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**Towards a Sociology of Insurgency:**  
Anti- versus Counter-State Building Jihad  
in Colonial Morocco's Atlas and Rif Mountains

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**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** This paper builds off two chapters about rural resistance movements in my first book manuscript, *Making Morocco: Colonial State-Building and the Struggle to Define the Nation*. In this paper I am testing the theoretical and methodological groundwork for the next larger study tentatively titled *Interwar Imperialism and Insurgency*. A major goal is to relativize the seemingly apparent normative logic of the territorial modern state by examining a critical hinge moment of contingency in its historical development, the decade after the postwar map was drawn at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. During the 1920s, European imperial powers attempted a massive "enclosure movement" (Scott 2009) across North Africa and the Middle East, attempting to realize the postwar map on the ground. In these efforts to eliminate non-state space in territories put under their control, French, British, Spanish, and Italians state-builders all faced fierce tribal insurgencies in Morocco's Atlas and Rif ranges, Libya's Cyrenaica, Syria's Jbel Druze, and the Kurdish highlands of Iraq (with Ataturk dealing with Eastern Anatolia). The study will work out different typologies of anti-state and counter-state building resistance, differentiating the social and physical resources, networks, military strategies, and ideologies expressed in these movements. This will include an analysis of "insurgency" from below that includes the voices, subjectivities, and agencies of these actors. One of the more broader theoretical aims is not just to work out how to do a sociology of insurgency, but also how to do it with an ethical reflexivity in light contemporary concerns about "threats" emanating from non-state spaces in almost exactly these same geographies.

In a post-9/11 context in which the threat of non-state actors exploiting geographical niches of non-state space (i.e. Afghanistan/Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, Libya, and northern Mali) is perceived as a preeminent security concern, there is an urgent theoretical and practical need for studying the dynamics of insurgency. While it has received attention in other disciplines, insurgency has rarely, if ever, been constructed as an object of analysis within sociology (Bourdieu 1992). This paper sketches out an approach that builds off the strengths of the historical and comparative sociological tradition and emphasizes three additional dimensions: spatiality, subalternity, and reflexivity. In terms of the latter, it seeks to avoid employing an implicitly state-centric normative lens, which frequently makes the study of insurgency a *de facto* exercise in counter-insurgency. In avoiding a state-oriented teleological bias in analyzing

actors, networks, institutions, geography, and historical sequences, I also attempt to resist a temptation in the opposite direction by over-generalizing strategic anti-stateness (Scott 2009).

To flesh this approach out, the paper considers two similar empirical cases in North Africa, comparing anti-colonial resistance from Berber-speaking tribal groups in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century against French pacification operations in the Atlas Mountains (1911-1934) and the Spanish military conquest of the Rif Mountains (1911-1926). Drawing largely on an under-utilized archival base of oral poetry, I examine how insurgency was framed, mobilized, experienced, and contested from within these subaltern, rural communities during this period of colonial military conquest. From this analysis, I argue for a more nuanced typology of “insurgency” that allows for both *anti-state* resistance seeking to protect local/regional autonomy from forms of state control and *counter-state* resistance that itself involves state-building in order to protect regional autonomy from external state controls.

## **The Theoretical and Policy Context for the Study of Insurgency**

### *Beyond a State-Centric Sociological Paradigm*

The state has formed a central theme of inquiry within sociology from its foundational period, particularly within the works of Marx and Weber. The state was “brought back in” after a mid-century period of society-centered scholarship, receiving invigorated emphasis by a “second wave” (Adams, Clemens, Orloff 2005) generation of neo- and post-Marxist scholars in the 1970s-80s interested in the material and conflict-oriented factors involved in early modern European state-formation, or the inverse question of revolutions (Tilly 1975; Evans, Rueschemeyer, Skocpol 1985; Tilly 1992). A more recent cultural turn has integrated Foucauldian (Gorski 2003; Mitchell 1988, 1991), Bourdieusian (Steinmetz 2007, Go 2008), and neo-Weberian (Adams 2005) approaches to the state, but the theoretical horizon of this literature remains deeply influenced by a teleological and normative focus on the ontogeny of the modern state.

In general, North American sociologists have left the study of non-state governed peoples to anthropologists, roughly following a metropolitan/periphery division of labor. The French and British, however, employed a much less clear division, particularly in the colonial era when “sociologists” did significant ethnographic fieldwork abroad. This is particularly true in North Africa, where French colonial sociology (Burke 2007, Burke & Prochaska 2008, Goodman & Silverstein 2009, Abi-Mershed 2010) flourished in the aftermath of the conquest of

Algeria begun in 1830 and later expansion into Tunisia (1881) and Morocco (1912). Due to the exigencies of colonial rule, the central research question for both colonial historians and social scientists concerned North Africa's political ecosystem. Colonial historiography legitimated French intervention by chronicling the chronic weakness of the North African state, or *makhzan*. Colonial sociology, particularly in Morocco, focused on "dissident" tribal groups in the interior that the military was trying to euphemistically pacify or, later, to administer.

The dean of this colonial school was Robert Montagne, the French analogue to Evans-Pritchard's (1940) structural-functionalist approach to tribal segmentation in the Sudan, who produced a masterpiece on Berber tribal organization in the High Atlas (1930) that became a practical manual for colonial administrators in Morocco. Later generations replicated many of these themes, from Gellner's (1969) study of segmentary opposition and the mediatory role of the High Atlas Ahansal saints to the much more reflexive studies of Jacque Berque (1955) on the social structures of the High Atlas and Bourdieu's studies of Kabyle society (1962). With all of these studies, North Africa's historically autonomous social groups were analyzed when they were about to be, were being, or had recently been forcibly subjected to the control of the colonial state.

### *Beyond a Counter-Insurgency Framework*

This state-oriented horizon also typifies the recent upsurge of interest in insurgency in the wake of interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, which is driven by market interests linked to the projection of American power in geographies deemed critical to national security. Much of this scholarship has been produced within the military itself and has been directly shaped by concrete tactical, strategic, and policy-oriented questions facing decision-makers. For instance, in the aftermath of the Iraq invasion, a coterie of counterinsurgency (COIN) theorists under General David Petraeus articulated a new military doctrine, coalesced in the 2006 Counterinsurgency Manual (Sewall, Nagl, Petraeus, Amos 2007), that laid out a more general strategic reorientation towards the exigencies of irregular warfare, the administrative demands of occupation, and the importance of so-called "hearts and minds"-oriented, population-centric, nation building. Since 9/11, a corollary ecology of insurgency and terrorism studies has thrived including the Beltway think tank world,<sup>1</sup> a vast online counterinsurgency

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<sup>1</sup> RAND has published numerous studies on insurgency (Galula 2006; Hoffman 2004; Jones 2008; Connable & Libicki 2010; Paul 2011).

forum,<sup>2</sup> and, within the academic world, a proliferation of “security studies” programs on one side and more theoretically oriented disciplinary subfields focused on violence and order.<sup>3</sup>

Because of the policy-oriented market pull, “insurgency” is constructed as a derivative problem of other goals related to stabilization and security. The macro-socio-political context or presuppositions built-in to the very act of categorizing certain activity as “insurgent” remain under- or unexamined. Another distortionary trend is the convergence of insurgency/counter-insurgency and terrorism/counter-terrorism, as the Bush-era Global War on Terror (GWOT) has morphed into a long war against Global Islamic Insurgency/Jihad (Scheuer 2004; Kilcullen 2009; Gates 2009). Within this paradigm, the uncritically accepted central problematic revolves around a perceived security threat of global terrorism/insurgency coordinated and launched from geographic niches in which there is a plurality, rather than a state monopoly, on the use of force.

In a recapitulation of earlier imperial eras, the U.S. and select other western powers are again involved in or contemplating military intervention, or small wars, to deal with this threat in a geography traversing the Muslim world from North Africa to South Asia. The concern in a list of cases including Libya, Mali, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Afghanistan, and northwest Pakistan is that a breakdown or absence of central state control will allow for a synergy between local/regional and transnational *jihadi* actors. The maximalist intervention option of “boots on the ground” occupations and “nation-building” seems to be on the wane, but the alternative, a long-war attritional strategy of “surgical strikes” through drone attacks and special forces activities, has become entrenched under the Obama administration.

Nevertheless, these tactical stop-gap measures do not represent a coherent strategic framework for dealing with a multi-polar global topography of power that simply does not fit an imagined interstate paradigm of sovereign, Weberian, territorial nation-states. On pragmatic, theoretical, and methodological grounds—a fresh approach towards the phenomenon labeled “insurgency” is clearly needed that challenges the normative assumptions built in to policy-oriented, and most disciplinary, perspectives about state formation and maintenance processes.

