CULTURAL AND SHIFTING IDENTITY:

BERBER IMMIGRANTS FROM NADOR (N.E. MOROCCO) IN BRUSSELS

Introduction

One way of gaining insight into the way immigrants reorganise their lives in Belgium is to take their countries of origin as a starting point. Therefore, in order to understand the world of Moroccan Berber immigrants, I pursued research through an interplay of contacts in the north-eastern Berber region of Nador (60 families) and in Belgium (30 families).[1] Most immigrants from the Nador region of Morocco settle down in Brussels, usually after an initial period in the French-speaking part of the country.

A significant feature of this research and its analysis is its predominantly female character. This is largely determined by the situation in which I, as a female research worker, found myself. Because I was a woman, I was, to a certain extent, 'restricted'. Most of the Berber women living in Belgium, and especially those living in Brussels, were only able to speak Berber and so, at first, I talked chiefly to men and, where possible, to the young. However, as my knowledge of Berber improved, there was an obvious shift in the attitude towards me by the local people. I was increasingly given to understand (albeit indirectly) that I had to stay with the women, adapt

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[1] My field research in Morocco was carried out over a period of about six years, involving three visits to Morocco, each of about three or four months.

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my clothes, etc. It was no longer accepted that I should leave the village by myself to visit other families, and the fact that the taxi that was to take me to visit a certain family did not arrive one day was taken as an indication of this.

After some time, I was given a sort of intermediary position, and it gradually became accepted that I could go and visit other informants by myself, but even then my freedom of movement was to some extent limited. It was always evident from the conversations that I 'belonged with the women'. I was, therefore, accepted, but, at the same time, 'restricted' to the world of women.

These practical limitations and restrictions gave me an insight into the seclusion of Berber women. Nevertheless, within this female world there is a degree of openness among the members. Basically, the boundary between the world of the men and that of the women is actualized by reciprocal transgressions spatially and temporally defined. The limitation of women is, therefore, constantly defined by reference to the men. It is essential to keep this complementarity in mind, even though this study is seen from a female perspective.

The complementarity of both sexes also expresses itself in the self-definition of the Berber immigrants.

Differentiation in the Adaptation of the Cultural Background

It is soon apparent, when meeting Moroccan immigrants in Belgium, that they do not represent a homogenous 'group'. In the first place, a distinction exists between the people who speak Arabic and those who speak Berber. Moreover, in the unwritten Berber language there are considerable differences in the three dialects that are spoken respectively in North Morocco (Rif region), Central Morocco (Mid-Atlas) and South Morocco (Souss).[2] A female immigrant from the Nador region will, in the first place, automatically look for contacts with women from her own region, and in this case linguistic considerations are, of course, important. However, as I shall show later, practical circumstances make it impossible for the woman to limit her relationships to this one group.

In addition to distinctions between Berber- and Arabic-speaking persons, there are also differences in behaviour between the successive age-groups in the Berber community in Brussels. The cultural background and the practical situation of migration

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[2] Starting from a basic vocabulary of two hundred words, Hart came to the conclusion that there is a deviation of 53% between the Berber dialect of the north and that of the south (1976:339). Moreover, within each dialect a number of variants occur, often from one village to another.

can differ greatly, as is shown in the cases of a Berber mother, an adolescent, a child born in Belgium, and a newly married woman.

a) The Married Berber Woman with Children

In Brussels, a married Berber woman with children, the central focus of this study, is involved in a specific form of 'adaptation'. In Brussels, the woman usually finds herself in a new and very limited world - the few rooms of her apartment. However, after some time has passed (and this varies from woman to woman) she extends the limits of her living space and begins to make contacts which will form the basis of a women's network.[3] If several Moroccan, or even Berber, families live in the same building, this development is often speeded up. Very often a Berber immigrant also makes contacts with non-Moroccan neighbours, and the attitude of the latter can be a determining factor in the establishment of the relationship. The important thing about the new relationship, of whatever kind, is that it allows the woman to cross the boundary between her dwelling-place and the surrounding world.

When the woman takes her child to school, she has to take a second step into this world, which in the traditional view is perceived as a man's world. The image of Europe held by Moroccans is basically a negative one in which the 'liberty' of European women is seen as a loosening of morals. This provides a further dimension for the entry of the Berber woman into the outside world in Brussels compared with that of Morocco, where the crossing of the boundary involves entering only into the spatial domain of men.

