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“WHAT IS A BERBER?”: CHARACTERIZATIONS OF IMAZIGHEN
FROM BRITAIN AND MOROCCO

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By Byron Head

A Thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for completion
Of the Bachelor of Arts degree in International Studies
Croft Institute for International Studies
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Abstract

This thesis seeks to investigate the similarities and differences in the characterization of Amazigh identity between nineteenth century British writings and contemporary (early twenty-first century) Moroccan news articles. The methods employed to do so included broad reading of both British and Moroccan writings, and analysis and sorting of the characterizations found therein. The results of this process showed that the British perspective, while nuanced, focused excessively on the Amazigh as violent and less civilized; contemporary Moroccan news sources portrayed the Amazigh as peaceful, organized, and seeking equal rights within Morocco. Conclusions of this study are thus: the British perspective, while not entirely inaccurate, was mediated by Orientalist thought; several fundamental aspects of Amazigh culture changed in the intervening period between the two groups of sources.

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Introduction

I studied abroad in Rabat, Morocco during the spring semester of 2013. One of the first things I remember learning upon my arrival in country: There is a *hanūt* on every corner in Morocco's major cities. These little shops are very much like scaled down versions of American convenience stores, where one can go to buy fruit, bread, candy, toiletries, or cell phone minutes. The second thing I learned about them: *Hanūts* are owned by Berbers. This turned out to be true for the *hanūt* that lay down the block from our study center. I developed a certain rapport with Muhammed, one of the employees—every time I came in, he would teach me how to ask for what I wanted in Tamazight. I found this both exciting and surprising, because in this land of polyglots, the demographics favor Arabic and French speakers in urban areas, and Arabic and Berber speakers in more rural settings. This *hanūt* employee's pride in his mother tongue intrigued me and inspired me to learn more about this ancient ethnic group.

Morocco considers itself an Arab country with its other North African neighbors; it is a member of the Arab League and the Greater Arab Free Trade Area, which leads one to believe that its population is largely made up of Arabs. This, however, is not the case. In fact, there is not even a clear, objective dividing line between Arab and Berber ethnic groups. Most demographic surveys, such as those by CIA World Factbook and the Encyclopedia of Nations, list Morocco as 99% "Arab-Berber," and it is thus up to individuals to self-identify. In my understanding, which was informed by my professors in-country, the majority of city-dwelling Moroccans identify as Arab (many Moroccans with acknowledged Berber heritage identify as Arab, and have little or no command of

Tamazight), while most Berber-identifying Moroccans live in small, rural towns and villages, with a minority living in Morocco's larger cities.

Because of this trend, the Berber population of Morocco has historically been decidedly less visible than the Arab population, both socially and politically. In recent years, that trend has been working in the reverse. When King Mohammed VI ascended to the throne in 1999, he instituted a series of liberalizing reforms in the nation's economic, political, and social realms. These reforms have sparked more vocal calls from Morocco's Berber population for equality, as well as giving Berber activists more and better channels through which to express these calls. This increase in visibility raises questions about why this equality-seeking activism is necessary, where the notion of Berbers as second-class citizens comes from, and whether this notion could be the result of European imperialism.

There are areas of the world that remain fraught with problems related to the lingering effects of European colonization and other international meddling. Many of the issues in Iraq and Syria today can be traced back to the arbitrary delineation of national boundaries by outside powers; contemporary issues of race and class in Brazil stem from Portuguese imperialism; South Africa has only recently recovered from the strife caused by apartheid, which was based on racial segregation first implemented by Dutch and British colonialism. It is therefore plausible that the lingering disparity in the treatment of Arab Moroccans versus Amazigh Moroccans also stems from, or was exacerbated by, European influence. Ethnic tensions were likely already present when Europeans first

gained prominence in Morocco, but there is significant historical precedent to support the speculation that the Europeans further intensified these feelings.

In this thesis, I aim to compare two different perspectives of Moroccan Imazighen: that of British writers who traveled to Morocco in the nineteenth century, and that of contemporary Moroccan news media. To that end, the research question I will address is “How do the characterizations of Imazighen by nineteenth-century British authors compare to the characterizations of Imazighen by contemporary Moroccan media?” The British were the first Europeans to gain access to Morocco, which made possible France’s later colonization of the country. They were also pioneers in the practice of foreign influence, both direct and indirect. As such, their writings about those endeavors and experiences would have been representative of other European countries seeking to replicate or improve upon the British method.