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<sup>2</sup> This includes the Small Wars Journal ([www.smallwars.com](http://www.smallwars.com)); blogs including abumuqawama.com, [insurgencyresearchgroup.wordpress.com/](http://insurgencyresearchgroup.wordpress.com/), and critics like tomdispatch.com; and online resources including IHS Jane’s and Statfor Global Intelligence.

<sup>3</sup> At Yale, we can see both sides represented in the “security track” of the Jackson Institute on the policy side and the Order, Violence, and Conflict program on the theoretical.

## *Towards a Sociology of Insurgency*

In moving towards a sociology of insurgency, the point is not to eschew the state as an object of inquiry (quite the opposite) but to offer a means of moving “beyond statist approaches” (Mitchell 1991) by relativizing state forms of territorial organization and social control and recapturing contingencies related to state building/maintaining processes. Shifting the focus to insurgency, which represents the friction point of these processes, creates counterfactual space from which to account for alternate modes of agency and political organization. A sociology of insurgency also opens up space from which to critique sociology itself, exposing how many of the discipline’s core theoretical assumptions have been closely wedded to the project of metropolitan and colonial state-building.

The provisional research agenda I propose for a sociology of insurgency incorporates five features: the historical, comparative, spatial, subaltern, and reflexive. A *historical* and *comparative* approach (even when dealing with contemporary cases) is intended to destabilize the normative and presentist blinders described above by exposing both *longue durée* continuities and important variations in state and non-state social and political forms. The *spatial* emphasis recognizes fundamental linkages between geography, topography, ecology and political and social forms of organization, particularly in accommodating and resisting various forms of state territoriality. To counter sociology’s tendency to privilege power-holding actors and institutions, a *subaltern*, bottom-up approach incorporates the multiple agencies and voices of non-elites, particularly the non-state actors involved in insurgencies. Finally, a sociology of insurgency requires a high degree of *reflexivity* that accounts for, or at least wrestles with, the positionality of the observer in terms of objectivity, but importantly in view of the frequently imperial relations of power involved in the very act of studying insurgency (Guhin and Wyrzten, forthcoming).

In this paper, this five-fold approach is applied to two empirical cases of insurgent mobilization in Protectorate Morocco, the *jihād* mobilized by Berber-speaking tribal groups against the French conquest in the Atlas Mountain ranges between 1911-1934 and against the Spanish conquest of the Rif between 1911-1926. This study highlights typological variations among insurgencies, and it also constitutes an historiographical intervention in recapturing the historical agency and vocality of marginalized rural actors whose record has either been ignored or co-opted by nationalist teleological histories. It integrates key primary sources,

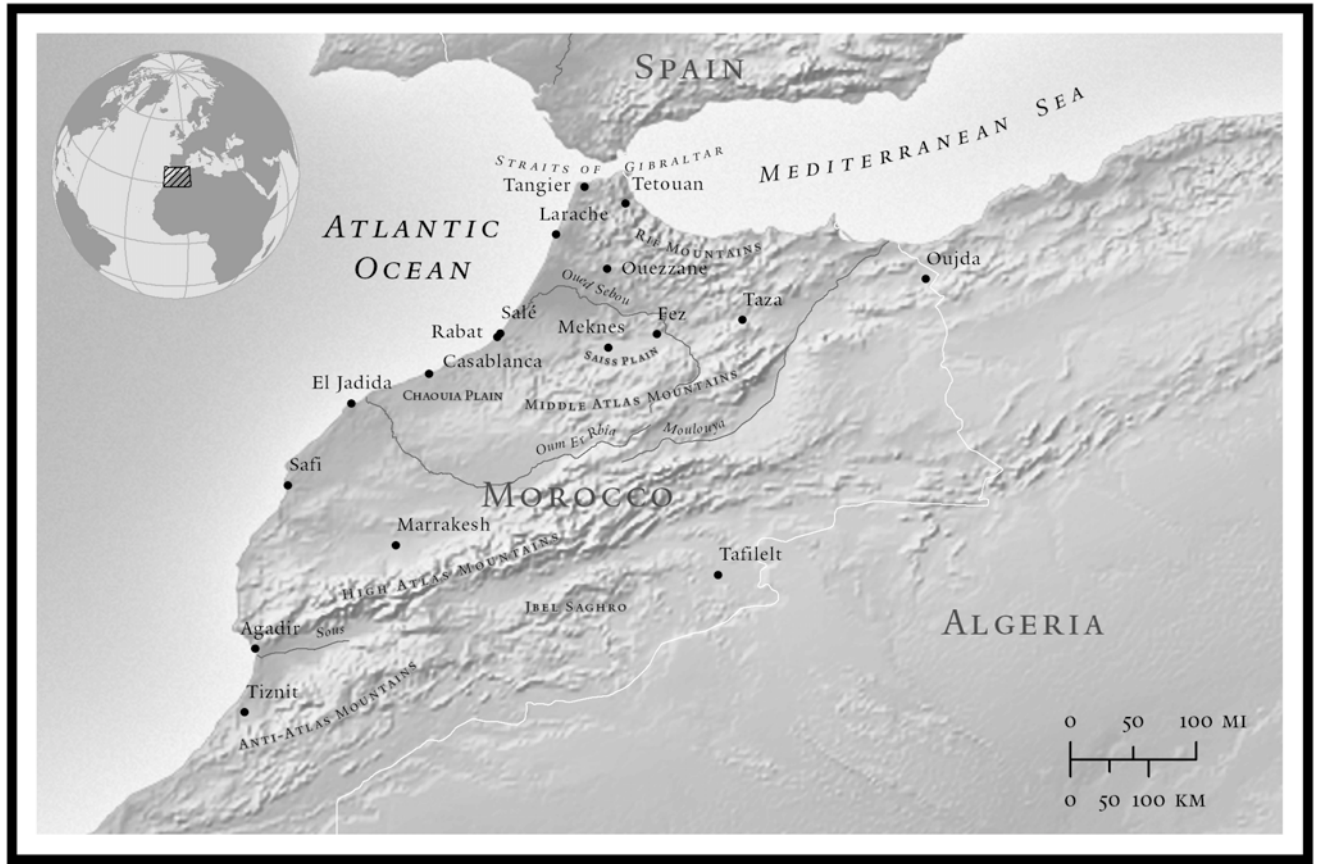
Berber poetry collected synchronically with phases of the colonial pacification, to analyze how these communities viewed European military intervention, framed and coordinated jihad, struggled over choosing resistance or submission, experienced modern warfare, and rationalize the ultimate failure of their insurgency. The conclusion addresses the relevance of these findings to the contemporary context in terms of questions of Western intervention, state formation processes, resistances and topographies of control in the region, and the perils of producing knowledge about insurgency in the present moment.

### **Protectorate State-Building and Anti-Colonial Resistance in Morocco (1907-1934)**

#### *State and Non-State Space in North Africa in the Longue Durée*

One of the continuous dilemmas of state-formation in Morocco is the challenge posed by its geography, which makes various regions of the country physically more and less accessible, and thereby legible, to the state (Scott 1999, 2009). Slightly larger than California, Morocco, like other Mediterranean landscapes, contains a wide range of topographies and climates in close proximity. The major feature of Morocco's geography is its mountain ranges. A series of three Atlas ranges—the arid Anti-Atlas; the snow covered High Atlas (reaching 4,165 meters/13,665 feet at Jbel Toubkal), and the cedar forested Middle Atlas—transverse the country diagonally from the south and west to the north and east. A fourth range, the Rif, stretches like a crescent along the Mediterranean coast, with peaks exceeding 2000 meters/6500 feet. These ranges divide the Atlantic coast and central plains from Sahara to the south and catch moist currents from the ocean, which falls as rain or snow then runs back through several rivers to the Atlantic and via the Moulouya River to the Mediterranean.

State space is most easily consolidated in the arable, lowland areas to the northeast where taxable, fixed agricultural goods like grains, olives, and wine were produced and military force, through cavalry and infantry, could much more easily be projected. The interior highlands and southern deserts, in contrast, tended to remain much more autonomous from the tax gathering and conscription activities of the state due to transhumant practices, physical distance from the center, and elevation. These areas constituted a fluctuating zone of non-state space, depending on the strength of the central government.



**Figure 1 Physical Map of Northwest Africa**

*Ibn Khaldun and James Scott*

This non-state zone encompassing North Africa’s mountain ranges and deserts constitute a rough equivalent to the Zomia massif in Southeast Asia described by Scott (2009), providing topographic and ecological shelter from state penetration. But, there are important distinctions. Though tribal groups inhabiting these regions did enjoy evasatory advantages, they also had dense cultural and economic interactions with the lowlands. In fact, it is actually the close *political* interaction between proximate state and non-state zones that has patterned recurrent cycles of state formation in this region, particularly in Morocco.

