

## Society and Culture

*edited by Virginie Ems-Bléneau*

ALLIOUI, YUCEF. *Les fondateurs de l'Algérie indépendante: Aux origines de la nation algérienne*. L'Harmattan, 2023. ISBN 978-2-14-032814-5. Pp. 514.

While modern Algeria would gain its independence from colonial France through the Algerian war, the indigenous effort to achieve this independence is often unrecognized. Youcef Alliouï in *Les fondateurs de l'Algérie indépendante* documents how the indigenous Kabyle people played an important role in establishing modern Algeria in regards to the resistance against colonial France and as a cultural foundation for the country. Past the “Avertissement et Methode [sic]” section, Alliouï records a considerable number of descriptions of Amazigh, or Berber, people (29). The descriptions are reminiscent of *Plutarch's Lives* and are followed by detailed accounts of important historical events before the Arabization and Islamification of Algerian culture. The second section of the book focuses on the genocide of the Kabyle people by colonial France. The genocide is illustrated through accounts of eradication of villages, repression of language and culture, and “unspeakable acts” committed against the Kabyle people (280). Similar to the indigenous tribes in the Americas, the Kabyle community faced deadly illnesses introduced by the new French population as well (241). Alliouï writes that, “pour les Algériens et notamment les autochtones kabyles, la conquête française de l'Algérie était la ruine de leur culture, de leur langue, de leur civilisation” (439). Besides the detailed accounts of genocide, this chapter includes the Kabyle's resistance against France's early efforts to colonize Algeria. Alliouï depicts the Kabyle's participation in the combat against the French as a fight of survival which included both female and male indigenous soldiers (300). Alliouï's section



on female soldiers makes this text unique considering that women's efforts are often overlooked in historical records. Following the second section is the conclusion which urges the Algerian people to decolonize and destigmatize their history in order to preserve and honor Kabyle culture. Throughout the book, Alliouï is very expressive of his anger regarding the genocide and atrocities done to the Kabyle people. He does not attempt to hide his frustration and he reassures the readers that, "malgré 'nos coups de colères' et nos instances concernant certains points historiques, je puis assurer aux lecteurs de mon sérieux" (132). Although Alliouï's writing is passionate, the text is well sourced and when he comes to contingencies in his research he speaks to "les Anciens pour chercher une quelconque corroboration" (132). Due to his rejection of chronological order and incorporation of legends, Alliouï writes, "que le lecteur soit rassuré, je ne prétends pas être un historien" (93). While the author is cognizant of his relationship to the Kabyle people as well as his uncommon writing style, he undermines himself as a historian which debases the validity of his work. Considering that *Les fondateurs de l'Algérie indépendante* has detailed accounts of Kabyle history and genocide, this book would be valuable for those researching in the socio-political, socio-linguistic, or anthropological fields.

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