On entering the outside world, it becomes possible for the woman to meet other women - Berber women, Arabic-speaking women and/or non-Moroccan women - at the school gate or on the way to school. A woman's network develops from these contacts, and the initial isolation of the female Berber immigrant is broken. This does not mean, however, that the 'limited' nature of the women's world has been affected. As in Morocco, the network has a great

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[3] The town as opposed to the countryside, in which the small village develops into one *group* of women in the absence of the men (all the villagers belong to it), offers the opportunity for the development of a women's *network* that can be spread out all over the city of Nador. The 'given' fact of the village group contrasts with the 'choice-aspect' that can play a part in composing a network. The practical circumstances in Brussels force the woman, as it were, to choose her friends. In the beginning, the contact of the Berber migrant with other women is often more important than a choice based on the personality of the new acquaintances.

'openness' among its members,[4] but the network is not absorbed into the cultural world surrounding it. It is, indeed, striking to see how the outside world is viewed and discussed from a relative distance.

Each female immigrant takes over a number of elements of her new surroundings and integrates these into her own meaning system. This does not preclude the maintenance of most aspects of the traditional cultural world (although perhaps in a slightly altered form). Sahlins (1981) has noted how a cultural system can be both reproduced and transformed at the same time. The continuity of their system does not prevent the new circumstances - in this case living in the 'strange' Belgian surroundings - from facilitating transformations. Within these adaptations, two levels can be distinguished.

The first level could be described as the reinterpretation of material elements from their own cultural system. Let us take sweet food as an example. In Berber symbolism, sweetness has a positive connotation connected with interpersonal relationships. Strongly sugared tea or coffee traditionally offered to visitors can, therefore, be seen as equivalent to the different sweets found in Belgian cooking, such as tarts, cakes, wafers, etc. Even though these elements differ from those of the Berbers in form and colour, they may be integrated into the traditional meaning system. They remain recognizable signs for the members of the old cultural community (van Zoest 1978: 117-23). For immigrants, 'recognizing' their own cultural signs is particularly important. In this way, the extent to which they continue to adhere to their traditional culture is externalized. (We shall see later that the other age-groups do not necessarily behave in the same way.)

Another example of selective adaptation can be seen when a baby is born, an event that is reinforced by a ritual ceremony. In Brussels, as in Morocco, sugar loaves (a positive symbol) and baby-suits are given as presents. The opposition of the colours pink and blue, often used by the Belgians, can be found in the city of Nador as well (perhaps because of Spanish influence[5]). These colours, therefore, can be taken over in Brussels. In the Berber countryside, however, other colours are frequently used as well. This is the symbolic expression of the fact that at birth, the fundamental opposition of the sexes is not yet of great significance. That is why the clothes of babies in Brussels can vary in colour, rather than being either pink or blue.

A new element, however, and one we have only seen introduced

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[4] The dissertation on which this article is based discusses the 'internal openness' of the woman's network in more detail (Cammaert 1983: 305-22).

[5] The Rif region was colonized by Spain till 1956. The city of Melilla, about 13 km from Nador, still forms a Spanish enclave in Morocco.

in a few cases, is that of giving sugar-beans to members of the mother's family and friends. Whereas traditionally, the sweets are given to the mother and the baby, in the new environment the visitor receives them from the mother. Although the symbolic meaning of sweetness is expressed more clearly when it is directed towards mother and child (so that it may fulfil its function), the fundamental meaning of this usage is a positive one. Thus the giving attitude of the mother could be compared with that of some married couples in Morocco who offer a small present to their guests a few days after the wedding. Thus the stream of the positive seems to flow symbolically in two different directions, strengthened together with the mutual ties among the individuals involved. So a 'new' element - giving sugar-beans - is adapted to their field of meaning and becomes acceptable.

In addition to the partial adaptation and alteration of certain elements, other changes are also introduced into the world of the Berber woman. For instance, the giving of sugar-beans stresses the giving position of the mother, whereas traditionally, she finds herself in a receiving position. Another example is the traditional washing of the linen in the village river, which is replaced by washing machines, thus eliminating female working groups and reducing the time invested.