This pre-colonial political environment is most incisively analyzed by the 14<sup>th</sup> century North African scholar, Ibn Khaldun, in his celebrated work, *al-Muqaddimah*.<sup>4</sup> In contrast to the model proposed by Scott for Zomia—where segmentary kinship organization, pastoralism,

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<sup>4</sup> “The Introduction,” to his universal history, *Kitab al-Ibar*. Chapter 2 of *al-Muqaddimah* concerns the organization of tribal society, Chapter 3 is about the bases of royal authority, and Chapter 4 examines the conditions of urban civilization.

mobile swidden agriculture, and orality/illiteracy constitute a repertoire for strategic evasion of the state—for Ibn Khaldun, this same set of practices also ironically constitute the secret sauce for state formation. In Ibn Khaldun’s model, the engine that drives cyclical wheel of state formation is raw *‘asabiyah*, or group solidarity, which can only be found among Bedouin, kinship-based social groups inhabiting non-state peripheries. When mobilized by a charismatic leader, this solidarity can help one group dominate others and thereby establish political authority. Ibn Khaldun goes on to explain that this produces a cyclical historical process because *‘asabiyah*, or solidarity, eventually wanes. The necessities of governing require incorporating individuals and groups outside of the tribe, the dynastic family consolidates power and wealth in its own hands, and the pleasures of urban life make the ruling family soft. The declining dynasty is eventually replaced by another peripheral tribe with stronger solidarity and military strength. Ibn Khaldun uses this model to explain the rise and fall of civilizations from the Greek, Roman, and Arab empires to the more contemporary (to him) great Berber Almoravid, Almohad, and Merenid dynasties in the Western Mediterranean.

In this pre-colonial political ecosystem, states rarely, if ever, exercised anything close to a Weberian territorial monopoly of force. Instead, state and non-state space coexisted in close proximity and formed a political symbiosis, with state-building dynasties both relying on and being threatened by tribal military potential. In Arab historiography, these two dimensions of the political environment were labeled *blad al-makhzan* (the land of government) and *blad al-siba* (the land of dissidence). In the pre-modern period, the land of the *makhzan*, or “tax chest land,” can most easily be understood simply as the areas where taxes could be collected and the land of *siba* where they could not. While the *makhzan* was often (but not always) the strongest entity in a given territorial field, it continually had to negotiate with other urban and rural power holders. State space was thus in constant flux with tribes submitting to or resisting taxation and military service depending on a shifting calculus of factors related to the punitive capacity of the state and their own self-interests.

### *The Colonial Rupture: From Limited to Total Pacification*

The advent of the colonial state in North Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> century radically altered this pre-colonial dynamic notion of state territoriality. The French first began to transform political space in Algeria in the 1840s, with the brutal *razzia* campaigns perfected by Bugeaud that achieved a near monopolization of the use of force in Algerian territory by the 1870s and in



Tunisia in the 1880s. Morocco was spared the late 19<sup>th</sup> colonial 'scramble for Africa' due to internal tensions among European powers over control of the strategic southern edge of the Straits of Gibraltar. But, after a series of diplomatic agreements including the 1904 Anglo-French Entente Cordiale, France expanded into Morocco in 1907. The 1912 Treaty of Fes formally instituted a protectorate framework of colonial rule in which the French pledged to ensure economic development, put down tribal insurgency, and carry out state building on behalf of the Moroccan sultan, who remained nominally sovereign.

Over the next two decades, the French and the Spanish (who were delegated control over a northern zone and enclaves in the far south) alternated between policies of limited and total pacification in Morocco. For the French, the initial goal was to secure the coastal areas and central plains (which included Morocco's urban centers), particularly the lateral corridor east from Rabat through Fez and Taza to French Algeria. Between 1907-14, they successfully pacified resistance in these areas and pushed south into the Middle Atlas, quelling Berber tribes that threatened this axis of transport and communication. After World War I, a second stage of limited pacification was launched in the Middle and High Atlas to secure a buffer around what the first French Resident General, Hubert Lyautey, labeled *Maroc utile*, or "useful Morocco." By 1922, the French had split the Atlas *zone de dissidence* in half, leaving isolated pockets of "unsubmitted" tribes in the *inutile* areas of the High Atlas and in the Saharan fringe.

In the northern zone, the Spanish conquest followed a similar trajectory, starting with a much more limited pacification inland from its enclaves on the coasts. Through the war, virtually all of the interior mountainous regions in the Spanish zone—the Jbala, Ghomara, and Rif—remained autonomous. After the war, the Spanish prioritized total pacification, the first step of which was to link their enclaves in the east and west. Operations in the west successfully subdued the Jbala, and troops in the east aggressively pushed from Melilla westward into the Rif. In early June, the main tribe blocking this westward campaign, the Ait Waryaghar, began to attack frontline outposts. In late July, a general attack was launched on the overextended Spanish lines, and in the Anoual battle, the Spanish were routed in the worst defeat of a European colonial power in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, losing over 13,000 lives, 20,000 rifles, 400 machine guns, 129 cannons, large quantities of ammunition, and large quantities of canned food (Ayache 1981: 147; Pennell 1986: 91). Though the Spanish regained up to the foothills of the Rif that fall, it took five more years, and the entry of the French on their side in 1926, to ultimately subdue the Rif state under 'Abd al-Krim that was formed in the aftermath of Anoual.

After the Rif War, the French initially settled back into the “*Maroc utile*” status quo, but reprioritized total pacification in the late 1920s due to raiding activity from the High Atlas, the Tafilelt oasis, and the Jbel Saghro and because French military planners were eager to transfer troops from Morocco to stave off the rising German threat. The grand strategy was to encircle the resisting tribal confederations in the High Atlas by cutting a route east from Ouarzazate across the Draa, Dades, and Todra valleys to the northern Tafilelt and on to the border with Algeria at Bou Denib that allowed them to rapidly transport troops. Each summer, mobile units were dispatched in pincer movements from Marrakesh, Meknes, and from the Algerian border, and by 1933 the High Atlas and Tafilelt had been subdued. In 1934, the ‘Ait Atta strongholds in the Jbel Saghro and the Anti-Atlas were finally subdued, completing a hundred year enclosure movement in North Africa. . The following sections shift away from the state and recenter on tribal resistance, or “insurgency.”

### **Anti-State Jihad in the Atlas Mountains**

In the French zone, the multiple Atlas ranges—the Middle Atlas, the High Atlas, and the Anti-Atlas—constituted the primary obstacle to a complete extension of state space. As was discussed above, the populations in these regions are a mixture of transhumant (primarily north-south migration in the Middle Atlas from summer highland pastures to lowland areas where they practiced shifting cultivation of grain) and settled populations (in the more isolated valleys of the High Atlas). They are linguistically distinct from the more Arabophone lowlands, speaking the Tamazight and Tashelhit dialects of Berber. In the pre-colonial period, many of these tribes asserted near-total autonomy, though at times, they could provided the military backbone of the *makhzan*, receiving tax exemptions and other symbolic or economic favors for serving as *jaysh*, or army, tribes. The rare times the *makhzan* would project power directly into these regions occurred in the form of the *mahalla*, a mobile court that would travel through the countryside collecting taxes (often through pillage) and mediating disputes. The entry of French troops on the Atlantic coasts and from the Algerian border in 1907, which these tribes were highly aware of, created a new threat, a “Christian” *makhzan*, which, in the name of the sultan, steadily began encroaching on their lands.

