Revisiting the Colonial Past in Morocco

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10 National resistance, *amazighité*, and (re)-imagining the nation in Morocco

Jonathan Wyrtzen

On October 17, 2001, a signing ceremony for the dahir creating the Royal Institute for Amazigh Culture (IRCAM)[1] was held on the Ajdir plateau near Khenifra, in the heart of Morocco's Middle Atlas mountains. At the ceremony, King Mohamed VI, whose Amazigh (Berber) mother lives nearby, delivered a speech remarkable for its succinct integration of a revised national 'imagined community'[2] that gives *amazighité* a central position in defining Moroccan identity:

> We desire, first of all, to recognize the entirety of our common history and cultural and national identity which has been built around multiple contributions. The plurality of streams that have forged our history and fashioned our identity cannot be separate from the unity of our nation, which is grouped around sacred values and inviolable foundations: the tolerant and generous Muslim religion, the defense of the country in its unity and integrity, allegiance to the Throne and King, and attachment to a democratic, social, and constitutional monarchy. We also want to affirm that Amazighité has the deepest roots in the history of the Moroccan people, shared by all Moroccans without exception, and that it cannot be used for political designs of any nature. Morocco is distinguished, across the ages, by the unity of its inhabitants ... They have always proved their firm attachment to their sacred values and resisted every foreign invasion or attempt at division.[3]

The creation of the IRCAM is the most high profile example of an effort by the monarchy to position itself as the patron of the Berber cultural movement that has gathered steam in the past two decades in Morocco, demanding cultural and linguistic rights including the teaching of Tamazight[4] in schools and its recognition as an official language. Since the 1930s, the dominant discourse of Moroccan nationalism emphasized the nation's Arab and Islamic character, and it is therefore a remarkable development that Morocco's *amazighité*, or Berber identity, is now also being celebrated at the highest level, 50 years after independence. In this process of re-imagining the nation, in which the Palace itself has taken a leading role, the pluralistic reality of Morocco's cultural and ethnic heritage is celebrated, while, at the same time, national unity is affirmed around the pillars of Islam, a fiercely independent spirit that has resisted invasion and division, and allegiance to the Alawite (Filali) monarchy.

Moroccan 'national' history is also being reworked into a more inclusive narrative, specifically colonial history of the resistance (*al-muqawama*) against the foreign invasion that took place during the Protectorate period. Nationalist historiography before and since independence reified Arabophone urban 'resistance' against the French beginning in the protests against the 1930 'Berber Dahir', continuing with the activities of the Istiqlal party created in 1944, and culminating in a unified official 'resistance' period[5] following the exile of the King Mohamed V in 1953 that resulted in his triumphant return in November 1955. Recent attention, however, is being focused on the earlier tribal 'resistance' against colonial conquest between 1907 and 1934 (in the Rif, the Middle and High Atlas, and the Saharan south) and on the role of women in the independence struggle.[6] As the Ajdir speech above indicates, the key criterion validating national unity (and, in fact, *inclusion* in the Moroccan nation) is participation in 'resistance to every form of invasion and attempt at division'. In this 'revisiting' of national history, the roles of previously marginalized, subaltern groups such as rural populations and women are highlighted, but a teleological historiography of the Protectorate – a grand narrative of national struggle leading to independence – continues to be perpetuated, albeit now with an expanded cast.

This chapter critically considers this category of 'national resistance' during the Protectorate period, with specific attention to the struggle by many of Morocco's Berber-speaking population in the Middle and High Atlas against the 'pacification' (the French euphemism for colonial conquest) of these regions. The question of *amazighité*, or Berber identity, was at the nexus of conflicting colonialist and nationalist narratives of Moroccan history and has historically been fraught with political tension since the 1930s, when France's ostensible 'Berber Policy' became the *bête noir* for Arab nationalists protesting an attempt to divide the country along 'Arab' and 'Berber' ethnic lines. Our goal is to reconsider this critical aspect of Morocco's colonial past by listening to Berber 'voices' themselves – by drawing on an archive of Tamazight poetry collected between 1911 and 1939 – to begin to move forward towards a more complex and nuanced understanding of 'resistance', beyond the colonial and nationalist paradigms which reduce it to either *siba* or 'national'. This revisiting of *amazighité* and 'national resistance' during Morocco's colonial period also illustrates how a subaltern approach can provide a needed empirical contribution to the broader theoretical discussion about nationalism, including the perennial question, 'What is a nation?' and by extension, 'What is nationalism?' A brief overview of this debate is valuable in situating the question of Morocco's Berber resistance in this larger theoretical context.

The nation as a historical continuity or as a constructed, imagined, invention?

The Moroccan case presents several quandaries when considered within the theoretical frameworks that have been created to describe the phenomenon of nationalism. In the dominant modernist–constructionist paradigm, nations are created by nationalism: in sum, the modern age characterized by industrialization created an economic imperative for nation-state political units with homogenized cultures. For one of its foremost theorists, Ernest Gellner (in his anthropological phase, of course, Gellner is most known for his work on our main subject, the Berbers of the High Atlas[7]), nationalism is a political principle 'which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent', thus political legitimacy 'requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones, and in particular, that ethnic boundaries within a given state ... should not separate the power-holders from the rest'.[8] Gellner does not precisely define 'nation', using it, 'ethnicity', and 'culture' interchangeably. With Morocco's complex Arab–Berber ethnic dimension, this question is crucial.

Benedict Anderson, one of the most influential theorists of nationalism, offers what seems a more helpful definition of the nation: it is 'an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign'.[9] However, Morocco again presents a difficulty due to the historically complex relationship between the central government (*makhzen*) under the sultan and outlying tribal areas: to what extent did an imagined Moroccan political community exist in the colonial period and to what extent was it imagined as limited and sovereign? Anderson also stresses the importance of print capitalism and a mass reading public for creating the conditions in which 'imagining' a national political unit is possible. Again, given that a large majority of Moroccan were illiterate during this period, particularly among the Berber population which is our focus, is any sort of national identity then not possible? Modernists discount the cultural and historical elements used as markers of national identity (Gellner believes they are completely contingent), instead emphasizing their constructed and invented nature.[10] Were Morocco's cultural and historical 'givens' (the influence of Islam, Arabization, imperial dynasties, etc.) therefore almost entirely inconsequential in how Moroccan national identity came to be defined?

