

**The conditions of Algerian workers' migration to France
between 1945 and 1954 through the poem "Alienation" in the
magazine Here is Algeria.**

**ظروف هجرة العمال الجزائريين إلى فرنسا بين عامي 1945 و 1954 من خلال قصيدة "الغربة"
في مجلة هنا الجزائر**

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Abstract :

This article aims to examine the conditions of Algerian workers' migration to France from 1945 to 1954 by analyzing a poem titled "Alienation" published in the magazine Huna Algiers. The study employs an analytical approach to translate the poem from Algerian dialect to English and analyze its content to understand the motivations behind workers' migration and the social and psychological impact of their exclusion. The study utilizes literary text analysis to shed light on the difficult conditions faced by migrant workers in France and the role of Huna Algiers magazine in highlighting migration issues and social transformation. The results show that the poem deeply reflects the feelings and experiences of Algerian workers, underscoring the crucial importance of literary magazines in documenting and disseminating these experiences.

Keywords: Migration, Huna Algiers magazine, poetry, workers, songs.

ملخص:

هذا المقال يهدف إلى استعراض ظروف هجرة عمال الجزائر إلى فرنسا من عام 1945 إلى 1954، من خلال تحليل قصيدة بعنوان "الغربة" نُشرت في مجلة هنا الجزائر. تعتمد الدراسة على المنهج التحليلي لترجمة القصيدة من اللهجة الجزائرية إلى الإنجليزية، وتحليل محتواها لفهم دوافع هجرة العمال والأثر الاجتماعي والنفسي للاستبعاد عليهم. تستخدم الدراسة أداة تحليل النصوص الأدبية لتسليط الضوء على الظروف الصعبة التي عاشها العمال المهاجرون في فرنسا، ودور مجلة هنا الجزائر في إبراز قضايا الهجرة والتحول الاجتماعي. تُظهر النتائج أن القصيدة تعكس بشكل عميق مشاعر وتجارب العمال الجزائريين، وتؤكد على الأهمية البالغة للمجلات الأدبية في توثيق ونشر تلك التجارب.

كلمات مفتاحية: هجرة، مجلة هنا الجزائر، الشعر، العمال، الأغاني.

Introduction:

Migration is a social, cultural, and political phenomenon that has shaped the lives of individuals and societies throughout the twentieth century. Algeria and France share a complex history of migration, marked by the movement of thousands of Algerians to France, primarily for employment opportunities. Algerian workers in the diaspora saw France as a space where key national ideas flourished, shaped by their political experiences and the challenges they endured.

During this study, we explore the following question: How did migration affect Algerian workers in France through an analysis of the poem "Alienation"? This paper examines the experience of migration through the lens of the poem, written by an anonymous Algerian worker during his time in France. The study aims to shed light on the conditions of Algerian workers by analyzing the themes and messages conveyed in the poem. Specifically, we ask: What motivated young Algerians to migrate to France, according to the poet? What living conditions did they encounter both in France and within the Algerian diaspora?

The significance of this paper lies in its literary approach to documenting a critical historical period—namely, the post-World War II era. Through an analysis of "Alienation," published in the journal "Here is Algeria," we aim to capture the sense of Alienation and transformation experienced by Algerian workers. This poem serves as a vivid testimony to the emotional and social realities of life in migration. By analyzing it, we will also seek to understand the poet's perspective on the causes of migration and the challenges faced by these workers on French soil, offering a nuanced view of this pivotal migration experience.

1..The policy of the magazine Here colonial Algeria:

1.1..Definition of a magazine (Here is Algeria):

A French magazine renowned for its coverage of Algeria between 1952 and 1960, it initially began as a radio broadcast in 1935, continuing alongside the magazine until Algeria's independence in 1962. The magazine ceased publication two years before independence, with its first issue released in May 1952 (Hamadi, 2020, p. 33)

Scholar Abdallah Hamadi describes the magazine in its introduction: "It serves as a forum where the culture of the French colony coexists with that of the Algerian population, exemplified by the juxtaposition of popular poet Sheikh Al-Samati with the French poet Victor Hugo." The literary project aimed to provide Algerians a platform to express their cultural creativity and bridge the gap between Algeria's Arab-Islamic culture and colonial culture. Additionally, this project had colonial objectives, as the administration allocated substantial resources to support it (Hamadi, 2020, p. 33)

1.2..The policy of pens paid in the magazine Here is Algeria:

The term "paid pens" refers to writers or journalists who produce articles or content in exchange for monetary compensation or rewards. These individuals may be affiliated with specific media outlets or platforms, but their primary characteristic is that they write upon request and are compensated by a particular entity. This model can be employed in various contexts, including advertising, political influence, or other purposes.