The methodology I employ for this project is text-based analysis. I have gathered source material from British authors during the middle to late nineteenth century, and contemporary Moroccan news outlets. The British sources are of both an academic and popular nature, in order to give the most comprehensive understanding of British characterizations of Moroccan Berbers at the time. The contemporary news articles come from internet sources based in Morocco regarding recent activities of Berber activists. These articles shed light on the characterization of Berbers within their own country in commonly available sources. The analysis consists of comparisons and contrasts between the two groups of sources to see what characterizations are apparent in both, and which appear in one, but not the other.

The thesis is laid out in four chapters. First is the historical context of Morocco, first focusing on the country's history from the Berber perspective, and second moving on to Great Britain's involvement within Morocco. The second chapter introduces the texts from the nineteenth century to be analyzed in the third chapter, in two groups: those of an academic nature and those of a popular nature. It goes on to give a brief overview of the most prevalent trends within each group of sources. Chapter three delves into the analysis of the texts themselves. Organized by subheadings based on common characterizations from the sources, this chapter synthesizes observations made by the various British authors to create a cohesive image of the Berber from their writings. Chapter four applies the same methodology for the contemporary news sources from Morocco, but because of the brevity of these sources, their introduction and analysis is combined into a single chapter.

These analyses yielded some unexpected conclusions. Rather than a simplistic characterization of Moroccan Berbers, nineteenth-century British authors produced a nuanced and complex understanding. Their characterizations were expectedly mostly negative and rooted in ethnocentrism, but they displayed a depth of study and inspection that I did not expect. Instead of focusing on physical appearance, location, or one prominent aspect of Berber culture and society, British writers made note of several different cultural facets, such as the differences between the various Berber groups within Morocco and their unusual Islamic practices.

The contemporary sources revealed less surprising conclusions. With the increased visibility of the Berber population since the implementation of Mohammed

VI's reforms, the Moroccan news outlets were predictably sympathetic to the Berber cause. These articles portrayed Berbers as peacefully and legally pursuing equal rights, and doing so as a unified front, rather than the fragmented villages and tribes observed by the British writers. Admittedly, there is a century of time difference between the two groups of texts, over the course of which characteristics of any society can, and invariably do, change. However, the fact remains that the earlier sources project a negative view of Berber society, while the more recent exhibit a positive one.

Chapter 1: Historical Context

Introduction

Because of its location at the crossroads of three separate world regions, the Kingdom of Morocco has always been a place of international interest. It is a meeting place for people from Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, and Europe. Its aboriginal population, therefore, has been subjected throughout the centuries to various waves of immigration and colonization. Dynasties from Phoenicia, Rome, and Arabia have all exercised authority over the lands of modern Morocco before its Amazigh inhabitants succeeded in initiating several centuries of self-rule. But in the 1700s a new influx of foreigners who originated in Europe began entering the kingdom. First they came only at the whim of the Moroccan sultan, but by the middle of the nineteenth century, European influence and power were firmly entrenched within the Moroccan government. Though today Morocco is more likely known as a former French colony, the British truly paved the way for the French to enter in the early twentieth century. It was the British who forced open the formerly closed Moroccan ports starting in the 1820s, first to themselves, then to the rest of Europe.

This chapter will first provide an historical overview of the Amazigh position in Moroccan society and the various foreign influences upon it, in order to provide the reader with sufficient background knowledge of this target population. This discussion will begin with the Roman conquest in the third century BCE and carry through to the reign of the current king of Morocco, Mohammed VI. It will additionally chronicle the waxing and waning of British influence in Morocco in the nineteenth century in order to

display that the British did in fact have a sufficient extent of influence there to merit the analysis of British writings from that period.

Amazigh History in Morocco

The Imazighen are the oldest-known inhabitants of North Africa. Archaeological remains dating as far back as 7000 BC show that Tamazight-speaking peoples originally inhabited the region ranging from western Egypt all the way to the Atlantic coast of northwest Africa.¹ The term “Amazigh” applies to many different groups, encompassing tribal groups ranging from the Tuaregs of the Sahara to the Kabyles of northern Algeria to the three main Amazigh groups that can be found in Morocco today: the Riffians of the north, the Tamazight of the Middle Atlas mountains, and the Tashethit of the High Atlas mountains, Anti-Atlas mountains, and Sous region.² These groups, though also distinguished by geography, are primarily differentiated by their languages: all speak what they consider to be separate languages belonging to the same branch of the Afro-Asiatic language family. Since the geographic range of Imazighen was so vast throughout much of the region’s history, and the administration of North Africa by non-African rulers did not align with the contemporary borders of Morocco, the terms Amazigh and Imazighen cannot be used to denote populations specifically within Morocco until the rise of the Idrisid dynasty (788 AD), the first empire with borders approximately aligning with those of modern Morocco.

