two) one is prepared to act.” One way harkis have reacted is by internalizing this imposed identity, leading to shame and inaction. As one woman explains, at first she affirmed loud and strong that she was a daughter of harkis, and was proud of this identity. She did not realize, however, the hatred of Algerian immigrants and the contempt of the French toward “us.” “We, the children, inherited from our fathers the identity of traitors, collaborators, harkis. These words hurt me. Now I don’t say (harki) anymore. People have taught me all too well that it means “traitor”. Even if I did not participate in this history, I feel guilty.” Kerchouche writes about her father’s guilty silence regarding the harki role in the history of the Algerian War. “Out of fear of receiving blows, fearing the judgment of History, the harkis hesitated to speak. It was as if to speak, and write, was to betray yet again…” The majority of first generation harkis describe this same experience of having been shamed into silence for many years.

Another way that harkis have responded, however, is by fighting back against this imposed identity. They have accepted the label of “harki,” while trying to redefine its

\[\text{massacré de villageois et encore moins des bébés, des enfants, des femmes et des vieillards pour imposer sa dictature. Qu’au contraire, à peine la guerre finie, la résistance s’est efforcée de restaurer la démocratie.} \]

\[\text{Brubaker, Ethnicity Without Groups 44.} \]

\[\text{Kerchouche and Gladieu, Destins de Harkis, 92. « Bien que je n’y sois pour rien dans cette histoire, je me sens coupable.} \]

\[\text{Kerchouche, Mon père, 13. « Par peur de recevoir des coups, craignant le jugement de l’Histoire, les harkis hésitent à parler. Comme si parler, et écrire, était trahir encore… »} \]
meaning through writing about their past in memoirs and testimonies, and pursuing official recognition. As Besanci-Lancou explains, she realized she must finally address her controversial past so that her children can construct a more positive identity.\textsuperscript{226} Not surprisingly, websites and memoirs define their harki identity in different ways, and for different reasons. Memoirs, as cultural carriers of memory, are more interested in diverse individual experiences, and focus on harkis as victims. These stories express all the ways in which they have suffered at the hands of the FLN, the French State, and fate itself.

By portraying themselves as victims, these harkis attempt to break down the barriers that exist between the harkis and other Algerians. They suggest that the harkis were not the enemies during the war, but rather compatriots struggling in the same tragic situation. Besanci-Lancou writes that “During the Algerian War, with the blind terror of certain independence fighters, each Algerian was a potential harki.”\textsuperscript{227} The stories in the memoirs suggest that who was a harki, a member of the FLN, dead, or alive was essentially random. Thus, this history is too complex for the Algerian/harki dichotomy.

Furthermore, throughout the memoirs, the harkis emphasize their Algerian identity. Most of the first generation harkis refer to Algeria as “my country” or “our country”, and wish they could have been able to stay there following Algerian independence. Kerchouche observes in her parents that “this certainty, that of being Algerians, never left them. Algerians who were humiliated and detested, but Algerians nonetheless. Better that than nothing at all.”\textsuperscript{228} The first generation in many cases passed on this memory of, and nostalgia for,

\textsuperscript{226} Besnaci-Lancou, \textit{Fille de harki}, 17.

\textsuperscript{227} Besnaci-Lancou, \textit{Fille de harki}, 19. « Pendant la guerre d’Algérie, avec la terreur aveugle de certains maquisards, chaque Algérien était un harki potentiel »

\textsuperscript{228} Kerchouche, \textit{Mon père}, 29. « Cette certitude, celle d’être algériens, ne les a jamais quittés. Des Algériens bannis, humiliés, détestés, mais des Algériens quand même. Mieux vaut cela que de n’être rien »

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Algeria, which creates a link between these harkis and Algerians that does not exist for association harkis.

By emphasizing the harkis’ Algerian identity, the memoir writers seek to bring about changes that would allow harkis to return to Algeria to visit. The importance of the “native country” and the psychological disruption of migration haunt these memoirs. Displacement and rootlessness are common themes in these works and Besanci-Lancou expresses a sense of injustice that harkis are not allowed to return the way that other Algerian immigrants can.229

At the same time, the memoir writers want to be accepted by Euro-French society and to get recognition for the injustices the harkis suffered. They realize that by shaming government authorities for their unjust treatment of harkis, they can win French public sympathy. In the film Harkis, for example, the head of the camp (also a former French captain) is vilified, while the majority of the French are portrayed in a sympathetic light. The predominance of open-minded and compassionate French characters in the film allows Euro-French viewers to denounce the racism of various anonymous French officials while remaining comfortable with their own role in the “harki drama.” This may explain why the memoir writers have been so whole-heartedly embraced by the French media as representatives of the harki community. The journal L’Express, for example, has praised Kerchouche’s Mon Père, ce Harki as a poignant memoir that “realizes the invincible merit of truth.”230

By embracing these “victims” and their efforts to revise of the harki identity, French officials and general public alike can relieve some of the guilt of colonialism.

229 Besnaci-Lancou, Fille de harki, 14.

Association websites, however, seek to redefine the harki identity by proclaiming the harkis as heroes. Harkis use the discussion board as a way for them to express their pride at being the children of harkis. One harki posted, “AS I OFTEN CELEBRATE, I AM BERBER, MY FATHER HARKI, AND I AM PROUD OF HIM AND HAPPY MYSELF AND I DON’T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT THE PREJUDICES OF OTHERS.”