This term highlights the concern that writers may lose some degree of autonomy or objectivity due to the financial interests of the paying party. In certain instances, paid pens can be characterized by their tendency to convey specific messages or manipulate information to serve the interests of their financiers.

It is important to note that this concept reflects a negative aspect of journalism or writing, emphasizing the need for maintaining independence and integrity to ensure the production of objective and reliable content. Abdallah Hamadi elaborates on this by stating: "The French colonial authorities recruit an arsenal of hired Algerian pens to achieve their desired goals. This work takes the form of both permanent recruitment for radio and magazines, as well as cooperative services for which the writer is compensated for their cultural contributions to enrich radio programs or the pages of a magazine here in Algeria" (Hamadi, 2020, p.08).

2..Critique of Alienationh's poem:

2.1..Poet of Alienationh:

In December 1954, the third issue of the magazine Here is Algeria featured a poem by an unknown Algerian worker, delivered by the singer and poet Taher Rehab. This poem, composed and performed in France, reflects the status of Algerian workers in the diaspora. The identity of the poet remains unknown, as does the specific year the poem was written; however, it is believed to have been composed between the end of World War II and the onset of the editorial revolution (Rehab, Al Tahir, 1954, p. 18).

The poem consists of forty-one verses written in a clear vernacular accent, characteristic of Algerian literature during the evolution of theatrical language post-World War II. During this time, writers sought to create a language that was accessible to Algerians, enhancing the simplicity of the vernacular (Fadila, 2009, p. 14).

The purpose of studying this poem extends beyond linguistic and literary analysis; it aims to capture the living conditions of the diaspora through the voice of an unknown Algerian youth representing a significant social class.

The poem appears to have resonated with some Algerians, leading the magazine to publish it in written form following requests from radio listeners. Despite highlighting the dire circumstances faced by people in Algeria and the harsh conditions endured by workers, the colonial radio (Here is Algeria) presented it as a demonstration of freedom of expression. This publication came just one month after the outbreak of the revolution. The magazine stated: "Al-Adib Rehab al-Taher broadcast this popular piece, which he quoted from the perspective of an expatriate worker in France seeking to earn a living, and we publish it at the request of some listeners" (Rehab, Al Tahir, 1954).

Literature emerges in the diaspora as migrants strive to express their experiences in a foreign environment, seeking to alleviate their feelings of Alienation. This expression often takes the form of art, such as singing or theater, as a means of entertainment and solidarity among one another. This type of literature has historical roots in the Arab world, with notable figures such as Elia Abu Madi and Mikhail Naimy (Abdel-Dayem, 1993, p. 67).

2.2..Introducing of Alienationh singer:

Born in 1917 in Liwa, Biskra, Rehab al-Taher Ben al-Sadik came from a well-off family. He was the only son among eleven children, with three sisters from his mother. He began his education at the mosque of Ali bin Osman Bailiwa, where he memorized portions of the Holy Quran. Among his teachers was Sheikh bin Nasser Al-Mubarak. His artistic career began with religious anthems, and he showcased his talent in various venues, including the Angle of Neglect, where his voice caught the attention of Haj Abdul Kader, who later introduced him to national radio (Hamadi, 2020, p. 123).

Polikavsky defines folk song as “the song that was created by the people and is not merely one that exists in a popular atmosphere” (Bolokavaski, 1985, p. 10), Rehab al-Taher developed a profound love for folk songs, which he defined as a literary art form resonating within popular circles. The term "popularity" signifies a connection to the people, and his work reflected the spiritual and moral values of Algerian society (Ibrahim, 1974, p. 109). The community expressed its sentiments through their own songs, creating a pattern of popular expression conveyed through both melody and lyrics.

Rehab al-Taher wrote and performed numerous songs that addressed themes of Alienation, including “Ya Alienation” (Éterne, 2024), “Tayr Al Ma'ali” (Éterne, 2024), and “Ya Rabbi Ya Khaliqi,” which he composed in 1952, The latter gained significant fame after its first performance and recording in 1953, evoking deep emotional responses from both men and women as it spoke to the psychological and social experiences of expatriates.