There are, therefore, certain shifts taking place in the traditional system. It is, however, essential to keep in mind not only adaptation to the surrounding culture [which is the immigration phenomenon mentioned by writers such as Yinger (1981), Gabriel and Ben Tovim (1979), and others], but also the creative aspect inherent in the adaptation of the cultural elements that have been taken over. In this taking-over, the female Berber immigrant concentrates clearly on her own closed world. In this way, she experiences the development of a number of usages and activities which, to some extent, follow naturally from pre-immigration customs and practices, but which also - in Eisenstadt's words[6] - result from the dynamic interaction between their own cultural patterns and those of the guest country.

The second level of adaptation in immigration is connected with the Berber boundary system.[7] I have already mentioned the

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[6] Quoted by Charsley 1974: 355.

[7] Elsewhere (Cammaert in press) I specifically consider the relationship between husband and wife in the traditional Berber community and in the migrant situation. Cf. Cammaert 1983, especially chapters III, VI.5 and VII.3.

ways in which the fundamental separation of the sexes structures the Berber community, and how the 'new' character of the environment of Brussels sharply affects this. The boundary of the apartment in Brussels is given a completely different meaning by the isolation of the female immigrant - different, that is, from the meaning of the boundary of her Moroccan home. What is generally considered, in Morocco, to be the threshold for daily transgressions (going to the river, to the well, to other women) takes on the meaning of a boundary between isolation and communication in Brussels. The traditional boundary between the home and the outside world, therefore, is questioned.

The husband can participate in this questioning to a greater or lesser extent. Being a man, he is responsible for his wife; he represents his family to the outside world. His wife's behaviour can affect his honour in either a positive or a negative sense. In view of the previously mentioned negative image of the Western world he will, at first, most likely be against this crossing of the boundary. Sometimes he himself defies certain sexual boundaries by, for example, being home during the day-time (even though during that time the house, traditionally speaking, is an exclusively female space). Furthermore, life in a nuclear family (as opposed to the traditional way of life within the family at large) more often brings the spouses in direct contact with each other which, in course of time, can make the intersexual boundary less absolute.

Therefore, in different circumstances, the conceptual boundary system is challenged by practical circumstances and by what is functional. Also in this matter, we therefore notice shifts and adaptations on the part of the Berber woman. Both levels of adaptation - the material one and the structural one - mutally affect each other. The taking-in of new material elements can affect the husband-wife relationship in a direct or indirect way. Through the course of time, shifts can also become visible in the way these elements are adapted (or selected). The married Berber woman takes her own traditional cultural world as a starting point for the shifts and adaptations she acquires as an immigrant, although she remains, in essence, within the relatively closed women's world. In examining younger age categories, some differences may be noticed.

b) The Adolescent Girl

The fourteen adolescent girls (from about 13 to 17 years old) encountered in Brussels were all born in Morocco, and for a decade they had received a traditional education in their home country, where they were being prepared to live as married women within a closed circle of women. They also know most of the members of their family that were left behind in Morocco. That is why Berber traditions also play an important role in the life of these girls. The majority help out with the housework after school, submit to the authority of their parents, and avoid moving in the women's network of their mothers. They often wish

to return to their own country after they have finished their studies and, in many cases, they accept the traditional preparation for their marriage (staying at home, the possible breaking-off of their studies, not knowing or even meeting their future partner, etc.). A few girls, who returned to their country when they married, managed to reintegrate relatively quickly into the traditional world at home. The female adolescent does not seem to cause a disruption to either the culture in the home country or to the 'adapted' system as established by her mother in Brussels. When a female adolescent is in doubt about choosing which way to act, she will, in most cases, eventually let herself (consciously or not) be led by her mother. In this case, the degree of adaptation this woman has established can play a considerable part with regard to the direction in which she will lead her own daughter.

But in a number of ways a shift may be noticed - a shift away from the world of the mother and towards the surrounding culture. This is most obvious with regard to clothing, as well as to such things as modern music, slimming, etc. In such material elements it becomes clear that, for many girls, the boundary of what is is permitted has moved or changed. The contact with the outside world - often more frequent and direct than in the case of the mother - causes a number of outwardly visible elements of the surrounding culture to be adapted without the negative connotations given to it by the traditional Berber community. Regular encounters with non-Moroccans, for example, result in the opinion that wearing short skirts is not necessarily linked with the loosening of morals, or that being slim is not necessarily looked upon as a result of bad luck or physical pains. This change of attitude does not always happen consciously, and it is not altogether common among adolescents.

