

The Berbers and Islam as a Vehicle for Arab Supremacism

by Hugh Fitzgerald (August 2016)



In Algeria, before the Arab invasion and conquest in the seventh century, the population was almost entirely Berber, and along with those who followed traditional Berber religious practices, a considerable Christian population (St. Augustine, he of Hippo, was a Berber) flourished. When the Arabs swept in, subjugating the Berbers, they brought with them an Islam that replaced Christianity. Even after many Berbers converted, they were treated by the Arabs as second-class Muslims, heavily taxed, and even enslaved. Islamization was accompanied by what we call “Arabization,” which was a complicated and lengthy process.

That word “Arabization” is usually used to describe the large-scale movement of ethnic Arabs into a non-Arab region, in order to change its demographic character. But there is another form of Arabization that does not involve a physical invasion; it consists, rather, in making non-Arab Muslims forget or dismiss their non-Arab identity, attempt to emulate the behavior of seventh-century Arabs, adopt Arabic at the expense of their own languages, and even assume Arab names, in order to transmute themselves into Arabs. And that is what happened over time to many Berbers, whose descendants are convinced that they are Arabs, and have always been Arabs.

The Arabs rule in Algeria with the conviction that while Muslims are, according to the Qur’an, the “best of peoples,” the Arabs are the “best of Muslims.” It’s not hard to see why they would be convinced of that. After all, the Arab sense of superiority flows naturally from the facts of Islam: Islam was made known to the world through Muhammad, an Arab, and in his language. The Qur’an itself was the setting down *in Arabic* of the message sent by Allah through his messenger

Muhammad. The Qur'an should ideally be read, recited, memorized, in the Arabic of the seventh century original, and millions of non-Arab Muslims learn in their madrasas to memorize and recite a text whose Arabic words they cannot comprehend. When Muslims pray five times a day, prostrating themselves in *zebibah*-thickening prayer, they always face toward Mecca in western Arabia. Many non-Arab Muslims take on Arabic names and fake Arab pedigrees. All of this testifies to the superior position, despite the universalist claims made for the faith, of one people, the Arabs.

For the many non-Arab peoples who have suffered from this Arab supremacism, the example of the Berbers in North Africa is both instructive and heartening, and most relevant to the war of self-defense that now must be waged by the world's Infidels.

Under the French, from 1830 to 1962, the Berbers in Algeria had actually been favored at the expense of the Arabs. Almost from the beginning of French rule, they were regarded as less fervently Islamic, and consequently as more "European," than the Arabs. This view was fixed from early on. In the 1850s, Colonel Daumas, then head of Algerian affairs for the French government, wrote of the Berbers: "They have accepted the Koran but they have not embraced it." And this French acknowledgement of the Berber difference continued right down to the end of the colonial period. In 1950, Eugene Guernier wrote in *La Berbérie, l'Islam, et la France*, of the Berbers: "Our [Berber] man is without contest a Mediterranean of the Occident; or better yet, he is an Occidental. The Berbers are part of the rational Occident in formal opposition to the Arabs. A French general in the 1950s wrote a well-received book arguing that the Berbers were, in fact, racially "Europeans."

When Algeria became independent in 1962, and the French *pieds noirs* left *en masse* for France, the Berbers had much to worry about. Not only had they been favored during French rule, which meant the Arabs would now have it in for them, but simply by not being Arabs, they could expect mistreatment from their new Arab rulers, and mistreatment is what they got. The use of the Berber language, Tamazight, was suppressed, and even the most innocuous attempts made by the Berber elite to revive Berber culture were crushed by the state.

In 1980-81, open revolt began in the most heavily Berber region of Algeria, the Kabyle, the result of a decision by the Arab governor in Tizi Ouzou to ban a

lecture on "Ancient Berber Poetry" by Mouloud Mammeri (a Berber linguist and author living in Paris). That was the last straw for Berber students; that the Arabs would not allow even a single lecture on ancient Berber poetry revealed the lengths to which they would go to suppress Berber culture and attempt to efface the Berber historical memory. Berber riots began in Tizi Ouzou, spread elsewhere in the country, and then even spread to France, where Berbers demonstrated in front of the Algerian Embassy. These riots showed that the Berbers were no longer going to quietly accept Arab domination. While those demonstrations eventually petered out, the rumbles of discontent continued, and one important Berber demand was finally met, after many delays, in 2002, when the Arab rulers of Algeria allowed the Berber language (Tamazight) to be taught in Berber-populated schools. And in February of this year, a further linguistic victory was announced: the Berber language was recognized as a "state language," which means it can now be used on official documents.

