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Social Demography of the Europeans in Colonial Algeria : The Case of Oran in the Late Nineteenth Century

by KUDŌ Akihito

Historians studying settler European society in Algeria have their roots in classical assimilation theory, and usually argue that the "fusion" among the European races took place at the turn of the nineteenth century. Other scholars confine their study to the ideological aspect and claim that the so-called rise of the "Algérien européen" is a myth. This article provides a more subtle portrait of European society in Oran based on the quantitative approach.

The analysis of the electoral college and of the dossiers of concessionaires points out that a second generation emerged during the late nineteenth century, especially in this coastal city. This study also reveals the mobility patterns of European immigrants and the complex functions that the city performed in this migration. Finally, the structure of urban society is analysed from a perspective of the conflict between European and Jewish communities.

Contemporary discourse on the Europeans of Algeria made reference to these social transformations. However, this is not to say that the "Europeans" were simply integrated into a "European-Algerian" community; rather, the settlement developed local identities and socioeconomic differences between generations.