### *Shifting to the Oral Archive*

“If only one possessed all the couplets, with their political and social commentary, invented and sung since the start of the century or earlier, one would have a most vivid account of the social history of the Atlas imaginable” (Gellner 1969:94)

To tell the story of the Atlas resistance on its own terms requires a shift from the standard base of colonial and nationalist written sources, but, as Ernest Gellner laments, the challenge is that these illiterate groups do not typically leave a parallel source repository. What Gellner did not know, however, is that a unique collection of Tamazight oral poetry actually had been gathered in the Atlas during this period. The most extensive collection is the *Fond Roux*.<sup>5</sup> Arsène Roux was a French soldier reassigned from Algeria to serve as an interpreter during the first wave of the pacification in the Middle Atlas in 1913. He later ascended to multiple educational directorships in Azrou and Rabat, but throughout his forty-year tenure, he collected Berber poetry personally and through numerous Moroccan assistants who fanned out to transcribe this oral literature in a Latin-script form of Tamazight. The poems represent a unique primary source from tribal groups whose own voices are rarely heard in the historiography. Also, the geographic and chronological breadth and the synchronicity of the collection with the events described in the poems (as opposed to an oral history collected years later) make it an invaluable source base for a subaltern analysis of anti-colonial resistance.<sup>6</sup>

In its production and performance, North African poetry, like that of other oral cultures, constitutes a highly public, often interactive, discourse.<sup>7</sup> This genre of oral literature functioned within the community as a shared discursive space in which a wide range of content—from the intimate to social, political, and theological matters—was disseminated. The medium contains a strong editorial dimension, as poets process, interpret, and didactically comment on society

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<sup>5</sup> This archive is located at IREMAM in Aix-en-Provence, France. This study draws on published poems (Stroomer & Peyron 2003; Roux 2002; Stroomer 2001, 2003, 2007) and unpublished poems from this archive collected during field work in 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Notes typically indicate the author and/or the tribe from which they originated; where, when, and by whom the poems were collected; and the genre and explanatory notes about the context and performance are also frequently included. The distortionary impact involved collecting and transcribing the poems, including self-censorship by the author, is difficult to assess, but it seems the poets felt free to relate a wide range of perspectives, including sharp criticism of the French. The meticulous concern for a faithful rendering of the lyric by both performer and collector indicates these offer a relatively reliable record of poems in circulation.

<sup>7</sup> The importance of poetry in North African oral history is also demonstrated in A. Heggoy’s book on poetry (1986) collected by French scholars following the Algerian conquest. On the varied use by colonialists and nationalists of Kabyle oral texts as signs of social difference in Algeria, see Jane Goodman (2002). On the prominence of oral performance in contemporary urban and rural Arabic-speaking societies, see Cachia (1989), Abu-Lughod (1986), Caton (1990), and Shryrock (1997).

and current events. As Hoffman observes in her analysis of women's use of Tashelhit poetry in the Souss, "collective identity is publicly displayed in these contexts, in contrast to the practices of concealing knowledge prevalent in other discursive domains" (2002:528).

Poems were chanted or sung in the course of everyday activities (by women grinding grain for example) and in a wide range of group contexts including weddings and feasts. They were also disseminated far beyond the local level by *imdyazen* (sing. *amdyaz*), or wandering bards, whom one scholar has labeled the "rural intellectuals" of the Atlas (Jouad 1989). The *imdyazen* traveled with a troupe, performing in encampments during the spring and early summer before returning home for the harvest. Their itineraries traversed the Tamazight-speaking bloc, from the oases in the Saharan south over the Atlas Mountains to the plains around Meknes and Fes, linking rural regions and also linking city and countryside. In the course of their travels, *imdyazen* relayed news about the state of crops, herds, and, most significantly, after 1907, the progress of the *irumin*, or Christians, invading the country.

#### *Framing and Organizing the Atlas Jihad (1907-1934)*

As a repository of public discourse, these poems provide an unparalleled window into the internal dynamics of Atlas tribal communities faced with an unprecedented expansion of state power into their daily lives. A dominant theme is the question of *jihad*, or defensive holy war against the colonial state. This question was tied to a wide range of issues including perceptions of legitimate Islamic authority; attitudes about the sultan and the obligations of the tribes to defend the *ummah*, or Muslim community; and debates about the implications of submitting to a "Christian" *makhzan*. Jihad in the colonial context was also directly relevant to existential realities including hunger, starvation, and the brutality of modern warfare, and more esoteric questions about eschatology, theodicy, and collective identity.

As described above, the pacification progressed from 1911-34 from north in the Middle Atlas south up into the Central High Atlas. Different organizational strategies were employed during these stages, with resistance/submission negotiated at the sub-tribal, individual tribal level, and periodically at the level of larger tribal coalitions. From 1911-13 with the first French penetration into the Saiss plain around Fez and the foothills of the Middle Atlas, tribes including the Ait Ndhir, Gerwan, Ait Segrouchen, and parts of the Ait Njild coordinated a coalitional response that, despite early successes, could not sustain resistance against the Franco-Moroccan *makhzan* forces (Burke 1976). This temporary alliance among roughly equal

tribal chiefs represented a sort of punctuated coalitional coordination among tribal groups manifested earlier in the southeast with the ‘Ait Atta and Dawi Mani’ alliance in the Tafilelt region in 1903 (Dunn 1977) and repeated in the final resistance against the French in High Atlas in the late 1920s/early 1930s. While sometimes remarkably successful in the short run, these confederations fell apart over time, as individual tribes, or subfractions of tribes, would break off and submit to the colonial state.

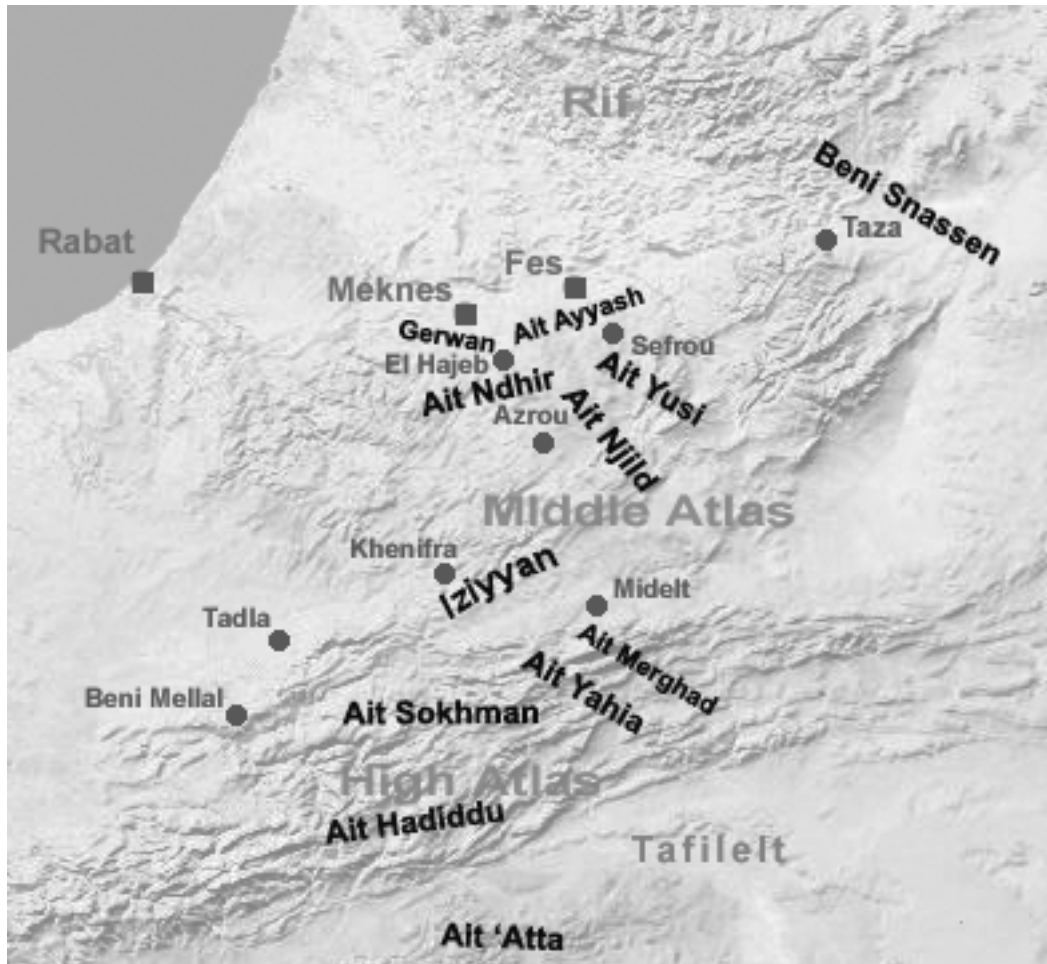


Figure 2 Map of Tamazight-speaking tribes appearing in poems. Created by the author and adapted from “Carte des Tribus du Maroc 1933,” Residence Generale du France au Maroc, Carton 3H 308, Service Historique de la Defense-Chateau de Vincennes.

Analyzing the content of poems generated by tribes continuing the jihad, tribes that had submitted, and even by those conscripted into the colonial army as partisans or regular soldiers, or *goumiers*, presents a fascinating window into the Atlas ‘insurgency’ and its evolution over time. Early poems composed as the French began moving into Morocco reveal the complex relationship between these supposedly “*siba*” non-state groups and the central

government, metonymically and concretely represented in the person of the sultan. Poems from the Ait Ndhir, whose territory encompasses both plain and mountains, refer to the 1912 Treaty of Fes as a bill of sale and rebuke the Sultan for selling the country to the French, who are consistently referred to as *irumin*, or Christians. One poet, l-Haj Asusi, chides the 'Alawite monarchy, saying: "The Christians have formed their columns and have risen against us from 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."<sup>8</sup> The poet interprets the treaty as a *jaysh* agreement in which the sultan sold off his rights to the fertile western plains to the French in exchange their help subduing the troublesome mountain tribes.