Many Berbers are keenly aware that they have been subject over the centuries to forced Arabization, both in the obvious physical sense – Arabs moving into and claiming Berber lands – and, even more devastatingly, through the imposition of the Arabic language and culture, and suppression of Berber culture (language, art, music, poetry). One Berber intellectual expressed a widely shared sentiment: "It is time—long past overdue—to confront the racist arabization of the Amazigh [Berber] lands." The suppression of the Berber language and culture and history is the most important part of this "racist Arabization." And thus, the recent revival of Tamazight, the Berber language, is a major milestone in the attempt to undo Arabization.

Another good sign for the Berbers is the apparent willingness of the Arabs who run Algeria to finally recognize the true size of the Berber population. For decades, the Algerian government would insist that the Berbers made up somewhere between 10 and 20% of the population. But now even that government recognizes that the Berbers constitute 1/3 of the population, that is, 13 million out of the total of 39 million. There are some Berbers who claim that even this understates, and that 50% of the country is Berber. These numbers give the Berbers a firmer claim for a share of political power in Algeria.

In France, among the *maghrebin* immigrants, the Berbers (from both Algeria and Morocco, where the Berbers are more than 50% of the population) are said to constitute as much as 75% of the total. And their behavior in France (as in

Algeria) is notably different from that of the Arabs. They are religiously much less observant; more of them have converted to Christianity or even become open freethinkers and “secularists.” And they resent the way they have, for some French government policies, been “counted as Arabs.” One example is the attempt to make Arabic the language of instruction for “children from the Maghreb” on the assumption that they are almost all Arabs, when most of them, in fact, are Berbers (in France they like to call themselves Franco-Berbers, while the Arabs call themselves “Arabs”) who, having fought so hard to obtain the right to be taught in Berber in their schools in Algeria, fail to understand why they must endure the paradox of having Arabic forced on Berber children in French schools. Here’s part of one Berber’s furious outcry:

“Une fois encore le colonialisme arabo-islamique tente de nous asservir, même en France, nous les franco-berbères. En effet, durant l’émission d’Yves Calvi c’est dans l’air sur France 5, le lundi 16 décembre 2013, comme d’habitude, Mme Dounia Bouzar, spécialiste maison de l’islam, tente de convaincre les téléspectateurs de France et de Navarre qu’il faut enseigner la langue arabe aux petits Français issus de l’immigration maghrébine. Une fois encore, avec la complicité agissante de la caste politico-médiatique, qui essaye de vendre son rapport sur l’intégration commandé par Matignon, les Franco-Berbères qui sont bien intégrés dans la patrie de Jeanne d’Arc, sont utilisés comme butin de guerre par les marchands de l’islam. Une fois de plus, l’impérialisme arabo-islamique montre ses dents pour intimider ceux qui ne sont pas d’accord avec sa vision hégémonique...”

“Yet again Arabo-Islamic colonialism tries to subjugate us, the Franco-Berbers, even in France. During the program of Yves Calvi of Monday Dec. 16, 2013, Madame Dounia Bouzar, as usual the house expert on Islam, tries to convince her television audience that the Arabic language should be taught to those French children whose parents are from North Africa. Yet again, with the frenetic complicity of the politico-media elite which is trying to peddle its report on “integration” requested by Matignon [that is, by the President], the Franco-Berbers who are already well integrated in the land of Jeanne d’Arc, are exploited as war booty by the merchants of Islam. Yet again, the Arabo-Islamic imperialism displays its teeth to intimidate those who are not in agreement with its hegemonic vision...”

The Berber resentment of the Arabs – and of that “Arabo-Islamic Imperialism” – reinforces, and is in turn reinforced by, antipathy for Islam. It is Berbers, not Arabs, who in France write for such anti-Islamic sites as *Riposte Laïque*, and even make common cause with some on the so-called “far-right.” It is Berbers, not Arabs, whom the French security services have mostly relied on to help monitor the Muslim population. It is Berbers, both in the Kabyle region in Algeria, and in France, and not Arabs, who have been converting to Christianity in numbers sufficient to alarm both the Algerian government and Muslim clerics in France.

We, the world’s infidels, should recognize what more and more Berber intellectuals have come to understand: that the largest and most successful imperialism in the history of the world is that of the Muslim Arabs. In conquering many lands and peoples, the Arabs managed to convince those they conquered to acquiesce in, even to be grateful for, that conquest, and to convert to the conqueror’s faith, and many were happy to “become Arabs.” And wherever Islam took hold, Arabs enjoyed a religio-cultural superiority.