On the other side, those who posit more historical continuity to nations argue that, although some have changed form and many have disappeared, nations existed before and maintain an ethnic continuity into the modern period. Others argue an ethnic heritage forms a given cultural reservoir which to some extent creates parameters for the type of construction of the nation possible by nationalists.[11] It would seem Morocco, a nation which has experienced a succession of dynasties since the ninth century and is currently ruled by one which took power in 1666, offers a supportive case for this second approach giving more weight to historical continuity. But, it is necessary to ask, what is the nature of this 'nation'? Can it be an ethnic identity given the racial and linguistic diversity of the country? Can it be a political identity given the fact that its borders once extended from Mauritania to Spain to Tunisia or that certain parts of the country barely had any interaction with the state?

Clear difficulties arise when an attempt is made to check these meta-theoretical frameworks against actual cases such as Morocco. By analyzing the evolution of how 'Berber identity' was used in rival colonialist and nationalist definitions of the 'nation', and by using Berber sources from the Protectorate period to examine how *they* understood their own identity and resistance to a 'foreign invader', problems with both modernist and more primordialist-inclined theories of nationalism will be evident. My aim is to demonstrate how a historical approach provides a needed empirical control in our attempt to understand nationalism.

The Moroccan vulgate and French 'Berber policy'

In the struggle over how to define the Moroccan 'nation' that began to emerge in the 1930s between colonial authorities and young Moroccan nationalist activists, Berbers were a prized pawn over which both sides fought. In French colonial doctrine, they offered proof of an age-old ethnic division within the kingdom and a perennial anarchic threat which justified their own necessary role in Morocco as 'protector'. For the nationalists, the Berbers were used as historical evidence of more than a millennium's experience of Moroccan national unity stretching from the ninth century, when Berber tribes appointed Moulay Idriss their ruler, to the present.

On the French side, the so-called 'Berber policy' had roots that extended back even before the institution of the Protectorate in 1912. Seeking a more rational colonization policy than that which evolved in Algeria, French colonial officials were, from the beginning, interested in 'scientifically' studying the Moroccan political and social situation. In preparation for an expected colonial expansion in Morocco, the Mission Scientifique au Maroc was initiated in 1903 to collect social, economic, ecological, ethnographic, political, and cultural information on the country under the directorship of Edmund Doutté and then after 1907 under Edouard Michaux-Bellaire. Michaux-Bellaire was responsible for articulating an explanatory analysis of the Moroccan nation based on a categorical distinction between the *bilad al-makhzen* (the land under the authority of the central government) and the *bilad as-siba* (the land of dissidence, or the tribal, mostly Berber, areas that refused to pay taxes). Edmund Burke has demonstrated how Michaux-Bellaire's binary distinction was synthesized with received wisdom from old Algerian hands into what he terms the 'Moroccan vulgate'.[12] The complexities of Moroccan society were simplified into a set of interrelated dichotomies: Arab versus Berber, plains versus mountains, and urban versus rural. The first resident-general, Hubert Lyautey, went on to divide Morocco into 'useful' – *le Maroc utile* which correlated with the *bilad al-makhzen* – and 'un-useful', *le Maroc inutile*, which

basically correlated with *bilad as-siba*. This binary view of Morocco was supplemented, among many resident officials, with the 'Kabyle myth' which had been developed in the French conquest of Algeria. The myth valorized Berbers as secular, democratic, sedentary mountain-dwellers, while Arabs were disparaged for being religiously fanatical, autocratic, nomadic plain-dwellers.[13]

This set of assumptions created the parameters for the development of a 'Berber policy' in the process of the 'pacification' of Morocco. In fact, there were two 'Berber' policies exercised in Berber tribal areas. In the southern areas of the High Atlas, the French continued a policy begun in the 1880s by Sultan Mawlay Hassan of subcontracting the subjugation and administration of recalcitrant tribal areas to the grand caids – the Glaouis, Mtouggis, and Goundafis – Berber warlords who ruled over vast stretches of difficult terrain. This grand caid policy, however, was not where the French initially got into trouble with the nationalists. The more infamous, so-called *politique berbère* of the Protectorate, which eventually culminated in the 'Berber Dahir' crisis in 1930, had its origins in the 'pacification' of the Middle Atlas tribes during the years before World War I.

Immediately after the establishment of the Protectorate, one of the first priorities for Lyautey was to secure the Rabat–Fez corridor, which was subject to attacks by the Beni Mtir and Guerrouane tribes living around Meknes. In 1913 and 1914, Lyautey's subordinate, Colonel Henrys, faced two difficulties in subduing these tribes: first, they had few chiefs or other leaders like the grand caids in the south with whom the French could cooperate (the most likely candidate, Moha ou Hamou, the leader of the Zaian confederation, proved their most formidable adversary in the region); and second, they refused to submit to the *makhzen* because this entailed submitting to an entire judicial structure of caids, qadis, and *shari'a*, which they felt threatened the basic traditional structures of their society.[14] The solution was to ask the tribes to submit instead to the *dawla*, or state (i.e. the French), which in return agreed to guarantee the free exercise of the tribe's customary laws and traditions. This policy was recognized with the issuing of a 1914 dahir (all of the dahirs were signed by the Sultan, who the French kept in place, symbolizing the 'partnership' with the indigenous ruler) stating 'tribes referred to as being of Berber custom, are and will remain governed and administered in accordance with their own laws and customs, under the supervision of the authorities'.[15]

This effort to create a separate judicial system for Berber areas was one part of general Berber policy which also included educational and administrative efforts to protect an 'untainted' cultural block in which strenuous efforts were made to prevent the Islamization and Arabization of Berber populations. Indigenous affairs officers were instructed not to use Arabic,[16] Franco–Berber schools were founded in the Middle Atlas in which Arabic and Islam were prohibited from being taught, and movement between the cities and countryside was restricted. Jacques Berque sums up this policy stating, 'it sanctioned the existence of a Berber reserve, a sort of national park which was to be sheltered from the ideologies of the plain, whether Arab or French'.[17] The culmination

of this policy was the issuing of the so-called 'Berber dahir' on May 16, 1930. Though the dahir introduced few new provisions, it did represent an effort to systematize a bifurcated administration of Arab and Berber zones in Morocco and give this division legal sanction. With the dahir, a French 'divide and rule' conception of the Moroccan nation – namely, that there were 'two Moroccos', one Arab and one Berber – was brought into the open.

