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Preface by
Federico CRESTI

Edited by
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Direttore Responsabile: Agostino Cilardo †
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In memory of our dear friend and colleague Agostino Cilardo (1947-2017)

If you would indeed behold the spirit of death, open your heart wide unto the body of life.
For life and death are one, even as the river and the sea are one.

Kahlil Gibran

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The articles in this book have been peer-reviewed.

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Is the Ethnic Genie out of the Bottle? Berbers and the 'North African Spring' Five Years on

Bruce MADDY-WEITZMAN

Abstract

This study argues that the current political and cultural space in North Africa is more open and contested than at any time since the end of the colonial era, and that Berber ethnicity, in all of its varieties and permutations, has achieved a degree of significance that scholars of an earlier generation did not anticipate. It focuses on the way that Berber identity has shaped, and been shaped by the post 2011 events in North Africa, showing how the Berber-Amazigh identity movement has registered important achievements both vis-à-vis its own Berber-speaking communities and state authorities, while continuing to fall short of achieving a critical mass in mobilizational capacity. It also argues that ethnic differences and particularities have become more salient in a number of instances, to the consternation of state authorities and others who fear the unraveling of the status quo and the national fabric as they understand it.

In the words of an old Danish proverb, 'predictions are hazardous, especially about the future'.[1] One may add that this is the case even for such intellectual luminaries as Ernest Gellner. Writing in the early 1970s, Gellner postulated that 'in his heart, the North African knows not merely that God speaks Arabic but also that modernity speaks French', and thus dismissed the likelihood that the Berbers might ever develop a more encompassing ethnic identity beyond their particular tribal loyalties within an Islamic milieu. In his view, the dynamics of modernization would eventually, but inexorably lead North Africa's native Berbers to assimilate into those larger frameworks of modern national states colored with an Islamic hue which had emerged throughout the predominantly Arabic-speaking lands during the 20th

[1] http://quoteinvestigator.com/2013/10/20/no-predict/

century.[2] Two generations later, the picture is far more complex, as those frameworks are under severe stress. The Arab collective appears to have reached a Shakespearean moment, 'to be or not to be', as religious, sectarian, and ethnic affiliations fuel civil wars and have even effectively erased state boundaries, particularly in the historic birthplace of Arabism, the Levant/Fertile Crescent region.[3] To be sure, the particular mix of factors in the Maghreb is quite different than in the Arab-Islamic East (*Mashreq*). Morocco and Algeria, the two North African states that contain the vast majority of the approximately 20 million ethnic Berbers worldwide, have managed to largely avoid the upheavals that toppled the neighboring regimes in Tunisia and Libya (and in Libya's case, rendered it a failed state). Nonetheless, as authoritarian regimes ruling over young, restless and increasingly politicized and dissatisfied publics, they continue to confront many of the political, social and economic challenges which have shaken the established order elsewhere. The 'Berber question', unique to North Africa but reminiscent in a number of ways of the 'Kurdish question' in the Fertile Crescent, is very much part of this package of challenges.

This study focuses on the 'ethnic' variable among those challenges, namely the way that Berber identity, in all of its varieties, has shaped, and been shaped by the events of the last five years in North Africa. It argues that the Berber-Amazigh identity movement has registered important achievements both *vis-à-vis* its own Berber-speaking communities and state authorities, while continuing to fall short of achieving a critical mass in mobilizational capacity. It also argues that ethnic differences and particularities have become more salient in a number of instances, to the consternation of state authorities and others who fear the unraveling of the status quo and the national fabric as they understand it. Whether one speaks of increasingly militant voices championing autonomy, or even secession in Algeria's Kabylie region and the Rif of Morocco, violent clashes between ethnic Berbers and Arabs in Algeria's historically remote and peripheral Mzab region, the efforts of Nafusa Berbers to defend and strengthen their

[2] E. Gellner, 'Introduction', in E. Gellner – Ch. A. Micaud, (eds.), *Arabs and Berbers: From Tribe to Nation in North Africa*, Duckworth, London, 1973, pp. 11-21, quote on p. 19.

[3] For a detailed analysis, see B. Friedman – B. Maddy-Weitzman (eds.), *Inglorious Revolutions: State Cohesion in the Middle East After the Arab Spring*, The Moshe Dayan Center, Tel Aviv, 2014.

communal existence and culture in the fractured Libyan state, the increasingly politicized and self-conscious Tuaregs in the Sahara-Sahel, and the various manifestations of Amazigh activism in Morocco, there can be no doubt that the Amazigh factor in North Africa is more relevant than ever, even as the movement itself struggles against continued language loss, marginalization of poverty stricken peripheral regions, and unfavorable state policies. While examining the achievements, obstacles and prospects for the Amazigh movement *vis-à-vis* North African states and the other components of their societies, it will heed the cautionary warning mentioned at the outset, and thus studiously avoid predictions.