¹ Robert Montagne, *The Berbers: Their Social and Political Organisation*, pg 2

² Vincent Monteil, *Morocco*, pg 11

The common term “Berber” is not actually the word that native North Africans use to refer to themselves. This word originated in Greece to refer to anyone who did not speak Greek, and was assimilated into the Arabic language as *al-barbar*. In the Tamazight language, speakers use the term *Amazigh* (plural: *Imazighen*), which means “free person.” I will therefore be using those terms throughout the duration of this project to refer to what might otherwise be called the Berber population. Though the word “Berber” has lost for the most part its negative connotations, the prevalence of its usage over that of the indigenous term is representative of the lack of political and historical voice that has plagued the Imazighen since the time of the Roman Empire’s entrance into North Africa in 146 BCE.³

It seems to slip through unnoticed in the historiography of ancient Rome, but the Romans did indeed reach and conquer the northwest tip of Africa. There is evidence that the Romans brought with them to the region their Latin script when they first expanded their control west from Carthage in 46 B.C.⁴ Christianity made its way to the region by way of the Roman empire as well, its spread beginning in the third century and blossoming after Constantine’s Edict of Milan in the year 312.⁵ This new system of writing and new religion caught on in varying degrees throughout the land, but remained concentrated mainly in and around Roman population centers like Volubilis.⁶ The

³ *id.*, pg 31

⁴ Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib*, pg 31

⁵ *id.*, pg 40

⁶ *id.*, pg 33

Imazighen were able to cast off Roman dominance, with the help of the Vandal invasion of Africa in 429 AD,⁷ and afterward, enjoyed about a century of self-rule before the return of the Romans/Byzantines in a much diminished capacity in 530 AD.⁸ During this time of independence, many Imazighen returned to their indigenous pagan religious practices, and others to Judaism, which had reached Morocco from the east.

When the Arabs came from the east during the last third of the seventh century AD, they brought a new language, Arabic, and a new religion, Islam, to North Africa. The Arab conquest of the region was solely military in nature at its outset, but it developed into a nominal religious conquest as well after the Arabs established their control. Amazigh chieftains were able to preserve their status in exchange for professed conversion to Islam, but with no indoctrinating institution like the Christian church, the Amazigh population at large was slow to convert to Islam in any meaningful sense.⁹

Similar to the Roman occupation of North Africa, the Arab conquest brought with it a socio-cultural shift in the cities, where there was significant contact with the Arabs. Though the majority of the Amazigh population dwelled outside major urban centers, elements of this shift reached them, as well, albeit at a slower rate and different practice. Islam replaced the Christianity of the Romans as the religion of civilization, although Latin-speaking remnants of the Roman occupation qualified, because of their professed Christianity and Islam's consideration of Christianity as "*ahl al-kitāb*," or "People of the

⁷ Michael Brett and Elizabeth Fentress, *The Berbers*, pg 76

⁸ Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, *The Berber Identity Movement and the Challenge to North African States*, pg 15

⁹ Abun-Nasr, pg 71

Book,” to continue their practices in exchange for a poll-tax.¹⁰ Outside of the cities, Islam was openly combated in many locales, and where it was accepted, it was rarely practiced in the same style as the Arabs. Converts frequently either adapted its orthodoxy to suit their pre-existing lifestyles or became extremely strict and puritanical in their practice.¹¹ The Arabs forced conversion upon non-*ahl al-kitāb* Imazighen, in line with the philosophy behind their conquest to spread Islam, and the new religion became well-spread by the end of the eighth century. But this conversion, while nominally granting converts access to the Islamic *ummah* (the community of believers), did not bring the Imazighen into social parity with the Arabs. The Imazighen were enslaved and conscripted into the Arab army to continue the conquest into Spain and across the Pyrenees.¹² However, this entrance into the Islamic community did bring about nominal recognition of the Imazighen as a distinct people-group— the Arabs adopted the Latin term *barbarus* as “*al-barbar*” and made it a proper noun, thus unofficially acknowledging the Imazighen as a distinct nation, a people.¹³

The Arabic language, too, was not quickly adopted by the Imazighen, initially being spoken only in the cities and the areas immediately surrounding them as the language of government and learning.¹⁴ While Islam reached and rooted itself firmly as