There are two types of pre-existing fissures within what can be called the Camp of Islam. We need to understand them in order to see what, if anything, we can do to widen and exploit them. One is sectarian, that which sets Sunnis against Shia, with the so-called “takfiris” – those Sunnis who have declared that the Shi’a are not even Muslims, but Infidels, with some even claiming that they are the “worst of Infidels” – being especially violent. We’ve seen the results of this 1400-year-old split in the executions of Shia in the territories controlled by ISIS, and also in the attacks on Shia markets and mosques and religious processions, in Iraq and Pakistan. In Pakistan, two Sunni terrorist groups, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Sipah-e-Sahaba, even take the Shia population as their sole target. And in Afghanistan, the Shia Hazara were in danger of being wiped out by the uber-Sunni Taliban when the American invasion in 2001 rescued them from that fate. When the Americans finally leave this time, who knows what the Sunnis will then do to the Hazara? Could it be that the Persian Shia, emboldened by the way they snookered Obama’s negotiators on the nuclear project, might intervene in Afghanistan to support fellow Shia in Afghanistan? That’s a scenario devoutly to be wished.

Non-Muslims cannot do anything to fan the flames of internecine warfare among the two main Islamic sects, but they can at least refrain from trying to prevent

it. If you have been brought up to believe that blessed are the peacemakers, and lions should always be made to lie down with any number of lambs, and you display a COEXIST bumpersticker on your rear fender, then ask yourself this: was the Iran-Iraq War, from 1980 to 1988, pitting Sunni-dominated Iraq against the Shi'a of Iran, a good or a bad thing from the standpoint of Infidels? It was, we should by now all recognize, a Good Thing that weakened, and preoccupied, both sides for eight years. Khomeini was kept busy with his enantiomorph in evil, Saddam Hussein. Just imagine what terrible things he might have done – having eight years more to work on his little science project, for example – had he not had to fight off an aggressive Iraq.

Yet after the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, beyond the initial goals of capturing Saddam Hussein and destroying his regime, the Americans came up with another aim: stopping the sectarian warfare that followed the release of the Sunni despot's iron grip. The Shia were not about to yield the power, political and economic, they now possessed; the Sunnis were not about to acquiesce in their loss of such power, and each side kept attacking the other. It was wonderful to behold. But our leaders, first in the Green Zone in Baghdad, and then in the corridors of power (watch out for those banana peels!), in Washington, were all for Getting-to-Yes conflict resolution, naively hoping that the Sunni and Shia would make up (after 1400 years), when those Washington apparatchiks should have been ruthlessly rooting for the permanent discord which, thank goodness, and despite their own best efforts, is what, instead of Yes, we got.

The second great fissure in Islam, after that of the Sunnis and Shia, and to which our discussion of the Berbers in is obviously relevant, is that between Arab Muslims and the 80% of the world's Muslims who are not Arabs. It bears repeating, that because Allah chose to deliver his message in Arabic to a seventh-century Arab, because Muslims should read, recite, memorize the Qur'an in Arabic, because Muslims must turn toward Mecca in prayer at least five times a day, because Muhammad the Perfect Man and Model of Conduct was Arab, because the Qur'an was written in the Arabs' language, and they are its only true transmitters, because the earliest Muslims, whose customs and manners, written down in the Hadith, constitute the Sunnah, were all Arabs, because the Arabs were the first to conquer vast territories for Islam – all this naturally produced a feeling of superiority in the Arabs. And wherever they conquered,

along with Islamization came Arabization. That word describes two different things: first, the physical movement of Arabs into what were non-Arab lands, as in northern Iraq, where the Kurds live, and Saddam Hussein moved Arabs onto lands taken from them, in an attempt to change the demographics of the area, to "Arabize" it. But the Arabization that takes place even in Muslim lands without Arabs is different, and describes the change in the non-Arab population that follows Islamization: they lose their original identity and try to become, culturally, "Arabs."

Among the outward and visible signs of this, think of how many Muslim non-Arabs have eagerly given themselves Arab names and false Arab pedigrees, and copied Arab dress of the seventh century. (Imagine someone in the Congo wearing a suit, carrying an umbrella and wearing a homburg, and calling himself Sir Anthony Ashley Cooper.) They wanted the prestige of being thought "Arab." In Pakistan, to take an extreme case, millions claim to be "Sayids" – that is, descendants of the Quraysh, the Prophet's tribe.

But there were also those non-Arabs who, as with the Berbers, resented being severed from their own culture, resented Arab indifference to, or hostility towards, the languages, cultures, and histories of those whom they conquered and converted; in short, they resented this cultural imperialism. The Berbers, by and large, nowadays do not want to be Arabs, and some of them don't even want to be Muslims, to judge by their online sites, and they identify Islam with centuries of oppressive Arab rule. The Arab attempt to efface every memory, no matter how innocuous, of Berber culture, has backfired. This anti-Arab feeling among non-Arab Muslims is not to be deplored, but encouraged by the world's Infidels. It is one way to weaken the hold of Islam on four-fifths of the world's Muslims.