Changes which are less visible and less general than these can also be noticed in a number of fundamental Berber values. One example concerns the *rahya*. This Berber term conveys the idea of respect for the parents, for the elder generation, for the family, as well as that of 'positive' shame, which plays an important part in relations between men and women. Under the influence of the new circumstances of immigration, adolescents add negative connotations to this notion, for example, being ashamed of an unemployed father (hence, sometimes a decline of their respect towards him), or being ashamed of their own nakedness in female company.

On the other hand, in some cases, a growing self-affirmation can be noticed, emphasising the individual as opposed to the prevailing importance of the family group in their home world - in other words, an incipient shift from a 'we-culture' towards an 'I-culture' (Eppink 1981: 45-59). This is expressed, for instance, in the value attached to going to work and to interpersonal friendships. Nevertheless, this shift in adolescent attitudes is still slight and may not be generalized.

In most cases, we observed that adolescents build upon the adaptations their mothers have established, but this does not

prevent them from quickly shifting the boundaries by questioning the system more frequently.

c) The Children

The situation is completely different for Berber girls who emigrated to Belgium when they were still babies, or for those who were born in Belgium.[8] For them, education starts, as it were, in Brussels. There is no question of a concrete Berber background in their case. It is, however, possible for the relationship between mother and child itself to develop in a relatively closed Berber surrounding - albeit with the adaptations established by the mother - during the first years of the child's life. Nevertheless, the child goes to school rather early.

From that moment onwards a gap begins to emerge between the Berber mother and her younger children. School affairs, like other aspects of the surrounding culture, are also alien to the mother to some extent. She perceives going to school in terms of authority versus obedience. The father looks upon education and schooling in the same way, and he holds the mother - who has to do without the traditional help of the women's group - responsible when the child does not meet these requirements.

Consequently, the child finds herself in two very distinct settings. The girl's behaviour will sometimes differ according to the setting she is in: a Berber girl, quiet and docile at school, will frequently behave rebelliously at home. Very often, this rebelliousness is the expression of a 'negative' feeling of shame with regard to her parents and/or the traditional Berber structures. In view of the part played by the school (and hence that played by Western culture), the girl often compares the position and behaviour of her parents with that of the Belgians, thereby being unable to discern the meaning of the discrepancy between the situation of the immigrants and that of the indigenous. This 'negative' feeling of shame for many Berber customs (e.g. the traditional clothing of the mother, some of the eating habits, religious celebrations) emerges more frequently with children than with adolescents. It shows that the norms that a little girl has internalized differ considerably from the Berber ones, and often have a Western character.

One can, therefore, understand that many girls (though not all) will detach themselves more and more from the world of their mother, as well as from the home world. Returning to Morocco forever is out of the question for practically all of them, although they are willing to go there on holiday. Many girls can exclude their mother by means of the language. As several of the Berber mothers only have a slight knowledge of French, their

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[8] I have met about thirty-five such girls in the course of my research in Brussels.

children can call them names in their presence - respect is thus again violated. The distance between the world of the mother and that of the children grows wider; for example, lies or distortions of the facts often cannot be checked.

Nevertheless, these children do not aim at breaking their relationship with their mother, nor with their home. It is apparent that, for children, the zone of contact with the surrounding culture is much wider than is the case for adolescents, and this has its consequences in their wishes.[9]

A striking characteristic that has already become visible with some of the adolescents is the increasing trend toward the 'I-culture'. Time and again the importance of interpersonal contact, of interpersonal (even intersexual) friendships or relationships has been emphasised. A second important line of development concerns the desire for a more explicit way of communicating, as opposed to the traditionally implicit code of communication of imitating and accepting (cf. also Eppink loc. cit.).

However, the shifts taking place in the world of the children reach much further than those of the mothers and adolescents, hence the sometimes numerous conflict situations within the family. An important factor which seems to be missing here is the presence of a mediating figure between these two diverging worlds. A 'link' could bridge the distance between the world of the children and that of the mother in Belgium, in the same way that elderly women in Morocco can move about relatively unhindered in both the men's and women's worlds.

d) The Newly Married Woman

I met a dozen young women who emigrated immediately after their marriage or who got married in the course of my research. Their position lies somewhere between the categories of women already discussed, and their conduct demonstrates characteristics deriving from each of these categories.