Dispassionate discussions of Berber ethnicity have often been hard to come by. The grand Islamic narrative of North African history held that the Arab-Islamic conquests in the 7th-8th centuries reunited the conquerors, the bearers of the word of Allah, with their long-lost cousins who had migrated to North Africa from the East and now willingly embraced Islam.[4] French colonialism postulated the polar opposite, holding that the Berbers had been victimized by the Arab-Muslim conquerors, and reifying the extant differences between Berbers and Arabs in language, social organization and religious praxis in order to promote a divide and rule policy.[5] As a result, Berbers would find themselves in a problematic place within the modern national movements and post-colonial state-building efforts in both Algeria and Morocco, vulnerable to often-specious charges of collaboration with colonialism, and of *fitna* (sedition). Indeed, opponents of the modern-day Amazigh identity movement frequently insist that Berber-Arab differences are merely the invention of French colonialism. Ironically, some Amazigh militants wholeheartedly embrace the colonial narrative of innate Berber superiority and undifferentiated Arab-Islamic imperialism and oppression.

Getting beyond this highly charged atmosphere is no easy task. One should begin with the reminder that most ethnic identities are

[4] For a discussion of this narrative within the context of Algeria's nationalist movement in the 1930s, see J. McDougall, 'Myth and Counter-Myth: "The Berber" as National Signifier in Algerian Historiographies', in *Radical History Review*, 86 (2003), pp. 66-88.

[5] P. M. E. Lorcin, *Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, Prejudice and Race in Colonial Algeria*, I.B. Tauris, London and NY, 1999; L. Rosen, 'The Social and Conceptual Framework of Arab-Berber Relations in Central Morocco', in E. Gellner – Ch. A. Micaud (eds.), p. 173.

'nuanced, mutable, their boundaries and characteristics changing with time',[6] while also remembering David M. Hart's stipulation that the Berbers form 'the basis of the whole North African edifice'[7] Over the *longue durée*, the numerous manifestations of being 'Berber', ranging from the existence of various forms of a single language, social organization, territorial cores and daily praxis, are durable enough to enable the inclusion of Berbers within the broad category of pre-modern *ethnies* expounded by Anthony Smith.[8] Berber ethnicity, however muted at times, remained ever-present, in one form or another, during the millennium of Islamic rule that preceded European colonialism, even if they owed their status as a named collective to the conquering Arabs, which was enshrined by Ibn Khaldun six centuries later, only to disappear and then reappear thanks to French colonialism. Concern over excessive Berber ethnicity was very much on the minds of Algerian *salafi* reformers in the 1930s,[9] and the Berber-Arab cleavage was present within both the Algerian and Moroccan movements, even if rarely talked about at the time.[10] Hugh Roberts even goes so far as to say that the eventual defeat of the

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[6] S. S. Saad, 'Interpreting Ethnic Quiescence: A Brief History of the Berbers of Morocco', quoted by D. Crawford, 'Royal Interest in Local Culture: The Politics and Potential of Morocco's Imazighen', in Maya Shatzmiller (ed.), *Nationalism and Minority Identities in Islamic Societies*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 2005, p. 167.

[7] D. M. Hart, 'Scratch a Moroccan, Find a Berber', in *The Journal of North African Studies* 4/2 (1999), pp. 23-26.

[8] Ironically, the Berbers rate nary a mention by Smith himself, apart from a map of the Mediterranean world between 200 B.C.-400 A.D. in one of his books, which denotes the territory of Numidia (encompassing portions of modern day Algeria and Tunisia). A. D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1996, Map 4.

[9] McDougall, 'Myth and Counter-Myth: "The Berber" as National Signifier in Algerian Historiographies'.

[10] For a discussion of the 1949 'Berberist crisis' in Algeria, see G. Kratochwil, *Die Berber in der historischen Entwicklung Algeriens von 1949 bis 1990. Zur Konstruktion einer ethnischen Identität*, Klaus Schwarz, Berlin, 1996, pp. 53-61; O. Carlier, 'La production sociale de l'image de soi / Note sur la "crise berbèriste" de 1949', in *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord*, XXIII, 1984, CNRS Éditions, Paris, 1986, pp. 347-371; M. Tilmatine, 'Religion and Morals of Imazighen according to Arab Writers of the Medieval Times', in *Amazigh Voice* 9/2-3 (spring/summer 2000), pp. 14-15. For the Berber-Arab tensions within the Algerian FLN and Muslim Algerian society in general, see A. Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, Penguin Books, New York, 1987, and M. Feraoun, *Journal, 1955-1962: Reflections on the French-Algerian War*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, NB 2000, p. 133, 261.

'internal' leadership by the external FLN leaders based across the Moroccan and Tunisian frontiers greatly damaged the process of Kabyle political integration into the Algerian Muslim nation.[11]

Writing about Moroccan identity and society during the 1960s, Lawrence Rosen observed that ethnicity constituted only part of a Moroccan Berber's social identity, and not necessarily the most important one. Berber-Arab differences at the everyday level in Moroccan towns and villages, while certainly present, were contingent upon a host of intermediary factors.[12] For many, even most Moroccan Berbers, this may still hold true today. Nonetheless, a modern Berber-Amazigh ethno-cultural identity has not only gradually surfaced but compelled the Moroccan state to recognize it. In Algeria, by contrast, Kabyle Berbers (greatly assisted by their mostly France-based Diaspora) have long been in the vanguard of the modern Amazigh movement, and have taken on many of the attributes of a modern *ethnie*:

> A named unit of population with common ancestry myths and historical memories, elements of shared culture, some links with a historic territory and some measure of solidarity at least among [its] elites.[13]

As such, the 'Kabyle question' has been an integral part of Algeria's tortured post-colonial nation-building and state-building experience,[14] and in recent years has compelled the Algerian authorities to accord a measure of recognition to the Amazigh component of the Algerian national collective as well. Overall, as James McDougall notes, the emergence of the Amazigh current marks a new twist in the historical constructions of social identities in the Maghrib.[15]

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[11] H. Roberts, 'The Unforeseen Development of the Kabyle Question in Contemporary Algeria', *Government and Opposition* 17, 3 (Summer 1982), p. 334.