'And do not separate us from our brothers, the Berbers!' – the Moroccan nationalist movement's response to French Berber policy

The 1930 dahir provoked an intense reaction from a section of the Arab Moroccan population – young, urban, and either French or Islamically educated men – which strenuously contested the 'Berber policy' they believed violated the unity of the true Moroccan nation.[18] These young activists used the dahir in the summer of 1930 to mobilize mass rallies condemning the French for trying to separate the Berbers from Islamic law and accusing them of a sinister plan to convert them to Christianity.[19] The Latif prayer traditionally used in times of calamity or natural disaster – 'Oh God, the Benevolent, we ask of You benevolence in whatever fate brings' – was used in mosques in Morocco's urban centers with the addendum, 'and do not separate us from our brothers the Berbers',[20] to frame protest against what they interpreted as French neo-Crusadism. The campaign against the 'Berber dahir' spread to other countries as far afield as Indonesia, with the help of the pan-Islamic activist Chakib Arslan and extensive press attention to the issue from Cairo to Surabaya. The central concern for these Moroccan urban activists, all of whom were culturally Arab, was to affirm the unity of an Arab and Berber national Moroccan identity.

In the early 1930s, this group organized the Kutlat al-Watani (the 'National Action Bloc') which, while pressing for wide-ranging reforms from the French authorities, also dedicated significant space in its journals to the defense of Moroccan national unity, arguing from history that the Moroccan nation's identity extended back more than 1,000 years, being forged in a continuous struggle with their northern Christian enemies. In 1933 in the nationalist journal *Maghreb*, Ahmed Belafrej, an early nationalist leader and future prime minister, refuted colonialist historiography that fabricated an Arab–Berber animosity,

> History offers us proof of the existence of a national Moroccan spirit which was formed in the course of trials and in battle against the Christian Portuguese and Spanish kingdoms and against the Turks, Muslims who nevertheless harassed the country without respite ... Why choose to use the principle of race in order to break us up and divide us? We are all more or less Berbers, some more Arabized than the others, the Arab element in Morocco is tiny. But one fact is certain – that all of Morocco is Muslim ... One cannot assert that Morocco is a Berber country colonized and oppressed by the Arabs and that France has arrived today to charitably liberate it. For Muslim Morocco has always been independent, from the

> earliest times in which the Berbers chose Idriss as Sultan, and which never had, we are certain, a single connection to the Caliphs.[21]

The Moroccan nationalists also pointed out that the most glorious periods of *Islamic* civilization in Morocco were instigated by Berber (the Almoravids and Almohads), not Arab, dynasties.[22]

In general, the nationalist framing of Moroccan identity attempted to subvert the Arab–Berber dichotomy used by the French by lauding the Berbers as Arabized Muslims, a strategy that subsumed ethnicity and racial distinctives under the religious identity of Morocco as a Muslim nation, but only the *Arab* cultural and linguistic aspects of this heritage were celebrated.[23] This definition of Moroccan Arabo-Islamic national identity formulated in the struggle against the Berber Dahir had a lasting impact, forming the basis later for an official state discourse of Moroccan identity following independence. In this narrative, the Protectorate was only a parenthetical interruption of the country's centuries-old history, that was overcome by the combined efforts of a unified Moroccan Muslim nation[24] rallying to support the symbol of Moroccan sovereignty and unity, the sultan. However, because it had been used by the French in an attempt to divide and rule, there was no celebration of *amazighité*.

Shortly after independence in June 1956, the King Mohamed V made a stop in the Middle Atlas at the same Ajdir plain where, a few years before, Thami Glaoui had staged a rally of Berber tribesmen to symbolically threaten the *makhzen* with a display of Berber *siba* unity. In a speech to the thousands of Berber tribesman assembled, he announced the repudiation of the 'Berber policy' symbolized by the 1930 decree, abolished the use of customary law, and praised them for their 'profound attachment to Islam', 'sense of national solidarity', and for their allegiance to 'one single fatherland, one single nation, and one single throne'.[25] Though the Palace reached out to Berber tribal chiefs to consolidate control after independence in the 1950s and 1960s, no traces of *amazighité* would be used in an official state celebration of national unity until Mohamed V's grandson gave the speech, partly quoted at the beginning of this chapter, on that same Ajdir plain 45 years later in 2001.

Amazigh imagined communities and resistance during the Protectorate

Though the question of Morocco's Amazigh identity was such a huge issue at the center of rival colonialist and nationalist attempts to define national identity, the present historiography of the Protectorate period still offers little insight into two vital questions: how did the Berbers themselves (1) understand their own collective identity, and (2) interpret their struggle against the foreign conquest of their lands? Due to a dearth of documentation on rural and tribal peoples, especially first-hand sources from largely illiterate populations, there is often an unavoidable practical bias towards elite history in any historical period or geographic region. Because history tends to be written mainly by

the victors (in this case, colonial or nationalist) and primarily based on accessible written texts (in this case, either in French, Spanish, or Arabic), the fact that we still know little about the Berber side to one of the major aspects of the Protectorate period in Morocco, the 'pacification' of the 'blad as-siba', is somewhat to be expected.

Most fortunately for Morocco's rural history, however, a tremendous trove of oral historical literature was collected, transcribed, and translated by French Berberists and their Moroccan interlocutors over a span of more than 40 years during the Protectorate (1914 to early 1950s) in the Middle and High Atlas and in the Souss. While some of these were published in French translation in the 1930s and 1940s,[26] the most extensive collection is archived in the Fond Roux at the Institute de Recherche et d'Etudes sur le Monde Arabe et Musulman, in Aix-en-Provence, France, and has only recently begun to be published,[27] and much work needs to be done to explore how these sources can help us understand a social history of Morocco's Atlas regions during the colonial period. The following is an initial attempt to investigate how this remarkable oral record provides insight into the evolution of how this Tamazight-speaking community imagined corporate identities in the process of being forcefully integrated into a colonial nation-state during the pacification campaign.