The most striking characteristic in the behaviour of these women concerns their relationship with their husbands. Most of these newly-weds choose the nuclear family. In this way, the young woman leaves the immediate influence of her mother, and of the latter's vision of the new world they live in. The influence of the Western environment may play a part in this choice (choice as opposed to the given immigration situation of the Berber mothers). (Some of the young women have studied and/or worked before getting married.) This development may also follow naturally from the growing demands of young people in the

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9 It may be noted in passing that the question of how they are regarded by Belgians is rarely posed. Obviously, on the level of the world of Berber children no decisive problems have occurred so far.

city of Nador (hence the large number of conflicts there).

The growing emphasis on individual 'feelings' is remarkable. Whereas traditionally speaking a marriage is a matter of two groups of families, nowadays there is more and more talk of relationships built on 'love' (*lhuB*). Here too, both the direct influences of the Western surroundings and the changes in the world of the Nador youth may play a defining role. Compared to the world at home, the interpersonal (and intersexual) building-up of relations in the category of newly married immigrants is in every respect in a more advanced stage. Time and again a widening of the zone of contact between man and woman is striven for (cf. mutual transgressions of the boundary).

Apart from the specific relationship with their husbands, these women also build up a world of their own. Repeatedly I heard that young women were looking for jobs. Here the stress is often on talking to and getting into contact with other women, rather than on the nature of the work itself. Therefore, the building-up of a women's network of people of the same age, although not necessarily Berber (the language is a problem), is what is sought. But when this build-up does not seem possible, they join a network of elderly women.

Even though the behaviour of a young woman is sometimes judged in negative terms by the elderly, there is no question of disruption within the family group, either in Belgium or in the home country. Family ties are underlined in different ways - in conversation and in behaviour. However, a number of contrasts between these young women and the older surroundings come to light. Frequently, the newly-weds will stress these contrasts, and so their behaviour assumes a more conscious nature than that of the children. As was the case with the children there are, however, tendencies towards a more explicit way of communication, towards independence and individualism. The importance of individualism in the eyes of these young women is made explicit in their wish for birth control in order to leave space for the individual upbringing of each child (this does not, however, interfere with the emphasis on obedience versus authority).

The flexibility with which young women are able to return to the traditional pattern whenever this is required by the company they are in is remarkable. (The conversations with young women or with elderly Berber women may be very different.) This is what especially separates these women from the children, who experience adaptation problems in a traditional Berber environment.

None of the age categories that have been discussed aim at breaking with the world at home. Each category, however, organizes its own world in a very specific way. Whereas the adolescents we have met strongly lean towards their mother's line of adaptation, the newly-weds and the children pursue a more individualistic development. While the children are being led in this development by the Western environment (i.e. school) right from the start, the newly-weds gain a new dimension to their lives, consciously or unconsciously.

Naturally, the personality of each of the persons involved plays a part in the nature of these changes. The boundaries between the categories that have been discussed cannot be drawn strictly. For instance, in the course of my research I came to know three adolescent girls who later got married. It was evident that the transition to marriage did not cause an immediate reversal in the behaviour of these women.

In addition to leaving the parental home and the 'adapted' world of the mother, relations with the husband also affect changes in the behaviour of a newly married woman. This does not mean, however, that marriage must be looked upon as an essential factor in the transition towards a more conscious adaptation of their own world. In these changes, time plays a part that may not be under-estimated. Prolonging the duration of study, delaying the age of marriage, etc. - changes that have gradually become prevalent - may also lend a more personal and conscious character to the adaptation of the adolescent's life.

The striking differentiation between the age categories mentioned does not prevent all these individuals from calling themselves 'Moroccan' or 'Berber'.

Ethnic Self-Definition

First of all, one notices a distinction in ethnic self-definition, according to the environment in which the speaker finds him- or herself.