[12] L. Rosen, 'The Social and Conceptual Framework of Arab-Berber Relations in Central Morocco', in E. Gellner - Ch. A. Micaud (eds.), pp. 155-73.

[13] A. D. Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995, p. 59.

[14] For a detailed discussion of the Berber identity movement and Moroccan and Algerian state policies after independence, see B. Maddy-Weitzman, *The Berber Identity Movement and the Challenge to North African States,* University of Texas Press, Austin, 2011.

[15] J. McDougall, 'Histories of Heresy and Salvation: Arabs, Berbers, Community and the State', in Katherine E. Hoffman - Susan Gilson Miller (eds.), *Berbers and*

Morocco: Achievements, Limitations, and Rumblings in the Periphery

Morocco's 'Democracy Spring' protests during the initial months of 2011 attracted a broad range of participants across the political and social spectrum, including Amazigh activists who promoted an agenda which was both national and ethno-cultural in scope.[16] Keen to avoid the upheaval which was sweeping across the region, King Mohammed VI deftly gained control of the public agenda through the promotion of constitutional reform, a variety of material incentives, and specific acts of repression. Overall, the much ballyhooed reforms that ostensibly heralded a march towards parliamentary democracy were cosmetic only, leaving power almost entirely in the hands of the Palace. However, they had the desired effect of taking the wind out of the protestors' sails.[17]

Over the course of his 12-year reign, Mohammed VI had responded positively to the growing organized activities of the Amazigh identity movement, adopting a series of Amazigh-friendly measures designed, in part, to counter-balance a resurgent Islamist current and thus maintain control over the public sphere. These included the introduction of Tamazight into Moroccan schools, the gradual expansion of the Amazigh presence in the audio-visual media, and enshrining Amazigh culture as an important component of Moroccan national identity. At the same time, the process was hardly unilinear, and a substantive gap remained between symbol and substance. The program for teaching Tamazight in the schools was hastily inaugurated and poorly implemented; efforts to give new-born children Amazigh names continued to be blocked by state authorities; and illiteracy and poverty remained especially high in the rural Amazigh regions. Nonetheless, Amazigh activism spread to campuses and even rural areas; in the media sphere, and after much delay, an Amazigh television channel was established. All of this served as a backdrop to the events of 2011.

Others: Beyond Tribe and Nation in the Maghrib, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2010, pp. 15-38 (quotation on pp. 29-30).

[16] Á. S. Collado, 'The Amazigh Movement in Morocco: New Generations, New References of Mobilization and New Forms of Opposition', in *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 6 (2013), pp. 55-74.

[17] I. Fernández Molina, 'The Monarchy vs. the 20 February Movement: Who Holds the Reins of Political Change in Morocco?', in *Mediterranean Politics*, 16/3 (2011), pp. 435-441, DOI: 10.1080/13629395.2011.614120

From the outset of his proactive approach to the protests, Mohamed VI made clear his desire that the new constitution contain an Amazigh dimension. To that end, he appointed Prof. Lahcen Oulhaj, a militant proponent of Amazigh identity, to the constitutional subcommittee that drafted the relevant language. Oulhaj's input, which at one point included a threat to resign if his demands were not met, was decisive, and the subcommittee produced a draft text that fully equalized the status of Tamazight to Arabic. However, to Oulhaj's dismay, Palace officials watered it down before issuing the final version, which was quickly approved in a national referendum.[18]

For many activists, the Palace's maneuverings simply confirmed their deeply-ingrained cynicism regarding the authorities' true intentions, namely to undertake a pseudo-embrace of the Amazigh movement in order to co-opt and neutralize it. Nonetheless, from a broader perspective, the explicit recognition of Tamazight as an official language, and of the centrality of the Amazigh component of Moroccan identity, alongside the Arab-Islamic and Saharan-Hassanian ones, was nothing less than historic.[19] After all, the demand for official recognition had been the central tenet of the Amazigh movement for decades. Morocco was now the only North African state, and the only other core Arab League member state besides Iraq, in which Arabic was no longer the sole official language. As such it served as a model of emulation for Amazigh groups throughout North Africa.

Five years on, however, the Amazigh glass remained far from full. One of the encouraging elements of the new constitution was that it required the passage of an 'organic law' to translate the new official status of Tamazight into reality in education and other spheres of public life. However, nothing was done to that effect. Similarly, no movement had been taken to implement article 135, which called for the direct election of regional councils as part of an overall plan of enhanced regionalization. In the educational sphere, teaching Tamazight continues to suffer from grave flaws: in the words of Abdellah Bounfour, of the Centre de Recherche Berbère in Paris, these are connected to the broader problems with Morocco's underperforming education, the poor training of teachers of Tamazight, and the fact that the standardized Tamazight being used in

[18] Interview with Lahcen Oulhaj, Rabat, September 2011.