Although he lived in Algeria, he focused on performing songs that expressed various segments of society, alongside publishing articles in several newspapers and magazines. His songs were frequently broadcast on Algerian radio, as they resonated with the sentiments of the people enduring the revolutionary period.

A poem addressing similar themes, crafted in a style akin to that of the esteemed poet Rehab, may also contain modifications made by him as a poet.

2.3..Reasons for the migration of young Algerians to work in France:

Economic conditions play a significant role in driving immigration, particularly as the population grapples with heavy taxation and poor working conditions. Algerians were also influenced by comparisons with earlier immigrants

in French cities, where they were not subject to colonial laws. The poet summarizes the reasons for migration in his poem through three main points: poverty and famine, the state of Algerian lands, and unemployment (Saadallah, 2011, p. 128).

2.3.1..Poverty and famine:

The poet expresses the harsh realities of poverty, stating:

*"Poverty is ruthlessly difficult;
What is left of his will? What is to become of him?
All night he thinks,
While his hungry children call out to him.
For strange travels are inevitable;
He is compelled by religion to emigrate from his homeland.
He emerged from the destruction that engulfed his homeland.
God has decreed that he must emigrate."*
(Rehab, Al Tahir, 1954, p. 18)

The use of the term "hungry" is not merely a moral metaphor. Algeria experienced waves of famine that resulted in the deaths of thousands of children. This famine led to soaring prices for essential goods like meat, ghee, dates, cereals, and wheat, forcing many Algerians to mortgage their remaining property or sell it to survive.

For the young Algerian poet who wrote this piece, migration became an inevitable solution due to the lack of livelihood in Algeria. His desire to provide for his hungry children reflects the desperate circumstances brought about by the impoverishment policies of French colonialism, which involved confiscating land and redistributing it to settlers, leaving Algerians at the mercy of colonizers.

2.3.2..Status of people's lands:

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The poet states:

*"My mother is our country's land.
You poor will, no trick like me.
No more in our country to release this sorrow;
We repatriate to other homelands.
This season there was no rain.*

*No work, no money, no supply for survival.
Palm without fruit,
No running water to irrigate.
Nobody bargains with ewe at the market;
No one will be satiated by the scarcity of her meat.
Olives without oil,
And no grass in the desert to feed the ewe."*
(Rehab, Al Tahir, 1954, p. 18)

The poem illustrates the disastrous economic conditions faced by the people, who depend on the land for their livelihoods through agriculture, livestock husbandry, and the sale of crops and livestock.

2.3.3..Unemployment:

The poet expresses:
*"No fruits in the ground.
Her poor owner didn't even find his power.
People swing in this land.
It's impossible for a destitute to live here.
He walked to France, maybe there
He finds enough work to be needed."*
(Rehab, Al Tahir, 1954, p. 18)

The transformation of landowners into impoverished workers, combined with the systematic deprivation of their right to work, has led to an inflated unemployment rate as a consequence of this policy. According to Al-Iadam: *"The miserable wages for workers, reported since 1870, range from one franc to one and a half for 12 hours of work a day... Wheat sells for 250 francs. How can these people not die from hunger, even while working? The same work is insecure, as there are countless unemployed people."* (Unknown, 1923) .

Unemployment has spread among the population, and economic conditions have worsened, resulting in a paralysis in the development of the industrial sector and in job opportunities outside the agricultural sector. Work in agriculture is seasonal. All these conditions have created economic insecurity for the people (Zozo, p. 65).

2.4..The situation of Algerian workers in France through an alien poem:

2.4.1..The situation of workers travelling to France:

The poet narrates:

*"The train calls me with its voice.
And this machine has reached its destination.
You call out, who's as far away as me?
And all the passengers showed up from their places to meet in the Alps.
Someone's confused, crying and thinking.
He did not utter the parting words to his parents and loved ones.
When night fell upon him, his pain increased.
No longer boarding the steamer,
He left his homeland behind and went with the sea.
What does the land of France hold for him?
Another brought by longing and dreaming;
He doesn't know his fate in France.
He doesn't have a tongue to speak.
He doesn't have brothers to embrace him."*
(Rehab, Al Tahir, 1954)

The poet captures the heaviness and sadness of farewells at the train station, portraying the journey at sea where darkness envelops them. Some travelers grapple with their emotions, fully aware that their fate in France is uncertain, especially since they recognize that the very people they will encounter are the cause of their suffering. Others await with longing to see the land of France, dreaming of a better life without even knowing how to speak French. A key point to note is that working in France requires primarily physical strength; thus, the French administration had no need to employ those who spoke French to work or interact with the French there.