One of the unique aspects of these sources is that, in a non-'print community' à la Benedict Anderson, this poetry functioned as a shared communal text. It was almost always performed publicly, particularly when weddings and *moussems* brought crowds together. A key figure in the circulation of news at these gatherings was the *amdyaz*, a troubadour who functioned as a type of rural intellectual,[28] traveling during warmer months on a circuit with his troupe of musicians through the Middle and High Atlas and sometimes spending the winter in the city of Fez.[29] In these poems, the *amdyaz* often spread news of events happening elsewhere in the country and expressed his own commentary on these events. Widely disseminated in a roughly synchronic manner, this poetry helped unify, not a 'print community', but an oral community, and it helps reveal how this oral society imagined communal identity and framed their own 'resistance' to conquest.

Within this body of poetry ranging over close to three decades from the beginning of the colonial conquest to its culmination in 1934, a dominant theme is the immanent threat by the *rumi* (Christian) invader to a common territorial unit. An awareness of the operations in different parts of Morocco, which tribes had submitted to the *makhzen* and which were still in dissidence, and terror at the *rumis*' modern weapons of war (machine guns, aerial bombing, and artillery) pervade many of the poems. The following poem from the earliest stages of the French conquest reveals the poet's clear awareness of the encroaching invasion from the Atlantic coast to the west and the occupation of Fez, to the poet's north.

> The Christian is coming;
> He has built outposts in the middle of Zaer country;[30]

He has planted his flags over the city of Fes, and he has stretched our his hands to conquer other territories and other riches.[31]

In another poem collected by Arsène Roux, while he was posted at the military post at El Hajeb at the foothills of the Middle Atlas south of Meknes, the poet cries out:

O red city![32] O Dar Debbibagh! The Makhzen is no more!
The Christians strut about there with total impunity
Cry for the fate of our cities: Fes, Meknes, Agourai, Sefrou, and Tabadout!
Surly the Christians are the cause of our fall!
Fes and Meknes are lost, not to mention Sefrou and Casa (Ibeida),
Can one not make the crow of the mountains white?[33]

Clearly the poet, and by extension his or her[34] audience, identifies strongly with a territorial entity including Morocco's cities and the plains below the poet's own tribal territory in the mountains. The encroaching 'Christian' army is rising from the plains towards the poet's base in these mountains:

The French (Fransis) remind me of a fog that rises and invades the mountain.
He did not delay in subjecting me. I have stopped throwing out horse kicks at him.[35]

However, though the distinction between mountain and plains is clear, this does not indicate that the Berbers felt no connection to the *makhzen* lands below them. In fact, the fall of these areas is greatly mourned in the following *ahellel* poem from an *amdyaz* of the Ait Youssi (whose territory stretched up in the Middle Atlas above Sefrou south of Fez), lamenting the fall of Fez to the *rumi*:

The Christians have fallen upon the chiefs as the sheep are fallen upon in the cities;
Lift up your grief, O Gate of Bab-Ftuh, Lift up your grief, O Bab-Guissa!;[36]
Next to you the sons of pigs have come to wash their coats (elkebbudät, capotes).[37]

Likewise, in an *aferdi* poem by El Haj Asusi, a strong identification is made linking the Berbers to Meknes:

Meknes is no more, O Berbers (Imazigen), the Meknes you knew no longer belongs to us.
It is to the Christian that it has gone
As for me, I have given it up. Everywhere there was a nice place to live has been snatched up by the Christian.
He has pillaged the treasury of the Sultans and my own is also empty.[38]

These Berber sentiments, arising in the midst of the historical lands of 'dissidence', seriously undermine the strict *blad al-makhzen/blad as-siba* dichotomy in the French colonial paradigm, and demonstrate that, in fact, the lands of dissidence had a much more complex type of identification with a larger, 'national', entity.

At the same time, these poets also draw a clear distinction between themselves and the rest of larger community. The following *tamawayt* is by a poet from Guigou, high up in the Middle Atlas, who fears the approaching French occupation:

The General inherited the *lgerb* region; God favors him.
If he is able, he will go all the way to the pass of Tizi Larays,
Up to the valley of the Moulouya, all the way to the country of the Ou Sidi-'Ali.
Then the people of the mountains will submit to him and kiss his hands.[39]

In this case, the poet uses the key word *lgerb*, a Berberized form of the Arabic word (*gharb*) meaning 'west' or the 'sunset', to refer generally to the lowland area along the coast and around the major cities. This area, which has already fallen, is opposed to the mountainous areas referred to in the rest of the poem. The poet foresees that the 'General', perhaps General Hubert Lyautey who was appointed the first resident-general of Morocco in 1912, will end up inheriting the entire land, including his own 'people of the mountains'. Though the mountain/plains binary is clearly present, there is also a sense of a shared destiny between the two areas. This is also the message of another poem from the Beni Mtir tribe:

The French (fransis) have received the whole country (tamazirt) as an inheritance.
Everywhere they have built their military posts and over them they have hung their flags as a sign of victory.[40]

Another poet grieves that the Christians have defiled the land by their conquest:

What sort of prayers are left
The Koran is mishandled, and the Christians, wearing their kepis, trample on our sanctuaries.[41]

In these verses, the loss of sovereignty to the Christian invader is poignantly felt by the Berber community in which they were composed, both on a political and a religious level.