[19] For an English-language translation of the French-language text of the constitution, see http://www.constitutionnet.org/files/morocco_eng.pdf

the schools doesn't correspond to any of the dialects spoken by the children.[20] The language also lacked social capital, making parents reluctant to have their children invest time in learning it.[21] On the political level, the authorities remained resolutely opposed to anything that smacked of an explicit Amazigh political party, and occasionally used force to break up demonstrations and arrest activists. Of course, this was part of the authorities' overall modus operandi designed to have a chilling effect on independent minded social movements.

Only one anti-government protest in the early heady days of the 'Democracy Spring' protests ended with fatalities, in al-Hoceima, the coastal city in the country's northern Rif region. This was perhaps fitting, as the region has historically been among the most marginal and alienated from the country's political and cultural center, dating back to pre-colonial times. The short-lived Rifian Republic (1921-1926) that fought hard against the Spanish and French Protectorate regimes was viewed with suspicion and kept at arm's length by Moroccan Muslim elites gathered around the sultan's court in Fez, and the story of the revolt led by the gifted and charismatic Muhammad bin Abdelkrim al-Khattabi was largely effaced from the official national narrative propagated by the state after independence was achieved in 1956. So was the brutal repression by the Moroccan armed forces, commanded by Crown Prince (and future king) Hassan, of an uprising there in 1958-59. For decades afterwards, Hassan avoided visiting the region, and the palpable neglect and resulting alienation, as well as its proximity to Europe, rendered it an ideal place for illicit activities, particularly drug smuggling, money laundering and clandestine migration to the Mediterranean's northern shores. One of Mohamed VI's first acts as king was a very public visit bearing a message of reconciliation. Over the next decade, the Palace directed considerable attention and resources to the region, with the big-ticket item being the Tangier-Med port complex, designed to promote large-scale economic development and employment. It also employed with some success the tried and true methods of coopting

[20] http://www.al-fanarmedia.org/2015/07/the-berber-language-officially-recognized-unofficially-mar.

[21] M. Errihani, 'Language Attitudes and language use in Morocco: effects of attitudes on "Berber Language Policy"', in *The Journal of North African Studies*, 13/4 (December 2008), pp. 411-428.

new Rifian elites into the bosom of the *makhzen*,[22] creating another level of embitterment among Rifian militants.

The state's efforts notwithstanding, the memory of Abdelkrim and of the 1958-59 repression remained alive in the minds of generations of Rifians. Hence, the controlled liberalization of political life, the emergence of the Amazigh identity movement, and the king's own gestures towards the Rif, resulted in new expressions of collective Rifian identity The recovery of the history of Abdelkrim and his short-lived 'Rifian Republic' are central to these efforts, intimately connected to the themes of marginalization and identity denial which characterize the contemporary Berberist discourse. The fact that some of the participants in the renewal of Abdelkrim's legacy were themselves political dissidents who paid a heavy price during the 'Years of Lead' during the 1970s and 1980s adds a particularly poignancy and historical continuity to Rifian identity.[23]

Interestingly, the masthead of an online news publication, *Demain*, published abroad by a leading Moroccan opposition journalist, Ali Mrabet, indicated that Moroccan pro-democracy activists view Abdelkrim as a useful reference point. For a time, one side of the masthead was graced by an image of Muhammad VI, who is declaring that he is offering to Morocco a monarchical system according to his own measurements (*Je vous offre une monarchie faite à ma mesure*); on the other side is an image of Abdelkrim, who is replying that he already had a small republic in 1922 (*Mais moi, j'avais déjà ma petite république en 1922*). The juxtaposition constituted a cynical retort to the king's much-trumpeted constitutional reforms, which purport to devolve greater authority upon elected officials.

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[22] Á. S. Collado, 'Territorial Stress in Morocco: From Democratic to Autonomist Demands in Popular Protests in the Rif', in *Mediterranean Politics*, 2015. DOI: 10.1080/13629395.2015.1033908

[23] B. Maddy-Weitzman, 'Abdelkrim: Whose Hero is He? The Politics of Contested Memory in Today's Morocco', in *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, XVIII, Issue II (Spring/Summer 2012), pp. 141-49. Mohammed Nadrani, the child of poverty-stricken, illiterate Rifian peasants and the author of a colorful graphic novel–like book for children that depicts Abdelkrim's heroic struggles against the Spanish invader, was one such survivor of Hassan's gulag. He explained his decision to write the book thusly: 'For me, this part of our history has been erased, altered, and especially denied by those in power. We wanted to get rid of this history, erase the memory of our people. I say this with great modesty. We have to revive this history in order to safeguard the memory of our people'. 'Mohammed Nadrani : le dessin ou la folie', MSN, January 16, 2009
http://www.bdzoom.com/spip.php?article3884

In the wake of the initial 2011 protests and the Palace's determined efforts to keep the situation under control, protests in the Rif took on an increasingly local character separate from the protest movement in other parts of the country, even as the authorities successfully renewed its strategy of coopting some of the dissidents into the new palace-oriented PAM party, to the dismay of others. Nonetheless, raucous demonstrations in early 2012 in the al-Hoceima region highlighted anew the considerable degree of alienation from the state. Bearing flags of Abdelkrim's Republic, the protestors were forcefully interdicted by gendarmerie forces, whom the protestors viewed as oppressive outsiders. In a symbolic gesture, some activists managed to make their way to Abdelkrim's ruined headquarters and be photographed waving his flag from the rooftop. For the state, this was a red flag of a different sort.