These early poems also demonstrate a complex solidarity, however, with "land of government" being invaded by the French. The following poem demonstrates the Middle Atlas-based poet's clear awareness of the encroaching invasion from the Atlantic coast: "The Christian is coming / He has built outposts in the middle of Zaer country [inland from Rabat] / He has planted his flags over the city of Fes / And he has stretched out his hands to conquer other territories and other riches."<sup>9</sup> Another laments the fall of Morocco's major cities to the *irumin*: "O red city! O Dar Debbibagh!<sup>10</sup> The Makhzan is no more! / The Christians strut about there with total impunity / Cry for the fate of our cities: Fes, Meknes, Agourai, Sefrou, and Tabadout! / Surely the Christians are the cause of our fall! / Fes and Meknes are lost, not to mention Sefrou and Casablanca,<sup>11</sup> / Can one make the crow of the mountains white?"<sup>12</sup> An Ait Yusi bard in the mountains above Sefrou laments the fall of nearby Fes, picturing the "grief" of the medina's major gates: "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! / Next

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<sup>8</sup> Fond Roux (FR) file 59.1. Recorded by Roux in El Hajeb, 1914-1918.

<sup>9</sup> FR file 50.2.10. Recorded by Roux in El Hajeb, 1914-1918.

<sup>10</sup> The area to the west of Fes Al-Jdid, where the French army camped and where the *ville nouvelle* was later constructed.

<sup>11</sup> The poet uses *l-baida*, a shortened form of *Dar al-Baida* (meaning Casablanca).

<sup>12</sup> Arsène Roux, *Poésies Berbères*, 91. Peyron's editorial comment explains that the crow, according to legend, used to be white, but was blackened by God after performing a sacred task. Elsewhere (pp. 137-38) the crow symbolizes a "traitor."

to you the sons of pigs have come to wash their coats.”<sup>13</sup> A strong sentiment of solidarity with the cities is clearly felt by the tribal groups on their periphery.

Even when a division is drawn between mountains and plains, a sense of greater territorial unity is present. A poet from Guigou, an Ait Myill village in the Middle Atlas not yet pacified, fears the pacification’s progress, saying: “The General inherited the *gherb* 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 U Sidi ‘Ali / Then the people of the mountains will submit to him and kiss his hands.”<sup>14</sup> The poet foresees that the French “General” will inherit the entire land, including the poet’s own “people of the mountains.” Though the mountains and plains are viewed as distinct, they have a shared destiny.

*Tamazirt* is another frequently used geographic designation, used mostly to designate a much closer homeland or countryside. The term *tamazirt* also carries the flexible connotations of *patrie*, used at times to indicate a much larger Moroccan “country.” For example, an Ait Ndhir poet cries out, “The French 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.”<sup>15</sup> The presence of indigenous affairs posts and the French *tricolore* are visual symbols creating dread for the poet, who pessimistically envisions their total control over the “whole *tamazirt*.”

From the perspective of these Berber-speaking communities, the sultan’s capitulation to the French and the fall of Morocco’s cities, coasts, and central plains to Christian control left the unsubdued tribes of the Atlas ranges the final line of defense for Morocco’s Muslim community. Islam served as their primary category of identity and motivated resistance against the colonial state. This religious obligation of defensive jihad is emphasized by an Ait Ndhir poet, who cries out to the chiefs of his tribe to rise up against a renewed push, ordered by Lyautey in 1913, against the troublesome tribes threatening the Rabat-Meknes-Fes-Oujda axis: “Here is a letter, O messenger! Take it to Driss, to Bugrin, to Moha u Said, the chiefs. / Gather around her Ajammu, L-Ghazi u Gessu, as well as Imalwi and l-Muradi u Mansur. Get U Abli too! / And tell them: The Christian [*arumi*], is it not he that, during his life, the Prophet commanded us to fight?”<sup>16</sup> Another poem chides Muslims for their cowardice and urges to keep fighting: “Let’s

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<sup>13</sup> FR file 52.5. Recorded by Moha u Driss al-Yusi in Sefrou, 1934.

<sup>14</sup> FR file 55.1.2. Recorded by Roux in El Hajeb, 1914-1918.

<sup>15</sup> FR file 59.1. Recorded by Roux in El Hajeb 1914-1918.

<sup>16</sup> FR file 50.3.1. Recorded by Roux in El Hajeb, 1914-1918.

go! Rise up, O Cowards, and join the Jews [*udayn*]! / Stand up, O Muslims against the Christians [*irumin*]! Are you already dead?"<sup>17</sup>

The tension in these exhortations indicates an intense struggle within and among tribes over whether to submit to the "Christian" *makhzan* or continue jihad against it. One Ait Ndhir poet exclaims, "There is no question of submission / We will fight, if victory eludes us we will move the camp, we will go from country to country / We cannot bear the enemy of the Prophet."<sup>18</sup> Mohha u Bentaher, from the Ait Myill tribe to the south of the Ait Ndhir, criticizes those who submit: "O you who have submitted / Is it a sultan you follow? / Is it a holy person you accompany? / No, it's by a swine that you let yourself be led / But I see no one who is scared."<sup>19</sup> Submission to the Christians and the nominal authority of the sultan is attacked as being against Islam.

Poets interwove sexuality, gender roles, and religious identity in duels between two poets, often within the same tribe, fighting about submission and jihad. The following exchange is between two Ait Ndhir female poets. 'Aisha Uqessur was the wife of a *qaid* named Driss, who recently had led his fraction to submit at El Hajeb. Tabašnut was the wife of 'Alla ou Driss, leader of a group of Ait Ndhir continuing to fight. In her first lines, Tabašnut taunts 'Aisha's husband, implying that he lets the French officer have his way with his wife: "What happens in your heart, O Qaid Driss, when the French chief orders you to leave your tent so he can enter in?"<sup>20</sup> 'Aisha parries this insult by reveling in the ease of her present life under the French compared to the hardships faced by the *mujahideen*: "I use the mules to transport the great water skins / I can, O senseless rebels, choose among the springs of the country / You, on the other hand, have been overtaken by misfortune / Your harvest is lost and you fight in vain!" Tabasnut responds by equating submission with prostituting oneself to the French: "I give up the springs of the country, and I leave you to Roux, O Aisha! / Share your bed also with Pisani."<sup>21</sup> Then she attacks 'Aisha as a collaborator with the Christians against the jihad: "The large water skins in which you are going to draw water and carry it / Are drying up the thirst of

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<sup>17</sup> FR file 50.2.10. Recorded by Roux in El Hajeb, 1914-1918.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> FR file 55.1.2. Recorded by Roux in El Hajeb, 1914-1918.

<sup>20</sup> While the poet might be simply slandering her opponent, there were numerous instances of officers taking Berber mistresses.

<sup>21</sup> Roux notes that he and Pisani were French non-commissioned officers assigned to the Sharifian column stationed in El Hajeb.



the holy warriors [*imjihad*] / O 'Aisha, who curses me while you prepare your tent / To let the French chief spend the night in!"<sup>22</sup>

With the French push for total pacification in the late 1920s, these dilemmas intensified for the handful of still resisting tribes who had been pushed into more marginal defensive positions at high altitudes, blocked from seasonal pasturage, and facing increasingly desperate circumstances. A different inter-tribal organizational coordination emerged as the jihad shifted into a more apocalyptic framework in these last stands against the colonial state. Maraboutic religious leaders exhorted the tribes with *mahdist* promises of divine judgment against the French and deliverance for the Muslims. In these last stages of the pacification, the remaining vestiges of the Ait Yafelman confederation, including the Ait Hadidou and fractions of the Ait Sokhman and Ait Merghad, rallied under the banner of these charismatic leaders for last stands in their mountain refuges.

For those still fighting, the technological and organizational superiority of the French army generated a religious crisis. A song collected by Moha u Driss al-Yusi in the early 1930s exclaims: "What swords! What Senegalese tirailleurs! What organization among the Christians! How can we fight them?"<sup>23</sup> An *izli* from the Ait Hadiddu of the Assif Melloul which was subdued in 1932, expresses despair: "If the Prophet had had to defend against machines like those that are attacking me / It would have been a long time ago / That the Muslims would have been conquered by the Christians / And that they would have broken their pacts of mutual support."<sup>24</sup> In this poem, the author evokes the greater Muslim *umma*, with a reference to the Prophet Muhammad and intra-Muslim defense alliances against a common enemy. The modern "machines" the warrior faces demonstrate the failure of his religious community: even the Prophet Muhammad would not have been able to defeat this foe.