¹⁰ Brett and Fentress, pg 83

¹¹ Montagne, pg 9

¹² Brett and Fentress, pg 82-83

¹³ *id.*, 83

¹⁴ Abdelaziz Touri, “A Brief History of Morocco,” pg 20

the religion of a majority of the population of North Africa,¹⁵ Arabic was much slower to establish itself. However, the Amazigh languages, which had weathered the storm of Punic and Latin civilizations, eventually gave way to “the language of God.” The reasons for this were pragmatic: the laws of sharia, the Islamic system of religious law that governs daily life, were written in Arabic¹⁶; Arabic had become the language of trade¹⁷; and Islamic prayers and sermons were, and indeed still are, conducted in Arabic. But even though Arabic was the language of their new religion, in many Amazigh communities, Tamazight was retained for household and other non-religious contexts.

The Imazighen revolted against the Arabs in the name of Kharijism in 740.¹⁸ According to this doctrine, only the best and most devout of Muslims was worthy to lead the *ummah*.¹⁹ The revolt all but unseated the control of the Arabs in North Africa. However, upon the defeat of the Arabs, too many Amazigh would-be rulers sprang up, leading to an almost constant state of war that lasted for thirty years.²⁰ In the end, Idris Ibn Abdullah, a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad through his daughter Fatima and a refugee from the east, was able to establish himself as the ruler of the land.²¹ He

¹⁵ Brett and Fentress, pg 124

¹⁶ *id.*, 125

¹⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁸ Maddy-Weitzman, pg 24

¹⁹ Brett and Fentress, pg 88

²⁰ *Ibid*

²¹ *id.*, pg 89

settled in his new capital at Fes in 788 AD²². As previously stated, this was the first political entity with a geographic shape roughly the same as modern Morocco. During the reign of the Idrisids, there remained a level of antagonism between the Arab and Amazigh inhabitants, even though they shared a religion.²³ Though they were occupied by both the Fatimids from Tunisia and the Umayyads of Andalusia, the Idrisids remained the nominal rulers of this region until the rise of the Almoravids in the middle of the eleventh century.²⁴

The Almoravids (those “bound together”) were an Amazigh dynasty that came north out of the Sahara to conquer all of Morocco and Andalusia, starting in the 1050s.²⁵ They were united by the Amazigh theologian Abdallah Ibn Yasin and military chief Yahya Ibn Ibrahim, and established their capital at Marrakesh in 1070.²⁶ Ibn Yasin’s goal was to unify the land under one brand of Islam, the Maliki school, and to eliminate any remaining paganism, Christianity, or non-Maliki Islam.²⁷ Though Ibn Yasin died in battle in 1059,²⁸ the community he brought together survived his death and established a dynasty that would rule the Islamic West for nearly a century. This dynasty represented

²² Touri, pg 20

²³ Brett and Fentress, pg 90

²⁴ Touri, pg 20

²⁵ Bret and Fentress, pg 99

²⁶ *id.*, pg 99-100

²⁷ *id.*, pg 101

²⁸ *id.*, pg 102

the fulfillment of Kharijite doctrine, which espoused that the right to rule fell to him who was most godly, regardless of origin.²⁹ It also represented a geographical and ethnic reversal of the previous campaigns of the region, with the Imazighen of the south moving north and conquering the Arabs, as well as other Amazigh groups.³⁰

Though they were Imazighen, the Almoravid rulers were enamored with Arabic literature. “They were patrons of poets and certain of their governors enjoyed erotic verse and took delight in the art of the troubadours.”³¹ However, this enthusiasm for Arabic literary culture did not equate to good relations with the Arabs. The Arabs of Andalusia “detested this domination (by the Amazigh Almoravids). Their oppression weighed heavily upon them, and their hearts were full of hate and indignation against the new rulers.”³² The Almoravids differed from the Arabs in one superficial, but nonetheless key way: the men wore veils over their faces that covered all but their eyes³³ for protection from the desert sand. This physically distinguished the Almoravid Imazighen from their Arab subjects, which led to and reinforced social and cultural distinctions as well.