In Ángela Suárez Collado's words, the latest developments in Rif confirm the notion of peripheries as dynamic and pluralistic structures with the potential to produce counter-hegemonic alternatives that challenge the center in the long term, rather than as being purely submissive spaces under a dominant core. A regional sense of belonging and degree of political commitment among Rifian youth has been further promoted by the way in which protests developed in the region. Regionalist demands are now being articulated by denser and more diverse mobilization structures, which include the large Rifian diaspora in Western Europe as well. Hence, various concepts and notions ranging from autonomy, regionalization, federalism and even independence are now more present in the public discourse than ever before. Although the realization of any genuine autonomy project remains beyond the horizon, its very articulation in the Rif is noteworthy. In that sense, it is following in the footsteps previously trodden by Kabyle militants. [24]

One of the serious shortcomings of the Amazigh movement in Morocco, and of Moroccan social and political movements in general, has been the disconnect between the urban-based organizations and activists, whose socio-cultural agenda is primarily ideological-discursive, and the poverty-stricken mostly Amazigh villages and towns of the mountains and valleys in the Moroccan periphery, who confront concrete health, economic, infrastructural and environmental problems on a daily basis. Sylvia I. Bergh and Daniele Rossi-Doria

[24] For details, see Collado, 'Territorial Stress in Morocco', 2015.

argue cogently that the February 20th movement's activists who spearheaded the initial democracy protests in February-March 2011 registered scant results in their efforts to mobilize rural populations behind them, as the latter didn't see the movement as being able to promote their interests.[25] I would argue that the converse is also true, namely that local protests in the peripheral regions have up until now failed to win the requisite sustained backing of wider sectors of Moroccan society in general, and that urban Amazigh associations, even when sympathizing with rural causes, lack the mass mobilizational capacity to have a major impact on specific issues. The authorities, for their part, are keen to maintain this disconnect, and use a variety of means to that end.

This disconnect, as well as increased militancy and determination among Amazigh youth in the periphery, was brought into sharp focus by an ongoing, 4-year grass-roots protest against an extremely valuable and profitable silver mine in the vicinity of Imider, a collection of seven villages, total population 7,000, in southeast Morocco, 130 km northeast of Ouarzazate. The mine is owned a subsidiary of Managem, the mining branch of the Société Nationale d'Investissement (SNI), a massive holding company whose largest shareholder is the Royal Family. For villagers, the mine is a symbol of how the state authorities and allied elites extract enormous wealth from their traditional lands, literally the ground underneath them, while leaving them struggling to eke out an impoverished existence. Moreover, the mine's operations required an enormous amount of water, which came at the expense of the locals' needs.

In examining the ways in which the protest is articulated, it is clear that the activists view their *Amazighité* as integral to their identity, and that the actions of the authorities, which included bringing in 'Arab' workers from outside the area instead of employing locals, were interpreted, at least partially, through an ethnic lens.[26] However, notwithstanding their efforts and determination, their struggle remained a local one, without sustained support from Amazigh groups

[25] S. I. Bergh - D. Rossi-Doria, 'Plus ça Change? Observing the Dynamics of Morocco's "Arab Spring" in the High Atlas', in *Mediterranean Politics*, 20/2 (2015), pp. 198-216, DOI: 10.1080/13629395.2015.1033900

[26] My research on the subject draws on published statements by the organizers and interviews with a number of activists.

elsewhere.[27] Similarly, the horrific floods in late November 2014 which caused the death of more than 50 persons and wreaked havoc on property and infrastructure in the country's southwest were widely viewed as another instance of the state's deliberate neglect of the Amazigh periphery, but generated only a 200-person protest in Casablanca (and a large police presence).

On both the discursive and grass-roots levels, identification with *Amazighité* has become more strident among youth. Suarez Collado points to the 'Kabylization' of Moroccan Amazigh activists, in admiration of the traditionally confrontationist posture vis-à-vis the Algerian state. This is expressed through 'a more extensive and radical repertoire of collective action, with an increase in micro-rebellions, sit-ins, boycotts, unauthorized meetings, marches and roadblocks, and a ritualization of protest as a way of identity'. In a similar vein, the active participation of the Nafusa Berbers in the Libyan uprising against the Qaddafi regime was eagerly followed by Moroccan Amazigh.[28] More recently, the clashes in the Berber-Arab violence in the Mzab region of Algeria (see below), has drawn their attention as well.