They stress the differences between themselves and Algerian immigrants, who arguably have not earned the right to be French the way that the harkis have. Another harki writes, “Yes, I am proud of harkis and nauseated by all the lies and fake discourses on the page of history that marks an indelible line between France and Algeria. Whatever the evil thinkers say, the harkis remain the most courageous men and fully worthy of being French, not like those who want to be French, yet who don’t want to love France. The harkis spilt their blood, and through their spilt blood they proved their love for this country.”

These harkis base their identity on having chosen France and defended French values.

Unlike the harki memoir writers, harkis in associations try to distance themselves from Algerians today and continue to stress the distinction between themselves and the FLN. They post serious critiques of contemporary Algeria and Algerian politics. One harki writes, “If Algeria presently suffers (unemployment, misery, massacre…), it is no longer the fault of...


232 Harkis.org, (accessed February 18, 2008). Posted by Anonyme on March, 2 2006, on the subject « Tres fière” « Fièr des harkis oui je le suis. Ecouée par tous les mensonges et les faux discours sur cette page d'histoire qui marque un lien indélébile entre la France et l'Algérie. Peu importe ce que disent les mauvais penseurs, les harkis restent les plus courageux des hommes et largement dignes d'être français, non pas comme certains qui veulent être français sans vouloir aimer la France pour autant. les harkis eux ont versé leur sang et par leur sang versé, ils ont prouvé leur amour pour ce pays. »
France and the Harkis, 43 years after the end of hostilities, but that of the ‘pseudo hero resistance’ of the FLN, who spoiled all the riches of the country. They live like billionaires…while the people suffer all kinds of harm.”

Thus these harkis continue to stress their divergence from the FLN and their policies.

Harkis posting on the websites are far more interested in their French identity. As one post explains, “It’s true that France locked us up in harki camps, we did not go to school, we were discriminated against everywhere, we were treated as Arabs, but it’s France. It’s like a mother who hits her children, but it’s nonetheless our mother and we must pardon her and love her. This is what my father told me. This is why I love this country. Tomorrow will be better, God willing. Long live the harkis. Long live France.”

For these harkis, “my country” refers to France, and they appear even more patriotic than their “native French” peers. On “Harkis.info,” Massai, the site moderator, uses an icon that includes the tricolor flag. One harki writes, “I am happy to live, to have grown up on French soil (LAND OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN, HOMELAND OF VICTOR HUGO AND JULES FERRY).”

Unlike the harkis in the memoirs, these harkis do not express a desire to be able to go back to

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234 Harkis.info, (accessed March 12, 2008). Posted by Zalamit on March 8, 2006 at 08:48, on the subject « FIERE DE L’ETRE FILS DE HARKIS » « C’est vrai, le chaoui, que la france elle nous a enfermé dans les camp de harkis, on n’es pas allez à l’école, on est discriminer de partout, on nous traite d’arabe, mais c’est la france. c’est comme une mère qui frappe ses enfants, mais c’est quant même notre mère on doit la pardonné et l’aimeit. Moi c’est ce que mon père il me dit. c’est pour ça que j’aime ce pays. Demain ça ira mieux, inch allah. vive les harkis. vive la france. »

Algeria, but instead seek more recognition for their services from France. One writes that she is going to turn away from the problem of the Algerians and their “FLhaine” (as some say), declaring, “I am going to demand reckoning from MY country, this France that my father calls ‘the mother country.’”

Again, the harkis situate themselves firmly in France and renounce their Algerian identity.

236 Harkis.info, (accessed March 12, 2008). Posted by zalabia on October 11, 2006 at 15:05, on the subject « Etre un(e) enfant de harki » « maintenant je vais arrêté de me détourner du problème en m’en prenant au algériens et à leur FLhaine (comme disent certains) et je vais demandé des comptes à MON Pays, cette France que mon père appelle ‘la mère patrie’.
CONCLUSION

People who identify themselves as harkis do not construct a single narrative of the past, but rather draw upon a multiplicity of often contradictory memories. Cultural and organizational carriers of harki collective memory structure different interpretations of the past and contest those that challenge their understandings of harki history and experience. The carriers of memory are gendered in the case of the harkis, and thus interpretations are also contested between sons and daughters of harkis. This struggle over which memories should represent the harki past demonstrates the contested nature of the harki identity and the fragility of their community. Harkis do not constitute a bounded group, but rather a collection of individuals who are either designated as such by external forces or who choose to identify with aspects of the harki past and present.

The case of the harkis reveals that collective memory is also not as cohesive as the concept might imply, and demonstrates the considerable potential for contestation inherent in Rousso’s carriers of memory. Communities transmit memories in a variety of ways, each of which can express not only different, but conflicting memories. Ignoring any of these vectors, for example association websites, produces an incomplete understanding of the community’s collective memory. Websites constitute a particular kind of collective memory carrier, theoretically open to all who seek to make a post, unlike most traditional
associations. They offer the opportunity to observe the continuous policing of memory that can only be inferred in other associations. These sites reveal the full extent of contestation over representation. Since, unlike in the case of national collective memories, no designated force exists within the community to regulate these memories, contestation becomes even more intense as memory work continues, and produces a correspondingly more unstable collective identity.

Finally, what is particular about harki collective memory is that it is not self-sufficient; harki memory is always formed in relation to another collective memory. Harkis define themselves and construct their collective memory in the context of French and Algerian memory of the war. Website administrators consciously engage in the “war of memories” occurring in France. Moreover, since the harkis are dispersed throughout France, their carriers of memory are tied to the French infrastructure. The memoir writers rely on the same channels as carriers of French national memory to make the harki history public. Disagreements among the harkis lie in how they want to conceive of their identity in this context and they fight over the best way to gain access to French collective memory, but the harkis never proclaim an independent collective memory.
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