Among non-Arab Muslims, the Kurds and the black African Muslims in Sudan are the latest victims of Arab atrocities. The Arab military of Saddam Hussein managed to kill 182,000 Kurds during the Qur'anically-titled *Anfal*. Then more Arabs were moved into Kurdistan to Arabize the region. And not a single Arab ruler, diplomat, or intellectual, inside or outside of Iraq, protested this massacre of the Kurds. This is the memory that needs to be kept constantly fresh in Kurdish minds. We do not have a stake in Kurds remaining in Arab-ruled Iraq, as our leaders have in the past insisted. Rather, the interests of Infidels are better served by an independent Kurdistan, grateful to the West for its aid, and

ideally carved out of territory that was formerly part of Arab Iraq and Arab Syria (the Kurds in Iran and Turkey will have to wait).

As for the Sudan, northern Arabs attacked and murdered, over several decades, millions of black African Christians and animists and, more recently, Arab militias (the Janjaweed) murdered, in Darfur (in the western Sudan) nearly half a million black African Muslims. Given the attempts of Muslims in the West both to find allies among blacks (CAIR with its solicitousness for "Black Lives Matter") and the apparent attractiveness Islam holds for some blacks in Europe and North America (especially in prisons, where the conversion rate is high), there is ample reason to keep talking not only about what the Arabs did in the Sudan in the recent past, but about the longer history of the Arab slave trade in East Africa.

That Arab slave trade began earlier, and lasted longer, and claimed more victims, than the Atlantic slave trade of the Europeans. This trade was particularly hideous because the Arab slavers castrated young black boys while they were still in the bush, and only 10% survived to make it, by slave coffle to the coast and thence by dhow, to the Muslim slave markets of Egypt, Arabia, and Istanbul. For the same reasons, to create doubts among would-be black converts, we in the West ought to be discussing not only that African slave trade of the Arabs, but the continued enslavement by Arabs of blacks in the Sudan (see the testimony of the "Lost Boys") and Mauritania. It would also be useful to remind would-be black converts that Saudi Arabia and Yemen gave up slavery, reluctantly, and only because of terrific pressure from Great Britain, as late as 1962, and that there are reports of slavery continuing to exist in the Saudi interior, just as, despite being officially outlawed, it still exists in the Sudan and Mauritania. And finally, that Muhammad himself was a slave-owner, thus legitimizing slavery in Islam, needs to be more widely known, in order to dampen Islam's appeal among blacks.

We can keep impressing on non-Arab Muslims the facts of Arabization, of the loss of their own languages and cultures and histories, and of all the ways that Islam has created and reinforces Arab supremacism. They can try to deny that painful fact, but eventually reality will break in for many non-Muslims, and with that, resentment should be built against the cultural Arabization that has accompanied Islamization. But we need leaders who are cleverer and more nimble than those who have so far been conducting, confusedly and half-heartedly, a

campaign of self-defense.

Some non-Arab Muslims will need no persuading that, as the late Pakistani writer Anwar Shaikh argued in his polemical study "Islam, the Arab National Movement," that "the prophet Mohammed subjected all non-Muslim Arabs to the cultural imperialism of Arabia...He made Arab-worship the cornerstone of Islam. Thus, those who embrace Islam naturally feel inferior to Arabia."

Those Muslim peoples who have been most obviously mistreated by Arabs – the Berbers, the Kurds, the Sudanese blacks – have the least difficulty in accepting this observation. They have had direct experience of Arabs; they live in the same countries with them. In such places as Indonesia, or Pakistan, where there are no Arabs, Arab supremacism is maintained not through violence, but by means of cultural imperialism. Westerners can help non-Arabs to recognize this, not by attacking them, but by expressing sympathetic indignation at this state of affairs and, by dint of polemical agility, may help undermine Islam's hold on the minds of some non-Arabs.

The most important fact to keep in mind is that 80% of the world's Muslims are not Arab. Their ethnic identity can be made to subvert, rather than reinforce, their commitment to Islam. When they see other non-Arab Muslims stand up successfully against the Arabs, they are likely to begin to think along the same lines. The Berber recovery of Tamazight, once suppressed and now "official" and perhaps – who knows – in the future perhaps even compulsory in schools in the Berber-populated regions, is one heartening example of such success. If the Berbers can demand, and finally get, full recognition of their language as equal to Arabic, and can revive Berber music (in the past, Berber singers such as Lounes Matoub have been killed by Islamic extremists), preserve Berber art and encourage its continuation (possibly with a museum of Berber crafts?), Tamazight-language poetry (including that which predates the arrival of Islam), other non-Muslim Arabs may begin to think of what they lost culturally when they "gained" Islam. This heightened consciousness of being subject to Arabization through Islam, is a point of entry to deliver the message that Infidels need to keep repeating, again and again: Islam is a vehicle for Arab supremacism.

This statement, once heard, cannot be unheard. It is easy to prove and impossible to refute. And we Infidels, who seek to tell home truths and thereby sow discord within the Camp of Islam, will at long last have gone – not a moment

too soon – on the ideological offensive.

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