This dual process of identifying with and distinguishing themselves from a larger entity, which is clear in the way that physical space was mapped out in the Berber imagination, is also evident in how these Berber poets define, identify with, and distinguish themselves from other collective identities in Morocco. How they categorize social groups clearly reveals a system of

mapping various communities within the territorial entities described in the above section. Given that this body of literature was collected following the initial French conquest, perhaps the most pervasive distinction between 'us' and 'them' lies in the references to *irumin*, which translates as the 'Christians'. This word, the plural Berberized form of the Arabic *rumi*, was originally an adjectival form for those from 'Rome', then to the Byzantines, and later generically to all European Christian foreigners. At times, the word *fransis* is also used, demonstrating an awareness of the specific 'French' identity of these Christian invaders. Though there does not seem to be a semantic difference implied when *fransis* is used in a given song, it does seem the word is only used by poets who have been subjugated by the French and were perhaps more familiar with them. Regardless, the primary opposition in the poems is clearly between the Christians and Muslims, with some Muslims fighting the Christians and some surrendering to them.

This point is critical to better understand the true dynamics at work in the simplistic distinction made between the 'land of the makhzen' and the 'land of dissidence, or rebellion'. While the French paradigm of the 'two Moroccos' claimed this demonstrated the 'Berber spirit's' historic love of freedom and aversion to being under the control of the state, it ignored the fact that ultimately the Berber tribes that resisted the 'pacification' felt themselves the only remaining defenders of the Muslim community, that their 'resistance' was a sign not of antinomian autonomy but of religious duty. This is particularly relevant for understanding the complicated relationship of these tribes to the Alawite Sultans who have ruled Morocco for more than 400 years, one of the major points of contention about Morocco's 'national' identity debated by the nationalists and the French in the interwar period.

In the earliest collection of poetry, gathered in 1914–18, the memory of the Moroccan civil war which led to the French takeover is a frequent subject. During this period of unrest (1907–11), the Sultan 'Abd al 'Aziz was overthrown by his brother, 'Abd al Hafidh, who vowed to fight a *jihad* against the French who had increasingly begun to control the country economically, politically, and militarily. When Moulay Hafid also was forced to compromise with the French and sign the Treaty of Fez in 1912, establishing their official 'protector' role, an intense disappointment was expressed among the Berber tribes of the Middle Atlas:

> Moulay Hafid came and we welcomed him. He promised us that once he arrived in Fes, he would call on the Muslims for help.
> But, when he settled in, he brought called on the Chiefs of the Haouz to be his counselors.
> O Morocco (Igerb)! He had already sold you to the Christians (irumin)![42]
>
> (Zedday poem of Lyazid u Lahsen)

It is clear that the poet, a member of the Beni Mtir tribe, felt a sense of identification with the sultan, but his allegiance was conditioned on the sultan

fulfilling his obligations as a Muslim leader in fighting off the Christian invaders. This sense of the sultan selling off the country is clear in another poem:

> The Christians have formed their columns and have raised against us the places they occupy.
> The Sultan sold them the plains of the West under the condition that they come subdue them.
> We have fought them beautifully. They stated the conditions of their act of purchase; they cited the justness of their claim that they had bought us and were within their rights.[43]
>
> (Aferdig poem by L-Haj Asusi)

Another poet feels sorry for the Sultan, who has capitulated to the French:

> Yes Hafid, you are miserable as we are miserable.
> But your misery is greater than ours: you live in the vicinity and under the protection of the Christian.[44]

In his pity, however, it is possible to see the distinction he makes between the sultan, living close by and under the French 'protector', and himself, who is not yet that close to the Christian and not yet 'protected' by him.

This last point is another very significant distinction that is made within the Berber imagination during this period of conquest between those who have 'submitted' to or been 'subjugated' by the Christian (*irumin*), and those that continued to fight against the French. This thematic vein that runs through this poetry provides perhaps the clearest exposition of how 'resistance', which is framed as a *jihad*, was understood by the Berbers of the Middle and High Atlas.

In a poem calling out to the notables of the Beni Mtir tribe, the obligation to a holy defensive war against the *rumi* is affirmed:

> Here is a letter, O messenger! Take it to Driss, to Bougrin, to Moha ou Said, the chiefs.
> Gather around her Adjammou, Lghazi ou Gessou, as wells as Imeloui and El-Mouradi ou Mansour. Get Ou-Abli too!
> And tell them: The Christian (rumi), is it not he that, during his life, the Prophet commanded us to fight?[45]

In these exhortations, the Muslim community is urged to fight, with the cowards being disparaged as 'Jews':

> Let's go! Rise up, O Cowards, and join the Jews (udäyn)! Stand up, O Musulmans, against the Christians (Irumin)! Are you already dead?[46]

In the midst of these exhortations to *jihad*, there is an intense dilemma over the question of submitting to the invader. This issue of whether to concede

defeat, give over one's weapons, and sign the registers of the French administration is one of the major issues that is wrestled with in this collection. For many, the idea of submission was inconceivable:

> To submit is impossible;
> Of submission there is no question;
> We will fight; if victory eludes us, we will strike our tents, and we will go from country to country (tmazight)[47]

In fact, some of the most fascinating poems in this collection are duels between two poets, one who has already submitted and the other who remains in rebellion, that Roux recorded while in El Hajeb. The following exchange is between two poets from the same tribe, one of whom has submitted and the other who remains in rebellion. In this exchange, the poet 'Abid, who has submitted and lives close to a French post by El Hajeb, and the poet 'Alla, who remains in rebellion fighting the French, spar back and forth about their respective positions.[48]

Mocking the physical deprivations the rebels are going to face when they have to winter in the cold and snow up in the mountains, 'Abid tells 'Alla:

> O combatants of the jihad!
> I fear you are waiting until January and that you are saying:
> Lets go submit, the Christian is harsh in his blows!'
> I fear, O 'Alla,[49] that your sandals will not patch over your feet.

In another poem, 'Abid teases 'Alla about his lack of supplies:

> Go then and graze on the ifsi plant,
> when the long rains fall,
> when the persistent rains come,
> nourish yourself with the grass of the gazelles.

'Alla, however, is not fazed and remains firm in his belief that his cause is noble:

> Yes, we will graze on the ifsi plant,
> yes we will eat the grass of the field.
> Yes we will even eat the earth.
> But we will never accept shameful submission to the Christian (irumi)!