For many, falling under the control of the "Christian" government, which involved relinquishing weapons and being registered by the indigenous affairs officers, was interpreted as a religious cataclysm. Sidi Mohand, a warrior of the Ait Merghad tribe, composed the following self-searching poem after surrendering at the Keba`a military outpost<sup>25</sup> in 1933: "Can he that has passed in front of the outpost / And has been registered by the Christian / Become a

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<sup>22</sup> FR file 59.2. Recorded by Roux in El Hajeb, 1914-1918.

<sup>23</sup> FR file 52.5.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Indicating the legacy of the Arab Bureaux first implemented in Algeria in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the indigenous affairs outpost was called *l-biru* in Tamazight, a Berberized form of the French word *bureau*.

Muslim again? / Is the outpost better than Islam / In the eyes of the subjugated / Who have forgotten the Prophet for the French?"<sup>26</sup> Submission is equated with apostasy.<sup>27</sup> In another poem collected in the early 1930s, an Ait Yusi poet grieves, "What sorts of prayers are left? / The Koran is mishandled, and the Christians [*irumin*], wearing their kepis, trample on our sanctuaries."<sup>28</sup> Here the pacification is interpreted as a desecration.

As news about French victories in the High Atlas spread, intense disappointment and anxiety were expressed in lower-elevation regions. In a poem collected in 1932, a poet in Azrou rhetorically asks the Ait Hadiddu tribe if the airplanes have reached their mountain fastnesses: "Question the pilot, O man of the Ait Hadiddu, and ask him if he is coming to bomb / Has he reached all the way to the Ait Hadiddu? Has he succeeded in subduing them?"<sup>29</sup> In another poem, a member of the Ait Ayyash of the Saiss plain near Fes grieves the fate of a region two hundred kilometers to the south, "Why did you submit? O Assif Melloul!"<sup>30</sup> These poems display an awareness of events transpiring across a wide region, a circulation of poems back and forth across the line of dissidence, and a growing awareness of the encroachments of the modern state—via telegraph lines, air power, artillery, and roads—advantages poets clearly identified as the cause of their defeat.

### Counter-State Jihad in the Rif Mountains

In the Spanish zone, the interaction between colonial pacification and tribal resistance initially resembled the loosely coordinated Atlas anti-state jihad but it diverged in significant ways in the early 1920s. In 1912, the French retained the lion's share of the historically legible, agriculturally productive of Lyautey's *Maroc utile*, leaving the Spanish a decidedly *inutile* zone in the north. Outside of the Atlantic coast and a sliver of the Ouergha valley, the Spanish protectorate consisted of mountainous territory that only rarely been under any regularly administration under the pre-colonial *makhzan*. Geologically distinct from the Atlas, this mountainous crescent—including the Jbala, Ghomara, and Rif—hugs the Mediterranean coast, reaching elevations above 8000 feet. Rainfall declines from west to east as moisture-laden air moves from the Atlantic to the leeward side of the Rif Mountains. Very few rivers flow through

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<sup>26</sup> FR File 57.1.1. Recorded by Mawlay Ahmed in Kebab, 1933.

<sup>27</sup> A 1932 poem by Houssa ou Moah, recorded near Azrou at Ougmes, makes the same equivalence between submission and apostasy, using a similar lyric (Roux, *Poésies Berbères*, 69).

<sup>28</sup> FR file 52.5.

<sup>29</sup> Roux, "Quelques chants berbères," 171. Recorded in Azrou, 1932.

<sup>30</sup> FR file 57.5.1, Recorded among the Ait Ayyache south of Fes, 1932.

this topography of steep mountains cut by deep, rapidly eroded, ravines. The flora is largely maquis, which isolated pockets of Aleppo pine, fir, and cedar at higher elevations (Pennell 1986; McNeill 1992).

Given this topography and ecology, the primary settlement pattern was scattered villages in mountain valleys, which produced grain, vegetables, and fruit. The most fruitful areas of the eastern Rif lay on its edges, including the plain inland from Alhucemas bay on the northern coast and the Ouergha plain to the south (Pennell 1986: 24; McNeill (1992:208). The few large towns are limited to Tetuan, close to Ceuta and the Mediterranean coast, and Tangier, which had been designated as an international zone in the 1912 Treaty of Fez. In the interior, the only one major urban center was Chaouen, a holy city sixty-five kilometers south of Tetuan settled in the 15th century by Andalusian refugees.

The economy, particularly in the mountains, was largely self-contained, with limited trade south to Fez and north to the Spanish enclave, Melilla. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was an increase of seasonal labor migration to French farms in western Algeria. Within the Rif, weekly local markets played a major role in economic life and served as the primary public social space, where news was disseminated and where tribal councils met. Linguistically, the northern region is split between Arabic in the western Jebala and Tarifit (a Berber dialect) in the Rif. As with the Atlas populations, there were cultural and religious transregional ties that linked it to urban centers such as Fez or Tetuan.

Politically, the mountainous north was semi-autonomous. The primary political organizing structure was the tribal council (*jama'a* in Arabic and *agraw* in Berber), which resolved disputes through customary law. The non-state space of the mountainous interior bordered closely, however, with the territories under the more direct control of the Moroccan *makhzan* and Spanish military enclaves on the Mediterranean coast. In the decade leading up to the protectorate, the Rif became even more autonomous due to the rapidly declining capacity of the *makhzan* to project its power. Rif groups ran near constant attacks against the Spanish garrisons, and there was also intensive inter- and intra-tribal feuding, on which the Spanish tried to capitalize by financing rival parties. Multiple local warlords including Ahmad El Raisuni in the Jebala and Abu Himara in the eastern Rif carved out local fiefdoms, both resisting the Spanish and cutting deals with them.

In 1909, after attacks against the mine and railway concession at Wiksan, the Spanish began to move south from Melilla, using *razzia* techniques burning villages and dynamiting

houses to collectively punish northern tribes. They also landed troops in the west at the port city of Larache and moved inland. After formalizing of their position with the 1912 treaty, the Spanish settled for a limited pacification of these lowland areas, opting to indirectly influence the interior by bribing tribal chiefs. After World War I, though, the Spanish shifted to an aggressive total pacification. This provoked a concerted jihad in the early 1920s directed by 'Abd al-Krim, a leader of the powerful Ait Waryaghar tribe, who masterminded a military and state-building strategy that achieved remarkable successes until it was overwhelmed by a joint Franco-Spanish offensive in 1926.

**Figure 3 Spanish Protectorate Zone with Rif Republic at its greatest territorial size shaded**

*Framing and Organizing Jihad in the Rif Mountains*

Spain's steady encroachment from the 1890s provoked a range of reactions from the tribal groups in the north, including collusion, accommodation, and resistance, and strategic alternation among all three. Typically, individual tribes or sub-fractions of tribes negotiated their relationship with the Spanish, depending on geographic proximity, relative military strength, and the individual calculations of chiefs. There were also examples, as in the Atlas, of punctuated tribal coordination, with broader coalitions periodically mobilizing resistance against Spanish military operations. An early example of such a coalition was mobilized against Abu Himara and the mining and railroad infrastructure that had been built under the aegis of his agreement with the Spanish.

This jihad then countered the Spanish response, gaining momentum under the leadership of Sharif Muhammad Amziyyan, a Banu Bu Ifran chieftain in the eastern Rif. As in the Atlas, a large corpus of Tarifit poetry of resistance was composed and passed down in the Rif about anti-colonial resistance.<sup>31</sup> Several of these early poems reference the leadership of Amziyyan: "The wind blew / In the kettle of the Rumi [Christian] / God has assailed him / With the brave Rifian / It is Sidi Muhand / Who is fighting against the Rumi / Numerous telephone

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<sup>31</sup> While no parallel to the Roux archive exists, a limited number of Berber poems from the Rif have been published. Though the historical potential of these primary sources has been emphasized by Chtatou (1991) and Khalafi (2002a, 2002b), they are doubly marginalized by being oral sources and by being from one of the most marginalized regions in Morocco, the Rif.

poles / Down in the plains / O free fighter! / Phone to the Spanish / Tell them to increase the number of their soldiers / Tell them that Spain is ruined” (Khalafi 2002a). This poem also highlights the importance of communications and the Rif fighter’s confidence, telling the Spanish down on the plains to phone back news of their defeat.

After Amziyyan’s death in 1909, however, hostilities quickly subsided; by 1912, the Spanish had stabilized a front at the Wadi Kart, leaving the higher elevations of the Rif alone. For the tribes, this very light footprint offered hope of a much less intrusive form of colonial control compared to the French zone that basically preserved the pre-colonial status quo of local autonomy. Several leaders, including the al-Khattabis (who later organized the jihad) had hopes that Spanish infrastructural development would benefit of the local population. However, they became disillusioned as the Spanish prioritized total pacification and direct control in the northern after the war. It is at this point that the northern “insurgency” began to diverge from the Atlas jihad.