2.4.2..Situation of Algerian workers in France:

The poet observes:

*"Someone who lived in 'delight'
feeds his people.
Someone left his mother crying blood.
And if there is a force of contempt in its distribution."*
(Rehab, Al Tahir, 1954)

The relationships between immigrants and their families remained centered around material benefits, which meant sending a significant portion of their wages back to their families. The poet poignantly expresses the plight of workers who struggled to sustain themselves with their wages in France, let alone send money back home (Saadallah, 2011, p. 129).

2.4.3..The psychological situation of Algerian workers in France:

The poet laments:

*"Oh, God, I feel like my ribs are on fire.
I think all night and the situation hasn't changed.
I don't have a warm breast.
And I don't have a relative listening to me.
Mom, I have to go back to the sea.
Walking towards a distant homeland in my mind.
Don't cry for your son if he goes;
Wish me well and my patience.
Goodbye, I split my heart for frames.
My patience and good is my claim.
Fate markets one's own market.
My God, bring us together and blossom our days."*
(Rehab, Al Tahir, 1954)

The poem begins with an expression of survival and the psychological pain experienced by the worker due to the separation, nostalgia, and misery of his homeland. This worker yearns to cross the sea to return to his mother and home country, then turns to address his mother, urging her to be patient with this suffering soul who is distant yet hopeful for her return.

The poet continues to voice his complaints to God regarding the distance from home and the agony of Alienation:

*"I pray to the Lord of people to gather us in the day.
I go back to my mother's embrace and my condition changes.
Oh, my God, my Creator, you know,
Parting from the homeland is hard. I couldn't."*
(Rehab, Al Tahir, 1954)

Through the voice of his mother and the expatriate mothers back home, the poet conveys their suffering while awaiting their children, who left on a train and did not return, yet they hold onto their faith that God will bring them back, saying:

*"My son, my son, will leave me for them.
Bad train. My heart is coal.
Your heart is cruel, incomprehensible, and unforgiving.
My son responded, you bad Alienation.
My son was bloody in tears.
I don't have neighbors or relatives to complain to.
God, return him to me.
In the homeland of Alienation to be preserved by God.
I left my heart to silence his fire.
Give me my son back, why did you take him?
Why do you like to cry parting, train?
You and the steamer agree on my son.
I don't have a sweetheart to tell.
And Cree is empty. Everyone here is gone.
My heart rejoices, and worries fall upon it. "*

(Rehab, Al Tahir, 1954)

3..Results and discussion:

Through this study, we conclude:

- Migration to France was largely driven by the living conditions imposed by the colonial administration.
- The use of pseudonyms or anonymous names in writing was prevalent during this period due to the insecurity faced by poets and writers, who were often subjected to scrutiny for their words. Popular songs were typically attributed to anonymous authors to evade social and colonial censorship.
- The songs created by migrant workers served as a reflection of their psychological states concerning their homes and families.
- The poem of Alienation, written by the unknown worker, encapsulates many aspects of the migrant experience. It vividly depicts the journey of workers, their final moments of farewell, their hopes for improving their circumstances and those of their families, their situation in France, and their yearning to return home.

- The poet and vocalist referenced numerous songs that expressed the sentiments of expatriates and immigrants, as Radio Ici Alger broadcasted these narratives in both France and Algeria. This ethereal connection between the homeland and the immigrant transmitted these stories through the medium of popular poetry.
- Algerian literary works provide valuable insights into the realities of Algerians during the colonial period. This literature, encompassing poetry, theater, short stories, and other forms, can be dated back to this significant historical context.

Conclusion:

The colonial magazine "Here is Algeria" was compelled to publish sensitive topics such as songs of exile, homesickness, and even disseminate religious literature. It directed writers and artists, in general, towards nature and manufactured peace to overshadow the importance and true magnitude of the revolution. In reality, the conditions of the workers portrayed in this poem highlight the extent of the suffering of Algerians under what France terms as French governance, calling for civilization and peace. However, it has led to nothing but hunger, poverty, destitution, migration, exile, and suffering that is more human. The question remains: How can France advocate for freedom of the press, thought, and expression while playing with ideas and shaping global opinion in favor of despotism.

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