'Alla then derides the subservience of 'Abid, saying:

> I have not, as you have, committed evil actions in order to merit punishment.
> But you, after having been struck,
> you return right back to him who struck you.[50]

In response, 'Abid denigrates the futility of 'Alla's fight:

> O 'Alla, did not the Christian break your jaw and pull out your teeth.
> That is the compensation of your jihad.

In his last couplets, 'Alla attacks 'Abid's sacrilege in giving up the *jihad*, saying:

> Your word is without weight, O you who have renounced Islam.
> Do they not say that 'Abid killed his offender
> and drew the vengeance of the lashes that he received in the middle of the camp
> in the presence of the soldiers.[51]

That fact that this exchange was well-known in El-Hajeb and brought to Roux to write down demonstrates the extent to which the tension between the two poets correlated to the intense moral and practical dilemma the whole community faced in the choice between submitting to the state or remaining in armed rebellion against it. In these passionate poems, there is a profound tension between tribes, or in this case within the tribe, over submitting or continuing to resist.

This division between those who have submitted and those who have not is one of the dominant themes within this body of literature. In reference to the nationalist struggle, it is illuminating to see how the boundary between 'us' and 'them' was tied to closely to the criterion of 'resistance' for the Amazigh inhabitants of the Atlas mountains. The experience of colonization, or forced submission to the *rumi*, created a profound sense of ambiguity for this population as the foundations of existing frameworks for identity, such as the 'imagined community' represented in a shared sense of allegiance to a Muslim ruler and duty to defend the community in *jihad*, were seriously shaken with the imposition of the Protectorate.

Conclusion

Such a foray into this archive of Tamazight poetic sources from the first half of the Protectorate brings a new perspective on the category of 'resistance' within the colonial period, providing a needed corrective to the colonial and the nationalist vulgates which have shaped our understanding of the Protectorate. It also helps historicize our understanding of the Moroccan 'nation', at a time where national identity is being renegotiated. For Morocco's Amazigh population, as for others, the Protectorate created ruptures and uncertainties about collective identity, and, over time, created new possibilities for how a 'national community' could be imagined. The parameters of how this nation was defined were determined by the specific contingencies in place in the colonial structure imposed on Morocco.

The urban movement that articulated what became the dominant discourse of Moroccan nationalism was born in reaction to a perceived French attempt to use Berber customary law and language to undermine the unity of the Moroccan nation. In the subsequent struggle against the Protectorate, therefore, the only legitimate cultural markers for Moroccan identity were those the French sought to suppress, namely the use of the Arabic language and the religion of Islam. In an ironic twist, given the fact that Berbers offered the stiffest opposition the French faced in colonizing Morocco, affirmations of *amazighité* had basically been co-opted by the colonial power. It was doubly ironic that, following pacification, the French were surprised to find Berbers eagerly desiring Muslim education and refusing to speak Berber and insisting on using Arabic. Though it is true the urban nationalist movement was very slow to penetrate rural areas, the French were shocked to find nationalist cells already operating in the late 1930s in remote Berber areas such as Midelt.[52] Morocco was and was not yet a nation during the Protectorate, and, in the end, it was the shared experience of colonization that, to a large extent, constituted the most critical catalyst in forging Moroccan national identity.

Can we consider the Berber resistance to the 'pacification' between 1907–34 as part of a grand narrative towards national independence in Morocco? On many levels this resistance was much closer to archetypal *siba* repertoires of resistance to a centralizing authority, in this case the French *makhzen* army, rather than a 'nationalist' type of activism. Though putting up fierce military resistance, these illiterate Berber tribesmen and women could not articulate a nationalist ideology that could compete with, or even be in dialogue with, the frames of resistance being developed by their Arabic and French speaking brethren down in the cities of the plains. The French pursued minimal efforts to create a Berber intellectual elite (for example, with the creation of the Azrou Berber college), but these were channeled into officer training at the Ecole Militaire of Dar Baida in Meknes, then into the colonial army in an attempt to ensure their loyalty to France.

But it is also not accurate to deny any sense in which this 'resistance' was in defense of a larger socio-political entity. It is true that, at the advent of the Protectorate, Morocco remained an extremely heterogeneous population, barely integrated by a transportation or communications infrastructure, largely illiterate, and barely industrialized. But, as our exploration of Amazigh sources revealed, Morocco was also integrated by a religious solidarity based on Islam and historically linked to a territorial political expression forged by dynastic efforts to impose central rule on the country. In their own minds, Berber resistance was framed in relationship to the broader 'national' unit, in this case a spiritual–political community, experiencing the common threat of foreign occupation by a 'Christian' invader.

Finally, the specific case of Moroccan nationalism and this question of 'national resistance' highlights the limitations of both the modernist and more historically oriented theoretical models of nationalism. Among the modernists, Benedict Anderson offers the most useful framework for understanding

Moroccan nationalism, but his framework must be modified to an extent. A type of 'imagined community' existed in Morocco in the period before the Protectorate among Arabs and Berbers that subsumed their cultural, ethnic, and linguistic differences. In Khaldunian terms, this *'asabiyya*, or solidarity, was based on a religious sentiment, that the Muslim religious community was linked together under the authority of the sultan, though the political 'sovereignty' of the community was often contested. While Gellner's modernist perspective belittles the importance of nationalist claims to historic continuity, Morocco's pre-modern, pre-industrial history played a significant role in how this national community was understood in the course of the modernization of the country during the Protectorate. Morocco also defies Anderson's framework in that what created a sense of a national 'imagined community' was not the spread of print capitalism (Morocco was dominantly an oral culture and, in addition, the French heavily censored the Arabic press), but a sense of shared history, particularly in a common struggle against an outside, Christian invader, which was reinforced in the twentieth-century experience of colonization.

In this regard, Ernst Renan's (the French Third Republic intellectual from whom Anderson takes a large degree of inspiration) emphasis on the importance of history is applicable to Morocco: in his 'What is a nation?' speech in 1882, he states,

> A heroic past, great men, glory (by which I understand genuine glory), this is the social capital upon which one bases a national idea. To have common glories in the past and to have a common will in the present; to have performed great deeds together, to wish to perform still more – these are the essential conditions for being a people.[53]

For Moroccan nationalism, like many other anti-colonial nationalisms, the criterion of 'resistance' became essential, constituting the social capital on which the imagined national community was based. As is evident in current efforts to expand the official canon of Moroccan 'resistance', it continues to function as a preferred means of creating national solidarity.