Though the Atlas jihad was sustained for more than two decades, it never represented a viable threat against the central state itself: the limited goal of this anti-state insurgency was the protection of local autonomy. In the Rif, in contrast, though the anti-colonial jihad started with similar anti-state objectives, it was transformed in the early 1920s into a much more ambitious counter-state building project under the leadership of Muhamed ibn ‘Abd al-Krim al-Khattabi, the eldest son of an Ait Waryaghar qadi, who took leadership within the tribe after his father’s death in 1919. After the war, the father had recalled his two eldest sons, Mohamed, who had been working with a paper and as a judge under the Spanish in Melilla, and Mahamed, who was studying in the School of Mines in Madrid, to lay the groundwork for the Ait Waryaghar to restart anti-colonial resistance.

The event catalyzing this transformation of anti-state to counter-state resistance in the north came during the summer of 1921. The Spanish had pushed from 1919 with two pincers from the west and east to link up a contiguous state space. In 1921, the Ait Waryaghar tribe stood between the two Spanish lines. In the east, the front consisted of an extended line of isolated small fortifications, often on high points far from a water source. In May, the Rif enjoyed the best harvest in fourteen years, creating a surplus that freed up tribesmen for a sustained large-scale assault on these lines, which began with attacks in early June on two forward posts, Dar Abarran and Igheriben.

Seven weeks later, in the heat of the summer, Abd al-Krim's forces launched a coordinated general assault across the front. Anoual, the primary forward Spanish base, came under intense attack, and the commanding general of Spanish troops in the east, Manuel Silvestre, ordered a general retreat. This devolved into a total rout as the Spanish front collapsed and the other tribes of the eastern Rif rallied to join the Waryaghar. In the end, Anoual constituted the worst defeat of a European colonial power in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the Spanish lost over 13,000 lives, 20,000 rifles, 400 machine guns, 129 cannons, large quantities of ammunition, and large quantities of canned food (Ayache 1981: 147; Pennell 1986: 91). The defeat represented a near fatal blow to Spanish state building aspirations in Morocco; it also represented the critical opportunity for a Rif state to emerge.

### *Constructing an 'Insurgent' Anti-Colonial State*

Similar to contemporaries including Ataturk, Ibn Saud, and Reza Shah, 'Abd al-Krim proved remarkably effective at wedding military, political, and cultural state-building strategies within a highly tribal society. The Anoual victory offered him a set of tools including weapons, ammunition, Spanish prisoners, and, perhaps most critically, symbolic power and legitimacy, with which to organize and mobilize a state-building movement combining Khaldunian and Weberian elements. In terms of the former, Spanish aggression triggered a response from the Rif periphery under the leadership of a charismatic reformer maximizing Ait Waryaghar *'asabiyah* to mobilize a broad tribal coalition. In terms of the latter, Abd al-Krim's reforms centralized authority by rationalizing the judiciary, tax collection, the administrative bureaucracy, and the army.

One important tactic was to centralize and monopolize the legal field by banning customary law and unifying a *shari'a*-based judiciary. For self-governing tribal groups, customary law offers critical mechanisms of collective enforcement including oaths, a fine system (*haqq*) or in the worst-case scenario, the feud. 'Abd al-Krim's campaign to eradicate customary law in the Rif and substitute it with *shari'a*—which uses individual evidence, testimony, and punishment--served to undercut local autonomy and centralize state control under a hierarchically organized system of government appointed judges. To enforce this legal monopoly, the state imprisoned those convicted of carrying out "vigilante" justice. It also paid informants and appointed *muhtasib*-s, or governmental inspectors, to regulate the weekly markets (Pennell 145-6).

The Rif state enforced social discipline by fining people for smoking kif (a cannabis product grown widely in the Rif), for not trimming beards, and even for not wearing footwear in public. Poems from the period indicate resistance to these reforms. One pleads with 'Abd al-Krim: "God put you on the right path / And that you give us the freedom to sing and dance / Oh Sidi Muhand / Why is your heart so hard? / You must know that your homeland is the origin of song and dance" (Khatami 2002b). Many legal reforms directly impacted women's lives: under Islamic law, as opposed to Berber customary law, women gained legal rights and duties, including the ownership of property and inheritance rights. Women and men were also both expected to perform the five daily prayers and were fined a chicken if they did not (Pennell 148).

In terms of revenue, the Republic of the Rif tried to create a monopoly on tax collection and fines. The state imposed a poll tax and a tax on produce; it also collected fines from recalcitrant tribes that refused to fight against the Spanish. Customs houses were set up to tax goods going back and forth into Spanish areas, which Ayache reports gave 5000 pesetas a day (1981:221); they were also set up on the border with the French zone and with Algeria. Another strategy was to sell mining concessions, which were pitched to the Spanish businessman, Horacio Echevarrieta (later a mediator between the two sides), and to the French company Le Tellier, but these never resulted in tangible investment. What did work, and became a primary revenue stream for the Rif state, was the ransoming of Spanish prisoners, which raised four million pesetas and financed the professional army (Ayache 1981).

The Rif state's administrative structure blended patrimonial and rational-legal bureaucratic forms. The central administration was based in Ajdir, the principal town of the Ait Waryaghar and de facto capital of the Rif Republic. Within the cabinet, 'Abd al-Krim appointed family members or extended relations to virtually all of the ministry posts. He also instituted a hierarchical bureaucratic structure starting from the local *jama'at*, tribal councils who were transformed into military-executive bodies. Each was required to elect a qaid who was then appointed commander of military forces and required to provision and lodge troops. Above the *jama'at* the Rif Republic had a consultative body, the *majlis al-ummah*, or national parliament, though decision-making centered on the person of 'Abd al-Krim.

The short-lived success of the Rif state was due to superior military organization and tactics. 'Abd al-Krim, replicating traditional practices used by the *makhzan* and colonial armies, put together a hybrid military combining regular and irregular forces. This core *nizam* army,

drawn from the Ait Waryaghar and a handful of Europeans who joined, was paid a salary and included former members of the Spanish *fuerzas regulares* with specialized artillery training. These were organized into *tabors*, or units, of 300-500 men, then subdivided into smaller groups (Pennell 1986: 130-32). With a total strength of 6-7000, the regular army fought the Spanish but also projected the Rif *makhzan's* authority among other tribes, particularly as the Rif state gained territory to the south and west. The regular army was supplemented by partisan, or irregular troops, periodically enlisted on a tribal basis through coercion or promise of booty.

As it took shape between 1921-22, the Rif state began have an increasingly quotidian impact on society through everyday state practices described above. As it expanded by taking territory back from the Spanish in the Ghomara and Jbala, it most concretely projected its presence in the distribution of military command posts, or *mahkama*-s. The state was also physically manifested in infrastructural development projects, the most significant of which was the construction of roads, or more accurately dirt tracks (*pistes*) radiating outward from Ajdir and linking *mahkama* posts throughout the mountains. To overcome the topographical challenges to state space in the north, 'Abd al-Krim prioritized the construction of a telegraph network connecting Ajdir to these posts, buying or stealing wire from the French and the Spanish (Pennell 1986:143).

#### *Imagining the Rif Republic from Above and Below*

Substantial symbolic work was also carried out to legitimate 'Abd al-Krim's state and sustain anti-colonial jihad. A national flag was designed which had a red background, a centered white diamond, and a green six-pointed star a crescent and a national anthem was composed. In January-February 1923, a *ba'ya*, or traditional oath of allegiance, was given by tribal leaders across the zone, hailing 'Abd al-Krim as "Amir" of the Rif. The immediate precedent was the 1908 *bay'a* given to Mawlay Hafid by the ulama in Fes, which included an obligation on him to carry out *jihad* against the French as a condition. The similar text of the Rif *bay'a* (Pennell 1986: Appendix 3) also conditioned the legitimacy of 'Abd al-Krim's rule as *amir* to the maintenance of *shari'a* and fighting jihad against the Spanish. Jihad, as in the Atlas, constituted the overarching framework of 'insurgency,' but in the Rif it was channeled by 'Abd al-Krim within the organizational structure of his state-building project.