In 1147, another Amazigh dynasty arose from the High Atlas in the same manner as the Almoravids: a charismatic religious leader united a group of previously stateless

²⁹ *id.* pg 107

³⁰ *Ibid*

³¹ H. T. Norris, *The Berbers in Arabic Literature*, pg 138

³² Ibn Khaldun in Ronald Messier, *The Almoravids and the Meanings of Jihad*, pg xix

³³ Messier, pg xix

Imazighen and led them on a military expedition to “fight in God’s name.”³⁴ This dynasty was known as the Almohad dynasty, the dynasty that professed the unity of God, and once they took it from the Almoravids in 1147, they also used Marrakesh as their capital.³⁵ The biggest difference between the two dynasties was in their approach to religious governance. While the Almoravids had prescribed to the Maliki school of Islam, the Almohads prized their own Islamic theology, which was originally scribed in Tamazight and then translated to Arabic.³⁶ These two dynasties were renowned for their architecture, and they are responsible for some of the most recognizable structures still visible in Morocco today, including the Kutubiyya Mosque in Marrakech, the Hassan Tower and Qasba Oudaya in Rabat, and the Qarawiyyin Mosque in Fez.³⁷ The end of Almohad supremacy began in Spain in 1212,³⁸ and the dynasty slowly lost control of various pieces of its empire until the Marinids, yet another group of Imazighen, came from eastern Morocco and captured Marrakesh in 1269.³⁹

The Marinids, who ruled from 1269 until 1472, invested most of their rule in competition with the two other Amazigh dynasties born out of the Almohads at Tunis and Tlemcen, as well as the Christians in Spain, in attempts to recreate the state controlled by

³⁴ Bret and Fentress, pg 108

³⁵ Touri, pg 21

³⁶ Brett and Fentress, pg 109

³⁷ *id.*, pg 111

³⁸ *id.*, pg 113

³⁹ Touri, pg 21

the Almoravids and Almohads.⁴⁰ It was during this time that two of the world's most famous Imazighen did their work: Ibn Khaldun compiled his famous *Kitāb al-ʿIbar* and Ibn Battuta undertook his great travels.⁴¹ The Wattasids succeeded the Marinids,⁴² but during this time the Saʿadis, the distant relatives of the Idrisids, who had remained in Morocco since the fall of that dynasty, were steadily on the rise to notoriety. The Wattasids did not last long before they succumbed to the rise of the Sharifian (descending from the Prophet) Saʿadis.

The Saʿadis rose to power in 1510 and moved Morocco's capital back to Marrakesh.⁴³ Their successful repulsion of the "infidel" Portuguese was a major factor in their rise to sovereignty over the Wattasids.⁴⁴ This dynasty, unlike the Amazigh dynasties before it, relied on a professional army and modern weaponry, rather than tribal confederations and a specific religious doctrine.⁴⁵ In the absence of a ruling Amazigh dynasty, the concept of the *marabout* came to great importance in Amazigh communities. A *marabout* was essentially a Muslim saint, who resided in a *zawiya*, or monastery. After the fall of the Marinids and the Wattasids, inhabitants of Amazigh villages began to look locally for spiritual and political direction. As a result, *zawiyas* became centers of local

⁴⁰ Brett and Fentress, pg 115

⁴¹ Touri, pg 22

⁴² Brett and Fentress, pg 170

⁴³ Touri, pg 22

⁴⁴ Abun-Nasr, pg 207

⁴⁵ Brett and Fentress, pg 172

wealth and power for Moroccan Imazighen,⁴⁶ rather than the nominal ruling Sa'adi dynasty. This political and religious schism resulted in, and was aided by, the tendency of the Imazighen to reside outside of major cities in locations remote to the dynasty. Thus, a schism once again developed between town-dwelling Arab and tribal Amazigh, and the dynasty, which had failed to create sustainable institutions of governance, did not long outlast the death of Ahmad al-Mansur al-Dhahabi, its greatest ruler, in 1603.⁴⁷

After several decades of disorder and conflict between the Sharifians and mountain Amazigh marabouts vying for authority, a different Sharifian dynasty arose in the 1660s, once more out of the dry and desolate south east.⁴⁸ This dynasty, known as the Alawite dynasty, was the dynasty with which Britain and other nations would negotiate throughout the nineteenth century, and is in fact still the ruling family in Morocco today.

Like the Sa'adi dynasty that preceded it, the Alawites did not focus on specific religious doctrine to legitimize their rule, and therefore a rift remained between the Alawites and the various Amazigh communities of Morocco. Though they nominally acknowledged "the Emperor," Morocco's Imazighen opposed his *Makhzan*,⁴⁹ the Moroccan name for its government, and were not pliable to his rule or policies. A uniquely Moroccan concept of *bilad al-makhzan* (government lands) and *bilad al-siba*

⁴⁶ *id.*, pg 170

⁴⁷ *id.*, pg 172-173

⁴⁸ Touri, pg 23

⁴⁹ Brett and Fentress, pg 176

(lands of no authority) soon developed⁵⁰— Morocco was a kingdom only partially ruled by its Sultan. Amazigh communities living in remote and defensible locations existed outside any true control of the Moroccan government. Some groups around Fez and Meknes in the Middle Atlas were accessible enough to the *Makhzan* that their chiefs played roles in the Alawite government,⁵¹ but in most cases, the Amazigh communities in and around Morocco's mountains were only subjected to an extremely limited scope of royal influence. Instead, they mostly lived in isolation by their own customary laws. It is thus that the romanticized notion of the Amazigh mountaineer, which I will discuss in chapter 3, finds its roots.