A historical perspective on how *amazighité* has been used in defining the Moroccan nation since the colonial period is critical in helping us understand current renegotiations of Moroccan identity. At the inception of the Moroccan nationalist movement, an Arabo–Islamic discourse was articulated to defend the nation against French efforts to use Berber markers of identity to divide it. Today, the historical record is again being used to forge a Moroccan identity that includes and celebrates the role of the Berbers, in Mohamed VI's words, in 'resisting every foreign invasion or attempt at division'. It is fascinating to observe how *amazighité* – Berber language and culture – which the King warns (in mind of the legacy of the 'French Berber policy) cannot be 'put to the service of political designs of whatever nature', continues to be used precisely for that purpose.

Notes

1 Institut Royal de la Culture Amazigh.
2 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised and extended ed. (London: Verso, 1991). How Anderson's thesis relates specifically to the Moroccan case is discussed in detail below.
3 Text of speech available on the IRCAM website: www.ircam.ma
4 Semantics are a minefield as the indigenous populations in North Africa prefer to be called Imazighen (free men); Amazigh means one free man and also can be used as an adjective; Tamazight is the feminine form and also is the language. Though Morocco has three Berber dialects, Tarifit (in the Northern Rif region), Tamazight (in the center), and Tashelhit (in the southern Souss region), Tamazight, which is spoken by the largest number of people, has been chosen to be taught in the school curriculum (with synonyms from the other dialects being included frequently). Another controversial political issue in the official recognition of the language is which alphabet to use – the Tifinagh script used by the Tuareg in the Sahara was chosen over Latin or Arabic scripts which were more charged with laicist and Arabizing baggage.
5 Active participation between 1953 and 56 must be validated to be recognized as a 'veteran' by the state-run High Commission for Veterans of the Resistance and Members of the Army of Liberation.
6 The High Commission for Veterans of the Resistance and Members of the Army of Liberation (created after independence to support those who participated in the struggle between 1953 and 56), has jointly sponsored several conferences on this expanded purview of 'resistance'. The collected papers of these conferences have been published as books by the commission, including *al-Muqawama wa al-Harakat al-Wataniyya bi-jiha Taza – al-Hosayma – Tawanat* (2000); *Dowr al-Mara al-Maghrebiyya fi Milhama al-Istiqlal wal-wahida* (2000); *al-Muqawama al-muslaha wa al-harakat al-watania b-il-atlas al-mutawasat* (1999); and *Nadwa alamiya hawl jihad al-Sahra min ajal istiqlal al-mamlakat wa wahdatiha al-turabiya* (1997).
7 Ernest Gellner, *Saints of the Atlas* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969). Also see his volume edited with Charles Micaud, *Arabs and Berbers: From the Tribe to Nation in North Africa*, (Lexington MA: Lexington Books, 1972).
8 Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 1.
9 Anderson, p. 5.
10 In Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger's volume, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge and New York, 1983), Hobsbawm asserts modern nation construction involves the selective re-appropriation and creation of symbolic practices, what he calls 'the invention of tradition', which serves to cement a largely fictive continuity with the historic past of the nation.
11 Anthony Smith's idea of ethno-symbolism is the best expression of this approach. See Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987).
12 Edmund Burke III, 'The Image of Morocco in French Colonial Scholarship', in Ernest Gellner and Charles Micaud (eds), *Arabs and Berbers: From Tribe to Nation in North Africa*, (Lexington MA: Lexington Books, 1972), p. 177.
13 Patricia M. E. Lorcin, *Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, Prejudice and Race in Colonial Algeria*, Society and Culture in the Modern Middle East series (London: I. B. Tauris, 1995).
14 Burke, 'The Image of Morocco', p. 193.
15 Charles Ageron, *Politiques Coloniales au Maghreb* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1972), p. 122. The authorities were charged with determining which tribes were to be deemed Berber. There are cases in which Arab tribes were put under customary law.

16 Ironically, many of these officers themselves were the agents of Arabization because they were more comfortable in Moroccan Arabic than in Berber and had to rely on bilingual translators, creating an advantage for Arabic speakers in Berber areas.
17 Jacques Berque, *French North Africa: The Maghrib between Two World Wars* (New York: Frederick Praeger, 1967), p. 123.
18 For an extensive study of the nucleus of the nationalist movement see John P. Halstead, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Origins and Rise of Moroccan Nationalism, 1912–1944*, Harvard Middle Eastern monographs (Cambridge MA: Distributed for the Center for Middle Eastern Studies of Harvard University by Harvard University Press, 1967). Many were members of small *salafi* study groups stressing a scripturalist Islamic reformism that had begun in Egypt (inspired by the teachings of al-Afghani and Abduh) and spread to Morocco. On the link between Moroccan nationalism and the *salafiyya* movement see Jamil Abun-Nasr, 'The *Salafiyya* Movement in Morocco: The Religious Bases of the Moroccan Nationalist Movement', in Albert Hourani (ed.) 'St. Antony's Papers', *Middle Eastern Affairs*, no. 3. (London, 1963), pp. 91–105. Also, see Mohamed el-Mansour's chapter, '*Salafis* and Modernists in the Moroccan Nationalist Movements', in John Ruedy (ed.), *Islam and Secularism in North Africa* (Washington DC: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, 1994), pp. 53–69.
19 An extended treatment of the Dahir can be found in Gilles Lafuente, *La politique berbère de la France et le nationalisme marocain* (Paris: Collection Histoire et Perspectives Méditerrainées, 1999).
20 Allal al-Fasi, who became one of the most prominent Moroccan nationalists, describes the recitation of this prayer by thousands of worshippers at the Qarawiyin Mosque in Fez following the Friday sermon, in his book on the North African nationalist movements, *al-haraka al-istriqlaliyya fi'l-Maghrib al-arabi* (Cairo, 1948, p. 165). This book was translated English as *The Independence Movements in Arab North Africa*, translated by H. Nuseibeh (Washington DC: American Council of Learned Societies). However, the prayer does not appear in the translation of the passage on the Berber Dahir. This section also oddly puts the date of the demonstration against the Dahir on March 15, 1930 (not in the Arabic original), 2 months before the Dahir was even published.
21 'Et maintenant?' *Maghreb*, no. 11, May-June 1933, pp. 50–51.
22 See for instance, Mohamed Lyazidi, 'Divers aspects de la politique berbère au Maroc', *Maghreb*, no. 11, May-June 1933, p. 8.
23 For the Algerian parallel on how Berber identity was subsumed within an hegemonic Arab cultural framework see James McDougall's chapter 'Arabs and Berbers', in *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 184–216.
24 Of course, Morocco also had a significant Jewish minority numbering over 200,000 by the end of the Protectorate. Though the nationalists attempted to include them in a frame of Moroccan unity, the religious dimension was problematic. The pressures generated by the Alliance Israelite to assimilate into French culture and that of the Zionists to immigrate to Israel caused a high degree of tension. With the independence of Israel in 1948, most Moroccan Jews emigrated there or to Europe and North America.
25 Ministère des Affaires Etrangères-Paris. Séries Maroc 1956–60, Dossier 29. Telegram no. 3260, Text of Ajdir Speech (June 11, 1956).
26 These display a strong Berberophilia for the most part. See Paul Reynier's *Taougrat. Ou les Berbères racontè par eux-mêmes* (1930); and Lucie Paul-Margueritte's *Chants berbères du Maroc* (Paris: Editions Berger-Levrault, 1935) is a collection of translated poems the author collected in Azrou and the surrounding area in the early 1930s.
27 A word of thanks to Michael Peyron who first alerted me to this source and has done incredible work documenting it and using it in his own studies of the