The seventh gathering of the World Amazigh Congress in Agadir, Morocco on July 24-26, 2015 highlighted the more radicalized, 'pan-discourse' that has evolved in recent years within the Amazigh current across North Africa. For the first time, the flags that were flown at the conference represented specific Amazigh regions (e.g. Kabylie, Chaaouia, Mzab, Nafusa and Canary Islands), and not the flags of the states of the various delegations (apart from host Morocco!). The newly elected president, a Kabyle woman, Kamira Nait Sid, an activist in the Movement for Self-Determination in Kabylie (MAK),[29] as well as various vice presidents were also denoted by their specific Amazigh communities, and not the countries of their passports (again, with Morocco excepted). The Algerian authorities were undoubtedly disturbed by the election of a MAK member as head, and no doubt

[27] For information on the protest, see the organizers' Facebook pages, https://www.facebook.com/Amussu.96Imider?fref=ts and https://www.facebook.com/MovementOnTheRoad96Imider?fref=ts

[28] Collado, 'The Amazigh Movement in Morocco', pp. 66, 70.

[29] The movement was founded in 2001 by long-time activist and singer-poet Ferhat Mehenni, advocating autonomy. It has since replaced 'autonomy' with 'auto-determination' in the organization's name. In 2010, Mehenni, ensconced in Paris, proclaimed the establishment of the Provisional Government of Kabylie.

concluded that the whole Congress was part of Morocco's efforts to manipulate the Amazigh question in a way which damaged Algerian interests. Not surprisingly, the organizers of the Congress were careful not to call Morocco's territorial integrity into question. Not only was the Moroccan flag flown, the highly symbolic and politically charged Rifian flag of Abdelkrim was conspicuous by its absence, creating outrage among some Rifian militants, who castigated the Congress as one more betrayal by those Amazigh activists willing to accommodate to the Moroccan *makhzen*'s demands.[30]

Algeria: Radicalization and Ethnic Conflict on the Periphery

Overall, Algeria stood out among North African states during the last five years as having avoided any serious challenge to the political status quo. To be sure, protests and confrontations of one sort or another with the security forces were an almost daily occurrence, fueled by both frustration over state neglect of basic services and a well-grounded belief in the hollowness of the regime's proclaimed plans for reform,[31] but they failed to crystallize into a broad-based opposition movement. The reasons for this failure were many, but the most fundamental one seemed to be the general reluctance to plunge the country back into the maelstrom of violence that had torn the country apart during the 1990s. The fact that the initial heady days of Arab Spring protests elsewhere had quickly given way to scenes of chaos and violence surely reinforced this reluctance.

The absence of sustained anti-regime protest was particularly noticeable in the Kabylie region, long the vanguard of the pan-Amazigh current as well as the traditional bastion of opposition to the Algerian state. While Kabyles proudly reminded outsiders that they had had their 'Spring' moment decades before the Arabs, in 1980, and had followed it up with an even more sustained confrontation with the authorities in 2001, activists failed to generate any large-scale protests this time around. But one can hardly conclude from this that Kabyle militancy

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[30] For details, see 'Sommet des peuples amaghis : l'ex Algérie symboliquement enterrée dans les instances du CMA (entretien avec Hocine Azem, vice-président pour le pays kabyle)' http://www.siwel.info/Sommet-des-peuples-Amazighs-L-ex-Algerie-symboliquement-enterree-dans-les-instances-du-CMA-Entretien-avec-Hocine-AZEM_a7708.html, and « Le Congrés Mondial Amazigh est-il contre le RIF ? », http://www.tabrat.info/p2153/.

[31] H. Roberts, 'Algeria's National "Protesta"', in *Foreign Policy*, January 10, 2011. http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/01/09/algeria_s_national_protesta.

and continued alienation from the Algerian state had diminished. Paradoxically, the opposite may well be the case. One indication of the continuing radicalization there was the October 2013 declaration by MAK's national council calling for a referendum on Kabylie self-determination and setting the establishment of a state as the ultimate goal, one that would be free from the 'Arab-Islamic yoke'.[32]

Meanwhile, six hundred kilometers to the south, simmering inter-ethnic tensions between Mzabi Berbers, who practice Ibadi Islam, and Chaamba (Sunni) Arabs burst forth in a series of violent episodes, beginning in 2008, the most serious of which, in the summer of 2015, left 25 Berbers dead, more than 50 injured, extensive property damage and an utterly poisoned atmosphere. The causes were multiple, a combination of local factors and state policies, and not based on any innate, unchanging ethnic or sectarian hostilities. Nonetheless, the ethnic factor now became the central reference point of their differences and decisively contributed to the unprecedented scale of violence. As such, it caught the attention of both the state authorities and Amazigh activists everywhere: the latter's response included calls for international action, including by the United Nations, to protect the Mzabi Berbers from 'persistent attacks on their physical security and the systematic destruction of their property and culture'.[33]

Historically, the Mzabi Berber communities constituted a tiny fraction of Algerian Berbers (approximately 30,000 at mid-century, c. 100,000-200,000 today). Their geographic isolation, social conservatism (women could not move away from the community) and Ibadi practice rendered them marginal to the larger forces weeping across the country.[34] Beginning in the mid-1950s, however, the expansion of state development policies, owing to the desire to exploit mineral resources in the region, led to an influx of population, disrupting the pastoral economy of the area's nomadic Chaamba Arabs, and compelling their settlement. Mzabi Berbers looked askance at the sudden, disruptive influx, and perceived the authorities as favoring the Chaamba Arabs, a view that was reinforced during the recent violence, in which the police were seen as supporting the Chaamba Arabs. Moreover, no efforts were made to create a unifying national narrative, leaving each community to argue over who had