At first, a Berber woman or girl will define herself as Moroccan; it is only when she knows that the listener is informed about the distinction between Berber and other Arabic speakers that she will present herself as a Berber. Moreover, in the company of Moroccans or Berbers she will specify that she is a Riffian, a distinction that can be narrowed even more, for example, on the basis of dialectical variants. As Evans-Pritchard remarks, in this way one can be at the same time a member and a non-member of a specific category or group (1940: 137).[10] In the case of a Berber woman belonging to the Moroccan nation - which comes to the fore when Morocco is placed against other countries (such as in the context of immigration) - the

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10 In this context, the term *category* indicates a number of individuals who possess one or more 'ethnic features' in common. However, there is no question of a feeling of togetherness as a basis for a meaningful social interaction. In a *group*, on the contrary, there is a meaningful interaction among the members, based on one or more common features. These features can be obtained from the linguistic, the religious, the physical, etc. domain. They can be innate as well as taught, imposed, invented, etc. Cf. McKay & Lewins 1978; Schermerhorn 1970.

accent of her membership is diverted when Berber and Arabic speakers are confronted, etc.

In order to stress this latter opposition, special light is thrown upon a number of diacritic cultural characteristics in Morocco concerning clothing, means of expression and rituals. By means of these, different ethnic categories and/or groups come into being. A few observable signs - material elements and/or basic values - are extracted from the whole of the culture in question and are attributed to a number of persons through which these are separated from their environment (Barth 1969: 14). Consequently, culture is manipulated in order to create certain boundaries and social contrasts. As Barth emphasises, these cultural characteristics do not always originate from a historiographically verifiable past: one does not deal with objectively perceptible differences, but with a variable, subjective ascription. The individual is classed in terms of his relation towards the others (ibid.: 11-17). This ascription, as a feature of the ethnic group or category, distinguishes the given facts of a culture. A culture changes and evolves - the diacritical features or cultural 'traits' can be changed or adapted - but the principle of dichotomisation between members and non-members continues to exist (ibid.: 14). In Morocco, this boundary is kept very much alive. A few women were surprised to hear that the Souss (South Morocco) had an organization of the house similar to that of the Rif, since the differences were so often emphasised.

Before independence (1956), an organized ethnic group living in the Rif, under the leadership of Abdelarim, was very active against Spanish colonialism. Such a group is not merely to be considered as a pressure group (see Glazer and Moynihan 1975); rather we should accept, as De Vos does, that in an ethnic group, an instrumental, purposeful dimension can be distinguished from an expressive, psycho-social one. Not only is the required status within the ethnic group to be considered, but also affective factors, such as origin and self-identification (1975: 5-41). Both dimensions can sometimes be far from functional, but on other occasions - during a war against the colonial power, for example - they can be given a more wide-ranging definition.

Immigration, too, can revive identity (Burgess 1978: 275-80), although not always to the same extent. In the case of the Berbers we noticed how a female immigrant in Brussels has built up a women's network, the members of which may have come from different regions of Morocco, or may even be non-Moroccan. These networks structure the internal world of the women to a certain extent, but they hardly affect their public world. In their composition we notice an application of Barth's definition: '...boundaries persist despite a flow of personnel across them' (1969: 9).

We looked, as much as possible, at women from the same region of Morocco, i.e. the Rif. In this case, other women were often badgered because of their 'being different', and

especially because of language differences. The repeated emphasising of these differences appear to support the ethnic boundary, even though there is some mutual contact. It is, however, mainly the expressive, psycho-social dimension that is externalized by emphasising differences. To an outsider, this distinction is hardly noticeable. The absence of organization or mutual interaction makes the term 'ethnic category' preferable to ethnic groups in this case.

It is possible that women belonging to the same ethnic category will, on occasions, 'work together', that is, cut themselves off or distance themselves from the others. This seclusion, in a way, can be compared with what Gulick describes as 'the ethos of insecurity', where everybody is distrusted outside a close circle of relatives (1976: 148). This distrust of outsiders, which is partially expressed by the strongly walled houses of the Middle East (as well as Morocco), becomes even more apparent in a strange environment. According to Gulick, in migrating from the countryside to the towns in the Middle East, kinship ties make the essential 'adaptation' possible and in this way buffers are created between the migrants and the town (ibid.: 146). In the foreign environment of Brussels, where non-Berbers predominate the different nationalities and/or ethnic groups live next to each other. Berber immigrants also express their 'insecurity'. It is only within a limited circle that anything may be said, and where any 'openness' exists. However, we would not necessarily confine this circle to relatives only, but rather stress its ethnic character.