Tamazight poetry. A French officer, Arsène Roux, was largely responsible for the creation and preservation of this archival repository. During his entire career in Morocco (which spanned from the initial pacification to the 1940s and included being the first director of the Berber College in Azrou), one of Roux's personal projects was the collection of Berber poetry, both in Tashelhit and Tamazight, from the Sous and from the Middle Atlas. Harry Stroomer and Michael Peyron published an invaluable catalog of the oral poetry in the archive (Catalogue des archives berbères du 'Fonds Arsène Roux', *Berber Studies Volume 6* (Leiden: Rudiger Koppe/Verlag Koln, 2003). Some of the poems have been published, see Arsène Roux, *Poésies Berbères de l'époque héroique Maroc central (1908–1932)*, ed. Michael Peyron, (Aix-en-Provence: Institut de Recherches et d'Etudes sur le Monde Arabe et Musulman, 2002).

28 Hassan Jouad uses this term, see 'Les Imdyazen, une voix de l'intellectualité rurale', *REMMM*, no. 51, January 1989, pp. 100–110.

29 See Arsène Roux, 'Les Imdyazen ou aèdes berbères du groupe linguistique beraber', *Hesperis* 8, 2nd trimester, 1928, pp. 231–51.

30 The Zaer region is northeast of Rabat.

31 Fond Roux, IREMAM, Carton 50.2.10. Recorded by Arsène Roux in El Hajeb, 1914–18.

32 Referring here to the red *piste* walls of Marrakesh.

33 Arsène Roux, *Poésies Berbères de l'époque héroique Maroc central (1908–1932)*, ed. by Michael Peyron (Aix-en-Provence: Institut de Recherches et d'Etudes sur le Monde Arabe et Musulman, 2002), p. 91. Peyron's editorial comment about the 'Legend of the Crow' explains that, according to the legend, the crow was white but was blackened by God after having performed the sacred task he had been conferred. The expression signifies a desire to change the fate of things.

34 Several of the poems are attributed to women. While certain genres tend to be composed by one or the other gender, all of these poems were heard by men and women.

35 Fond Roux, IREMAM, Carton 59.1. Poetry of amateur poets of the Beni-Mtir. Recorded by Roux in El Hajeb 1914–18.

36 Two of the principal gates of Fez, outside of which the French must have done their wash in the waters of the rivers flowing through wadis.

37 Fond Roux, IREMAM, Carton 52.5.

38 Fond Roux, IREMAM, Carton 59.1. Poetry of amateur poets of the Beni-Mtir. Recorded by Roux in El Hajeb 1914–18.

39 Fond Roux, IREMAM, Carton 55.1.2. By Mohamed u Bentaher l-Mguildi el-'Arfaoui of village of Guigou. Recorded by Roux in El Hajeb, 1914–18.

40 Fond Roux, IREMAM, Carton 59.1. Poetry of amateur poets of the Beni-Mtir. Recorded by Roux in El Hajeb 1914–18.

41 Fond Roux, IREMAM, Carton 52.5.

42 Fond Roux, IREMAM. Carton 59.1. Songs of amateur poets of the Beni Mtir. Recorded by Roux in El Hajeb, 1914–18.

43 Ibid.

44 Fond Roux, IREMAM, Carton 59.2. Songs of the Beni Mtri. Recorded by Roux in El Hajeb, 1914–18.

45 Fond Roux, IREMAM, Carton 50.3.1. Tamawayt recorded by Arsène Roux in El Hajeb, 1914–18.

46 Fond Roux, IREMAM, Carton 50.2.10. Recorded by Arsène Roux in El Hajeb, 1914–18.

47 Ibid.

48 Fond Roux, IREMAM, Carton 50.3.1. Recorded by Arsène Roux in El Hajeb, 1914–18.

49 He puts in a note here that this is Alla n Aicha Hmad, poet of the fraction of the Beni Mtir that was still in dissidence.

50 Roux notes that this refers to the lashes 'Abid received at the whipping post from the French commander.

51 Again referring to the lashing 'Abid received upon submitting.

52 Robin Bidwell, *Morocco under Colonial Rule: French Administration of Tribal Areas, 1912–1956* (London: Frank Cass, 1973), p. 57.

53 Ernst Renan, 'What is a Nation?' translated and annotated by Martin Thom, in Homi Bhabha (ed.), *Nationalism and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 53.

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