This uneasy status quo remained until European influence reached its zenith at the opening of the twentieth century. Rather than continuing a precarious and unspecified peace with the largely autonomous Amazigh communities throughout Morocco, French and Spanish forces sought to, and ultimately succeeded in, bring these communities under their own administrations. The Imazighen resisted much longer than the *Makhzan*— the Aït 'Atta of the Anti-Atlas held out until 1934, 22 years after the nominal colonization of Morocco⁵²— but they, too, were finally subdued by the European occupiers. However, this subjugation did not necessarily lead to a program of Europeanization. Some Imazighen did take advantage of new opportunities in the new markets available to

⁵⁰ Abun-Nasr, pg 231

⁵¹ Brett and Fentress, pg 177

⁵² *Ibid*

them,⁵³ but in general, they were devalued and granted neither work nor political voice in the new regime.⁵⁴

The French policy on Imazighen actually served to unite Morocco's formerly disparate groups. Their view on the Imazighen was as "a subject race to be kept apart from their Arab neighbours in the interest of French hegemony."⁵⁵ Though many Moroccan Imazighen were recruited with positive results to the French army,⁵⁶ the French issued the Dahir Berbère in 1930, a decree mandating the reinstatement of customary Amazigh law rather than Islamic law in Amazigh communities.⁵⁷ This decree, which many Moroccans interpreted as a tactic of divide and rule, served as a catalyst to spark a sense of "Moroccan solidarity against the dominion of the infidel" that would result in Moroccan independence twenty-six years later.⁵⁸ In conjunction with that, the growth of communication technology and urban immigration precipitated by the French both served to remove former barriers between groups and minimize the importance of one's ethnic identity.⁵⁹ Ignorance and fear gave way to understanding and solidarity as the metaphorical veil was torn from the face of the mysterious "other" through a growth in

⁵³ *id.*, pg 186

⁵⁴ *id.*, pg 182

⁵⁵ *id.*, pg 190

⁵⁶ *id.*, pg 190-191

⁵⁷ Harold D. Nelson, *Morocco, A Country Study*, pg 55

⁵⁸ Brett and Fentress, pg 191

⁵⁹ *Ibid*

accessibility and daily interactions. The Amazigh contingent played a critical role in the achievement of Moroccan independence in 1956.

Since independence, the situation of Imazighen in Moroccan society has fluctuated significantly. The reassertion of Moroccan identity after the era of the protectorate took the shape of Arabization in many sectors, including government, education, and business.⁶⁰ This was at the expense of Amazigh culture and identity, perhaps because the years following independence were the first since the Wattasid dynasty that Morocco's government extended to include its Imazighen inhabitants *de facto* rather than just *de jure*. This Arabization compelled urban-dwelling Amazigh Moroccans to develop Arabic language skills and further separated them from their Amazigh identities. Five years after achieving independence, Sultan Mohammed V died, and his son Hassan II came to power. Hassan II's reign was characterized by many human rights violations and repression of any and all dissent. Thus, any fledgling Amazigh identity movement would likely have been silenced quickly. But, perhaps more influential in this political dormancy was the effect of the French "closed educational network."⁶¹ This system of schooling, enacted specifically for rural Amazigh communities, sought to produce local leaders with only a primary or secondary education,⁶² who were thus incapable of any organized opposition or political salience outside their isolated communities.

⁶⁰ Nelson, pg 120

⁶¹ Mark A. Tessler, "Morocco: Institutional Pluralism and Monarchical Dominance," *Political Elites in Arab North Africa: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt*, pg 44

⁶² *Ibid*

When Mohammed VI ascended to the throne in 1999, he initiated a series of liberal reforms in many sectors, notably in the area of Amazigh rights. He established the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture in 2001, and in 2003 issued a reform introducing Tamazight-language instruction in primary schools,⁶³ where it had formerly been illegal. Most recently, Morocco established a new constitution in 2011 claiming a new second national language— Tamazight. There is now a national news channel broadcasting in Tamazight to go along with channels in French and Arabic. These social and educational liberalization policies have been accompanied by a resurgence in Amazigh ethnic pride that continues to grow, its proponents emphasizing the Amazigh population's aboriginal origins in North Africa and reaching out in solidarity to Amazigh communities across national borders.