The re-interpretation of the objects from the new environment within their own frame of reference, as described above, does not affect the preservation of ethnic boundaries. The newly introduced elements are not considered as culturally diacritical; in other words, the taking-over of Western cultural features is not considered as breaking through the ethnic boundary. The creative adaptation of new cultural features realizes the further existence of ethnic ties beyond the spatial boundaries. However, in adapting to her new way of living, it may be that the Berber woman remains within the traditional cultural system: the Western, outside world continues to lie beyond.

Immigration itself also causes another boundary - an invisible one - to arise between immigrants and non-immigrants. Those who stay at home are not usually informed of the living conditions that really occur in Brussels; immigrants are invariably seen as living wealthy and prestigious lives. This aspect of the relationship, however, does not violate the boundary that 'demarcates', as it were, the ethnic category of the Riffians. The fact that most Berber women do not exclude returning to Morocco in the future indicates that they consider themselves as part of this ethnic category. The altered status they hope to reach by that time - an image of material wealth - does not detract from the fact that they have ties in their home

country. They are admitted into a category which distinguishes itself from 'the others'. Considering oneself as belonging to the same ethnic category or group does not accord with Harris's thesis that 'the material conditions of socio-cultural life' are the first priority (1969: 4). Despite different material conditions, ethnic demarcation - in other words, a number of cultural diacritics - still continues. The continuing evolution of culture - and consequently also that of the diacritics - does not prevent the principle of dichotomization - in this case, between Berbers (Riffians) and non-Berbers - from remaining in existence.

Although the world of immigrant Berber young people does not always coincide with that of their parents, they still refer to themselves as Moroccans or Berbers. The intensified interpersonal contact - both with Berbers and non-Berbers - gives a different content to the ethnic identity of the young people. Also, a distinction has to be made here between the age categories mentioned. Adolescents who move mainly within their mother's network show a pattern similar to that of Berber women in the matter of realizing their ethnic identity. Ties with the home country are maintained; some girls get married in Morocco and then stay on living there. Berber immigrants and non-immigrants are usually perceived as belonging to one great ethnic category.

However, the fact that one reacts against the traditional way of living and looks for more interpersonal contact with the non-Berber surroundings (as some adolescents and newly married women do) does not imply that one wants to relinquish one's own ethnic identity. It may appear that the adapted cultural elements are not always viewed in the same way by the elder generation. The conflicts that arise between both generations follow directly from the different ways of re-organising the framework of the world they are living in (the young people, for instance, wear short clothes outside the house and they want friendly contacts with the other sex, etc.). In this way, from a traditional viewpoint diacritic elements are affected (e.g. the enclosure of the female body, the separation of the sexes) and thus, to a certain extent, blur or endanger the dichotomy between Berbers and the West. According to the elder generation, the ethnic identity of the Riffians is affected. The young, however, call themselves Riffians too - Berbers, as opposed to those speaking Arabic - and do not consider elements adapted from the West as being diacritically relevant. For in wishing to expand the medial zone or zone of contact between both cultural groups, the elements mentioned above fall within this zone. This does not exclude the fact that there are also some differences which these young people will occasionally emphasise. They frequently bring forward a number of Berber values - such as the religious dimension of life, firm family ties surpassing the boundaries, the role of the grandmother, etc. - when comparing the Berber way of life with the Western one. All the adolescents and young women we spoke to had spent

ten to fifteen years (or more) in Morocco. This explains why they acquired most of the diacritic elements used for their identification with their home country. The ethnic category they belong to connects immigrants with the stay-at-homes, in the same way as it did with the elder generation. Very often, when they are in their home country they will conceal or hide the conflict-generating aspects of the new world they live in (at least if they are conscious of them).

The children, however, to a large extent miss the cultural dimensions of the Riffian home country. In an immigrant situation, the cohesion of the Berber world can be passed on to the children only in a reinterpreted and impoverished form, because of the absence of numerous important aspects. Holidays spent in the home country are too short and often too far removed from the child's representation of reality to fill these gaps. It can be seen immediately that the immigrant child therefore has fewer diacritic cultural elements from the Berber world at his or her disposal with which to define him- or herself ethnically. Opposing this is Western school education, in which quite a lot of diacritical features are offered. Here too, the Berber child largely misses the coherence provided by Western cultural patterns.