[32] http://www.nationalia.info/en/news/1588

[33] 'Le Mzab en danger', Paris, le 27/06/2965 – 09/07/2015 Pour le Bureau Mondial du CMA, http://www.congres-mondial-amazigh.org/-/index.php

[34] E. A. Alport, 'The Mzab', in E. G. – Ch. A. Micaud (eds.), pp. 141-52.

been 'first' to settle, and thus 'own' the region, and over their respective actions during the Algerian war of independence (the Mzabis were accused by the Chaambis of being *harkis*, i.e. collaborators with France, although the author of what became the Algerian national anthem, Moufdi Zakaria, was a Mzabi, and the airport in the region's largest town, Ghardaia, is named after him).[35] By 2007, the Mzabi activist Kamaleddine Fekhar was calling for Mzabi autonomy. His incarceration in summer 2015 generated a wave of protests by Amazigh activists across the region and in the European Diaspora. The fact that he had had contact with Moroccan officials in the past made him a natural target for the Algerian authorities keen on blaming Morocco for the unrest.[36]

Libya and Azawad

Libya's long-marginalized Amazigh minority - 8-9% of the population, residing primarily in the Nafusa mountains and the coastal city of Zuwara in the northwest of the country – suddenly emerged on the public stage in 2011, thanks to their important supporting role in the armed struggle that toppled Mu`ammar Qaddafi's regime. Qaddafi's four decades of rule had been marked by almost unremitting repression of any expressions of collective Amazigh identity: his attitude was succinctly expressed in his 1985 statement that 'if your mother transmits you this language, she nourishes you with the milk of the colonialist, she feeds you their poison'.[37] Amazigh associations could only operate abroad: they routinely included Libya on its 'black list' of regimes, characterizing Qaddafi as practicing cultural and linguistic genocide against the Amazigh people. In 2007-08, Qaddafi had briefly toyed with a more Amazigh-friendly approach, but quickly reverted to his previous hostility. But the war opened up an entirely new chapter in Libyan Amazigh history. Even before Qaddafi's final fall, the disappearance of the state authorities in the Amazigh regions left a vacuum which activists quickly filled, bolstered by the

[35] M. Matarese, 'Algeria's Ghardaia: Old brothers, now enemies', http://www.middleeasteye.net/in-depth/features/gharda-old-brothers-now-enemies-133045489>

[36] 'Algerian PM Accuses Morocco of Fomenting Sectarian Clashes in Ghardaia', http://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2015/07/163204/algerian-pm-accuses-morocco-of-fomenting-sectarian-clashes-in-ghardaia/

[37] Quoted in K. Lee, 'The Amazigh's Fight for Cultural Revival in the New Libya: Reclaiming and Establishing Identity Through Antiquity', in *Seattle Journal for Social Justice,* 11/1 (July 1, 2012) p. 301.

legitimacy and new-found confidence provided by participation in the war. The Berber language was swiftly introduced into schools, anti-regime news broadcasts proudly displayed Amazigh symbols, and long-standing tribal differences apparently were subsumed, a key element in any effort to forge a modern *ethnie*. According to one resident of Yefren, the largest town in the Nefusa region:

> The revolution has brought us all together. We all had our tribal allegiances before, and it would be rare for anyone to eat from the same gasa'a (shared plate) as someone from another Amazigh town. Now Nalut, Kabaw, Jadu, Zintan, Yefren, al-Qalaa – we all eat in the same plate.[38]

In advancing their agenda for a post-Qaddafi Libyan order, Libyan Amazigh took inspiration from Morocco, seeking constitutional recognition of Amazigh identity as part of a democratic and multi-cultural regime. An initial draft constitutional charter did recognize 'the linguistic and cultural rights of all components' of Libyan society, and stating that minority languages would be considered 'national', even while leaving Arabic as the country's sole official language. However, this was hardly sufficient: the Paris-based 'Tamazgha' association quickly attacked the 'discriminatory' draft constitution as promoting an Arab-Islamic path for Libya in violation of the country's ancestral identity.[39] A later constitutional draft provided some small measure of recognition, expressing pride in all of Libya's social and cultural components 'represented by the Arabs, Amazigh, Tuaregs, Toubou, and others'.[40] But unlike in Morocco, this didn't translate into success, as the Libyan Amazigh did not possess anywhere near a critical mass in numbers or influence, and their often vocal efforts were shunted aside by the main factions competing to shape the new Libya.[41]

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[38] M. Zeiton, 'In liberated Libya in the Year 2961', www.guardian.co.uk, 6 August 2011.

[39] 'La dérive du CNT : un projet constitutionnel discriminatoire', www.tamazgha.fr, 24 août 2011.

[40] 'Libya - Initial Draft Constitution 2014 (English)', International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), 'Constitution Net'. http://www.constitutionnet.org/vl/item/libya-initial-draft-constitution-2014-english

[41] S. Youssef - J. Pack, 'Libyan Constitutionality and Sovereignty Post-Qadhafi: the Islamist, Regionalist, and Amazigh Challenges', in *The Journal of North African Studies*, 18/4 (2013), pp. 523-543.