British Activity in Morocco

European colonialism moved its focus to Africa and East Asia after Spain and Portugal conquered most of South and Central America. Europeans realized that these continents were full of natural resources, as well as people, whom they could exploit for financial gain. Areas of interest for Britain in the 1800s include Egypt and the Sudan, southern Africa, Nigeria, and Morocco.

While Morocco was not the biggest international interest for Britain, Britain was assuredly one of the most influential foreign powers in Morocco from the late 1820s until the beginning of the twentieth century. Its influence in Morocco was both economic and political. The opening of Moroccan markets provided the British Empire with a new

⁶³ <http://www.minorityrights.org/4886/morocco/berber.html>

market for its own exports, as well as a new market of exotic imports; additionally, the construction of the Suez Canal in the middle of the century lent Morocco yet more economic importance in the British agenda. Politically, Britain's interest in Morocco was an extension of her rivalry with France. British control in Morocco served as a way for her to counteract any French moves in North Africa. The extent of Britain's influence and interest in Morocco can be seen in the reaction of the British government to Moulay Abdul Rahman's decision to revive the practice of Barbary piracy in 1828 in order to help finance his financially struggling government. The British immediately sent a flotilla to blockade Tangier until the Sultan reversed his policy.⁶⁴

Morocco's European relations began favoring the British during the Napoleonic Wars at the end of the 1700s and beginning of the 1800s. Moulay Sulayman (1792-1822) agreed to provide cattle to Gibraltar, provided the British army with grain,⁶⁵ and opened up ports for trade, not out of a love of commerce, but because his government was bankrupt.⁶⁶ Moulay Abdul Rahman (1822-1859), who had formerly been the governor of Essaouira and was therefore acutely aware of the benefits of maritime trade, continued to encourage European trade, signing deals with the British, French, and Portuguese in the

⁶⁴ Khalid Ben-Srhir, *Britain and Morocco during the Embassy of John Drummond Hay, 1845-1886*, pg 18

⁶⁵ *id.*, pg 17

⁶⁶ C.R. Pennell, *Morocco since 1830: A History*, pg 23

mid-1820s.⁶⁷ Trade with Europe continued to grow throughout the course of the century, and proved to be the Trojan horse of European conquest and colonization.⁶⁸

France officially made its entrance into the North African world in 1830 with its invasion and occupation of Algiers. This development made Britain extremely wary, as Algeria lies on the border of Morocco, and in the estimation of the British government, it was better that a weak and fractured, and therefore manipulable, state hold control of the southern half of the mouth of the Mediterranean, rather than a primary European adversary.⁶⁹ The *Makhzan* found itself torn between the designs of the British and the plans of the powerful notable families in its bigger cities. The British favored a policy of non-interference in the Franco-Algerian conflict, not wishing to give the French any reason to change the status quo in Morocco. Many Moroccan notables, however, had commercial interests in western Algeria which they wished to protect, and therefore began raising calls to support and protect *Dār al-Islām*, the Home of Islam.

Sultan Abdul Rahman compromised by dispatching his cousin and brother-in-law Moulay Ali bin Sulayman to occupy Tlemcen, the nearest Algerian city to the Moroccan border, in October 1830.⁷⁰ The arrival of a French warship in Tangier in January 1832 was sufficient to convince the Sultan to recall his troops, but this event also sparked a

⁶⁷ *id.*, pg 24

⁶⁸ Lucette Valensi in Brett and Fentress, pg 181

⁶⁹ Pennell, pg 41

⁷⁰ *id.*, pg 42

local anti-French *jihād*, or struggle, that the Sultan was once again persuaded to support, and that would culminate in an extremely short war in August 1844.⁷¹

Throughout this incident, the British had been negotiating with the Sultan to stop his support for the resistance movement,⁷² but Abdul Rahman was receiving so much pressure from the movement's leaders to support it that, without direct British intervention in Moroccan policy, he was unable to comply with British wishes. When the *Makhzan* sued for peace in 1844, the British were there to mediate the terms of the Treaty of Tangier⁷³ to ensure the French did not make any gains that would give them an advantage over the British. This British negotiation was orchestrated by Britain's Consul-General in Morocco, Edward Drummond Hay.