There are various consequences of this. The frequent contact with non-Berber children has enlarged the medial zone between both cultural worlds. A Berber girl wants pocket money, exactly like the Belgians; she wants to eat chips, as the Belgians do; she wants to play in the street with the Belgians; she wants to play after school instead of attending Koran lessons. On the other hand, a Berber girl usually speaks Berber; she goes on holiday to Morocco; she observes how her mother and other Berber women or adolescents behave; she hears them talking about other Berbers, about Morocco; she listens to the many stories her mother tells her, etc. In so far as she talks about this to non-Berbers a number of these elements, varying from person to person, become partially diacritical. Moreover, a number of these diacritics are emphasised more than once by the school environment, especially in the form of phenotypical and objectively perceptible differences.

These differences procure for the Berber girl the ethnic label of being a 'Moroccan' because, for the most part, outsiders do not know the internal ethnic divisions in Morocco. As Roosens remarks, it is therefore '...possible that from repeated and continual affirmation by the surrounding setting new ethnic entities and identities will grow with a partly new content' (1982: 111). Like many adolescents, several young Berber girls are ill-informed of the substantial meaning of ethnic divisions within Berber culture. Added to this is the fact that that they spend a considerable, if not the greater part of their time in an environment where these boundaries are not known (the school, the street, etc.). That is why these immigrant girls seem to accept the ethnic label 'Moroccan'. However, the content of being Moroccan varies greatly for these

young immigrants. Elements from different cultures can be found in it: Berber, as well as Spanish, Greek, Belgian, etc. This variation is connected with the strongly enlarged medial zone between Berbers and non-Berbers. At the same time, the shift from the ethnic label 'Berber' to 'Moroccan' contains an enlargement. In this way, the ethnic identity of Berber children slides away from that of the other age categories towards the non-Berber world.

Conclusions

Berber immigrants obviously do not form a homogeneous group. Already, within the female part of their community, differences in behaviour can be noticed that distinguish the age categories of the Berber mother from the newly married woman, the adolescent girl and the child. Both the background of the individuals involved and the actual situation in which they find themselves give the newly built-up world they live in a different content for each of the mentioned categories. The Berber mother only carries through a limited number of transformations in reproducing the traditional culture system (in which she is largely followed by her adolescent daughter). However, these transformations assume a more profound and conscious nature for the newly-weds and for some adolescents. The influence of the West, and that of the recent demands of youth in Nador, do not prevent a further building-up on a Berber basis. In view of the fact that Berber culture is offered to the children in a very atrophied form, it is very difficult to speak of a similar cultural reproduction. Because of the permanent influence of the Western school environment, the distance between the world of the mother and that of the child continues to grow. In view of the absence of any kind of medial figure, this gap has not so far been bridged.

However substantial the differences between the age categories, one can still discern the dichotomy of 'we' versus 'the others'. The content given to their own ethnic group or category may vary (its name can even shift from 'Berber' to 'Moroccan'), but each female immigrant considers herself as clearly distinct from 'the others' that surround her. Continuity with the past differs for successive age categories. The historical background of the home country, which remains a vivid reality for the mother (e.g. fighting against Spanish colonialism), is generally equally as 'strange' for a Berber child as for a Belgian. This does not prevent the child from realizing in his or her ethnic self-definition - consciously or not - ties with the Berber world.

Various possibilities for development now lie open. The so-called 'passing' (De Vos 1975: 26-30) or disappearance in the indigenous group, in view of the phenotypical differences and the attitude of the Belgians who continue to maintain the cultural

differences that fix the boundary, seems to be the least probable hypothesis. It is more probable that a sub-system will be developed that will differ, to a greater or lesser extent, from the new system of the elder generation. Through this sub-system new cultural elements may be introduced, both from the environment and from the traditional culture; or else new elements may be created which, perhaps later, will be said to be authentic (cf. what has happened to the Hurons in Canada, Roosens 1979: 40-4; 1980: 179-94). The exact course of events is hard to predict. As Barth puts it, '...one cannot predict from first principles which features will be emphasized and made organizationally relevant by the actors' (1969: 14). A further question arises concerning the reaction of the elder generation to such a sub-system.

In the event of conflict with the autochthons, however, the distinct 'new' systems should grow closer to each other, despite the possibly numerous differences. It is not impossible that in such an event, the enlarged ethnic boundaries of a Berber - or perhaps Moroccan - 'immigrant system' will be regarded as the only authentic one, which would naturally not be without consequence as far as relations with the 'stay-at-homes' is concerned.

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