As so often happens in times of civil strife and the breakdown of central authority, Libya's descent into civil war rendered Amazigh-Arab tensions more salient, particularly as the initial anti-Qaddafi alliance between Nafusa Berbers and neighboring Zintan Bedouin Arabs broke down.[42] And in a further indication of rising ethnic particularism, steps were taken to form a Libyan Amazigh Supreme Council, whose representatives would be elected by all Amazigh municipalities, which would be charged with defending the community's linguistic, cultural and political rights.[43] Although the word autonomy was not mentioned, one might well imagine it becoming part of the Libyan Amazigh discourse, particularly as various notions of federalism are increasingly being bandied about as possible remedies for Libya's fragmented post-Qaddafi order.

The one million-plus traditionally nomadic Tuaregs, living primarily in the Sahel regions of Mali and Niger, with an additional 100,000 in Algeria, and smaller numbers in Libya and Mauritania, present a paradox regarding modern Berber ethnicity. Although far away from the multi-cultural sophisticated urbanites of Morocco, Algeria and the Diaspora who make up the intellectual core of the Berber identity movement, the Tuareg symbolize linguistic, cultural and even genetic purity, the least influenced by outside factors, as well as the bearers and curators of the ancient Tifinagh script, an important symbol for modern Berber culturalists. As such, they lobbied international organizations and European governments to protect them in the face of repressive regimes in Mali and Niger. Ironically, it was the Tuaregs who in 2012 proclaimed the establishment of an independent ethno-national Berber state, Azawad, in northern Mali. For Berberists everywhere, it was a seminal moment, even if the circumstances of its establishment did not neatly fit into the overall liberal-secular narrative of the Berber identity movement, on a number of counts: Tuaregs mercenaries had been serving Qaddafi (the movement's bête noire); upon the collapse of the regime, a few thousand of them made their way to northern Mali, where they were

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[42] K. Zurutuza, 'Libya's Berbers fear ethnic conflict', Al-Jazeera English, January 6, http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/12/libya-berbers-fear-ethnic-conflict-201412306535319949 5.html; N. Pelham, 'Libya Against Itself', in *The New York Review of Books*, February 19, 2015. http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2015/feb/19/libya-against-itself/

[43] https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/africa/20431-libya-berber-to-form-supreme-council-to-defend-their-rights

joined by defectors from the Malian army, and proclaimed the establishment of Azawad. In turn, they were quickly pushed aside by Islamist radicals, some of whom were Tuaregs themselves and had fought together with the Azawad/Tuaregs leadership against the Malian authorities in earlier decades. In the end, French military intervention chased the Islamists into the Saharan wastes, but the future of Mali and the place of the Tuaregs in the region remained an open question.

Concluding Thoughts

Ten years ago, I asked Dr. Abdelmalik Ousadden, one of the doyens of the Moroccan Amazigh identity movement,[44] what he thought the future might hold. His measured, but optimistic response was that the movement was only at its very beginning: 'I don't know where it's going, but I know that it's going in the right direction'.[45] Dr. Oussaden passed away at the age of 86 in early 2014. I suspect that were I able to pose the question again, his answer would be the same. Five years after the North African 'Spring' moment, Amazigh ethnicity seems to be more salient than ever. The Moroccan state has officially recognized it as an integral component of the country's national identity, even if the implementation of this recognition remains limited, while pan-Amazigh and more localized aspects of Berber ethnicity have become significant for communities including the Rifians in the north of Morocco, the Nafusa Berbers in Libya, the Mzabis in Algeria, and the Sahelian Tuaregs. Even in Tunisia, where the number of Berber-speakers is only 1%, efforts are being made to recognize the country's Amazigh heritage. With genuine liberalization and democratization not on the horizon, an increasingly militant discourse that has a separatist bent is being displayed in Kabylie, and radiating outwards. Amazigh cultural expressions, in the fields of music, poetry and dance are flourishing, aided by social media, youtube and other forms of mass communication that have contributed to the deepening of Berber collective imagining across the globe.

At the same time, the authoritarian Algerian and Moroccan states maintain a preponderance of power, and are interested more in containing than addressing Amazigh grievances. The mass mobilization capacity of the Amazigh current remains limited. And radical Islamism

[44] M. El Manouar, *L'amazighte en devenir… legs de l'un de ses vétérans: feu dr. Ousadden,* Imprimerie Maarif al Jadida, Rabat, 2015.

[45] Interview with Dr. Ousadden, conducted in Fez, February, 12, 2006.

has shown itself to be attractive to young Berbers as well, to the dismay of the overwhelmingly secular Amazigh movement activists.

Taken together, these developments pose major challenges to North African states, joining the host of issues which the authoritarian regimes of Morocco and Algeria need to address in order to 're-contract' and re-legitimize themselves in the eyes of their restive publics, while in Libya and Mali, the issue is whether or not a functioning state framework, unitary or federal, can even be reestablished. In any case, the political and cultural space in North Africa is more open and contested than at any time since the end of the colonial era, and Berber ethnicity, in all of its varieties and permutations, has achieved a degree of significance that Gellner did not anticipate.

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http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/12/libya-berbers-fear-ethnic-conflict-201412306535319949 5.html