*Imdyazen*, or professional troubadours, were also enlisted to perform pro-regime propaganda in weekly markets. As was shown in the previous section, within a largely oral



culture, the performance of poems served the function of relaying news, of public debate, and, similar to an Andersonian (1991) understanding of print culture, as a primary means through which collective identity was imagined. During the war, 'Abd al-Krim commissioned songs that supported *jihad*, glorified the Rif *mujahideen*, and celebrated victories over the Spanish (and later French). At the weekly markets, the qaid would read out the latest news from the front then the *amdyaz* and his troupe would perform before the circle of spectators. Both the longer *raqsiyat* genre, which consists of a refrain repeated after each verse of two or more rhymed couplets, and the shorter *izran* (singular *izri*; *izlan/izli* in Tamazight), rhymed couplets, were composed to legitimize 'Abd al-Krim's rule (Chtatou 1991:197-202).

Chtatou, who collected poems among the Gzennaya tribe, relates one of the *raqsiyat* that entered the Rif canon in the aftermath of the war. The verses recount Rif successes against the Spanish and French: "We gained independence and kicked out colonialism / I will die for two things: my country and my sweetheart / Take your rifle and get up early / Take enough ammunition and go to the hill / If you want to crush the treacherous people" (Chtatou 1991). Another poem was modified to become the lyrics of the national anthem of the Republic of the Rif: "On to the war, off we go / We will come back home victorious / O friend ask history / It will inform you that we are the best victors / We fought so many battles / And left the enemy baffled / They left behind castles and buildings / And hurried in their defeat / Today the red flag is fluttering / High over the victors' heads / Praise to God the Almighty / And curses to all the traitor " (Chtatou 1991). Here the Riffis are putting themselves in the historical record, citing great deeds done against the European enemy including successes in battle and the taking of the "castles and building" left behind in the city of Chaouen. The prominence of the "red flag," the national symbol of the Rif Republic, in the poem clarifies its fittingness as the national anthem.<sup>32</sup>

Other poems laud 'Abd al-Krim's military and religious virtues in an attempt to maintain high levels of morale: "Abd al-Krim is the hero of heroes / He fears nothing / Neither the mountains, nor the lions / Abd al-Krim is a Muslim / To whose aid God has come / The Spanish, our enemy / Hunts the Riffis in the mountains / Sidi Mohamed / Is a political leader / He has sworn to expel the French to the borders! / Abd el Krim is a dove of the sky! We wish him a long life! / The Rumi attacked Anwar and A'arwi / Mohammed n Abddekrim / Oh! The

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<sup>32</sup> Chtatou (1991:201) includes the original poem composed at Chaouen and the abridged version used as the anthem cited in Ouazzani (1981:455) and Kridia (1986:79).

Freedom Fighter! / The airplane flew over the mountain / Sidi Mohammed is the hero who defends the religion" (Khalafi 2002b). Other poems encourage the public to fight the holy war, to defend the homeland against the Spanish: "Oh young Rifis / Defend your homeland / The Spanish attack us / To possess our women!" (Khalafi 2002b). Another poem references a total mobilization of Rif society for defensive war: "Our grandfather! / When you asked us to war / Everyone mobilized / The shepherd and the farmer / The faqih who left the mosque / The old women who broke their pots / Look at the warrior / How many weapons he carries with him / Look: the sharp dagger / Look: the sword of the farmer / The rifle in his hand / Has felled the enemies" (Khalafi 2002b)

The poems also reveal insights into the experience of fighting a highly asymmetrical war, in which the Rif tribesman daily confronted an enemy with superior technologies. Often, the poets tease the airplanes passing by: "Oh my dove / Oh plane that flies / And deposits no more / Pass on a hello to the president of the nations / Tell him to drop bombs on us / Abdel Krim is very strong / Omar N Rmadani / Is a fighter without equal / He fights with his pistol / And his sword (Khatami 2002b). Another tells the plane to pass on a message encouraging the French president to agree to a treaty: "Oh my dove / Who flies where he wants / Pass on my greeting / To the president of France / Tell him to agree to a link of friendship with Abd el Krim / Otherwise, be sure that Abdel Krim is dangerous!" (Khatami 2002b) These display the bravado of Rif society and also the clear awareness within these 'insurgent' populations of the international implications of their anti-colonial struggle.

Other poems reveal struggles to keep discipline within Rif society. As we saw with the opposing Atlas poets, the primary temptations offered by the colonial state were material: food, money, and safety. The following poem attacks the poet's "aunt" and "uncle" for selling out to the Spanish across the front lines: "Have you filled your silo with grain, my Aunt? / Your husband is an insolent man / When he is out of work / He rushes to rejoin the Rumi / The face colored / He goes out to steal / On his back he carries bread and tea / His wife waits to bring him something to eat / Him, he loves wine / Be sure he will be pierced like a dog! / What have you gained? / Oh you who spies on your village? Have they given you a salary / So that you exploit the reaper?"

The poems are not all celebratory though. Like their Atlas analogues, many express dismay about the horrors of modern warfare, particularly aerial bombing: "The airplane flies in the skies above Tizi 'Ezza / O my God / It has left the nation of Islam consoling itself / The

airplane flies in the sky above the region of Iyyar Mawas like smoke / It killed humanity / It killed Mohamed / And has cut him in two.” Khatami 2002b). From 1924, the Spanish extensively used mustard gas against the civilian and military targets (Balfour 2002), often in psychologically devastating nighttime bombing raids (Garcia-Munoz 2005:40).

The entrance of the French into the war in fall of 1925 and the renewed Spanish offensive from the north encircled the Rif Republic, cutting off supply routes and causing widespread starvation that winter. The cataclysmic costs of the war generated questions about the trajectory of the jihad and ‘Abd al-Krim’s leadership. One poet asks: “The house in the mountains / O my sweetheart / Where is your master? / Why isn’t he here? / Is he sick? / Tell me, where has he gone? / Is he dead? / If so / Ask God to comfort you / O my mother / How I have mourned when the village was emptied of its inhabitants / Comfort my heart, cry no more / Comfort like the mountains that resist the clouds / Oh Moulay Mohand / What path do we take? / The path that leads to our country / Is now full of *rumis*.” (Khatami 2002b).

Though the core army continued to fight, there was a sense of exhaustion expressed in the general public: “O Sidi Mulay Muhand! Our patience is exhausted / The bomb comes from the sky! And the bombardment comes from the sea!” (Khatami 2002b). Aware he had no viable options for continued resistance, ‘Abd al-Krim surrendered himself in May 1926 on the French front, after which he exiled to Reunion. After five years, the Republic of the Rif and anti-colonial resistance in the Spanish zone was broken. Ironically, over the next several years, many of these tribesmen were integrated into Moroccan units in Spain’s Army of Africa, and in the 1930s, played a significant role under Franco’s command in the Spanish Civil War.

## **Conclusion**

This study of two anti-colonial resistance movements in Protectorate Morocco has served as a proof of concept for a sociology of insurgency. The shift of focus, achieved by drawing on an untraditional source base of poetry produced by rural actors, opens up new angles on non-state actors’ perspectives on and strategies for preserving their autonomy. This move provides a much more nuanced and textured reading of the internal dynamics of what the colonial state, or many present states, would label “insurgency,” revealing the ideological paradigm of jihad which framed this resistance, the fierce internal struggles over resisting or submitting the state, and how anti-colonial insurgency was experienced by actors themselves. The use of a sub-national comparison also revealed an important typological distinction

between two different modes of defending the autonomy of historically non-state spaces. The end goal of the first, the anti-state resistance of the Atlas, was to block the intrusion of colonial state practices through individual tribal and loose confederative military jihad. The end goal in the Rif was the same, but the means differed: to block the colonial state's pacification campaign, 'Abd al-Krim built a state himself, welding the northern tribes in a defensive jihad against the Spanish and French.

As much as I would like to simply ignore obvious policy-oriented questions this study provokes, I feel an ethical responsibility to address the current context with two final remarks. First, I urge a critical reflexivity in the use of the category "insurgency." One massive blind spot in much current analysis is a failure to see distinctions between different types of resistance. While simply repelling state intrusion is a goal in some cases, many others like the "insurgencies" by the Taliban in Afghanistan and Ansar Dine in Mali are actually rival state-building movements that are attempting to monopolize territorial control through violence and the imposition of a *shari'a* based judiciary. Second, a critical awareness of the normative political presuppositions built into the labeling of activity as "insurgent" is needed. In most conflicts, the question of who represents the "constituted" and "legitimate" state is precisely the bone of contention. A related issue is a mismatch, in many cases, between expectations and reality about state governance. I urge a more agnostic, or ecumenical, normative expectation about state forms, with room outside of the territorial nation-state for alternate or transitional modes of governance on more local or regional levels. The labeling of non-state and failed state spaces as, by definition, security threats draws the United States into an imperialist, interventionist overreach, attempting to "pacify" the "dissidents" through invasion or constant drone strikes, that ultimately reinforces the dynamics creating insurgency.

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