British influence within Morocco grew throughout the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s. British diplomats, particularly John Drummond Hay, Edward's son and successor, pressured the *Makhzan* to resist the expansion of French influence within the kingdom and to continue enacting policies favorable to British economic needs—namely, greater *Makhzan* control over the piratical populations of the Rif area in northern Morocco, a policy of appeasement and passivity in nearly every international dispute, and reducing import and export tariffs.⁷⁴ Drummond Hay helped introduce the Treaty and Convention on Commerce and Navigation between Britain and Morocco in 1856, which abolished

⁷¹ *id.*, pg 48

⁷² Ben-Srhir, pg 19-20

⁷³ Pennell, pg 49

⁷⁴ *id.*, pg 56

most monopolies, reduced import duties, and fixed a maximum on export duties,⁷⁵ all of which gave Britain exclusive advantages in trade with Morocco, much to the chagrin of many Moroccan notables who prospered from trade monopolies and duty taxes. This treaty “sealed British hegemony in Morocco for a generation.”⁷⁶ It also benefitted the British position that, because of the disruption caused by the 1848 Revolution in France, the French positions of Consul-General and Secretary in Morocco were reassigned nine times throughout Drummond Hay’s tenure,⁷⁷ which resulted in a drop in France’s influence in the country.

Morocco’s importance in British foreign policy also increased when a new waterway was created to facilitate travel to Asia. Construction on the Suez Canal began in 1859. Designed by a Frenchman and dug out by Egyptian manpower, the canal’s usage was dominated by Britain when it opened in 1869. It provided the British with much quicker access to India, the gem in its imperial crown, by eliminating the need to sail all the way around the southern tip of Africa. With the opening of the canal, control of the Strait of Gibraltar became even more important for the British, and thus the strategic value of its influence in Morocco increased to a level beyond that of merely blocking French expansion.

Britain maintained its efforts to avoid foreign occupation of Morocco throughout the 1860s and 1870s. Morocco was forced at the conclusion of the Hispano-Moroccan

⁷⁵ Ben-Srhir, pg 57

⁷⁶ Pennell, pg 61

⁷⁷ *Ibid*

War in 1861 to sign a treaty with the Spanish agreeing to pay 100 million pesetas in indemnity,⁷⁸ but British help in negotiating the treaty, as well as internal instability in Spain throughout the 1860s and early 1870s, prevented the Spanish from furthering their sphere of influence beyond Ceuta and Melilla in the north. France was likewise occupied with problems at home and in Algeria during this time.⁷⁹ The British gained influence in another sector of Morocco when Sultan Sidi Mohammed and his son Moulay Hassan sought to reform the army after its defeat by the Spanish. The *Makhzan* began purchasing firearms from Britain in 1869 and turned to the British to train its recruits starting in 1870.⁸⁰

Britain retained a strong influence in Morocco through the turn of the century. Although Drummond Hay's attempts in 1880-1883 at revising the 1856 treaty failed, Morocco's sultans continually sought British counsel and support in affairs both foreign and domestic until the Cambon-Lansdowne Agreement was signed by the British and French governments in 1904. The British government was responsible for organizing the Madrid Conference in 1880, a conference held among the major European powers to address the issue of the status and rights of Moroccan proteges, native Moroccans serving international employers.⁸¹ The *Makhzan* utilized British assistance in reforming its fiscal

⁷⁸ Edmund Burke III, *Prelude to Protectorate in Morocco: Precolonial Protest and Resistance, 1860-1912*, pg 20

⁷⁹ Pennell, pg 70-71

⁸⁰ *id.*, pg 73

⁸¹ *id.*, pg 86

and administrative systems in 1901.⁸² And in the following year, Walter B. Harris, an English resident in Morocco and author of two texts that will be examined in this project, played the role of mediator in resolving a dispute between the *Makhzan* and Wazzan sharifs regarding the abolition of the Wazzani tax exemptions.⁸³

It was around this time that British influence began waning as that of the French continued growing. When the *Makhzan*'s debts reached the level that it had to seek an international loan, it signed an agreement with a French bank in December 1901.⁸⁴ The Abu Himara revolt 1901 to 1903 opened the door for French reforms, as it displayed to the *Makhzan* that the British program of reforms had failed.⁸⁵ Finally, Britain gave way to French hegemony in Morocco with the Cambon-Lansdowne Agreement of 1904. The agreement stipulated that France renounce her claims on Egypt for freedom of action within Morocco,⁸⁶ and ended the Anglo-French rivalry in North Africa.

Conclusion

The narrative of Amazigh society in Morocco is one of consistent and repeated conquest. The Imazighen were, and remain, viewed as a mysterious “other” by observers from outside their own society. At certain moments throughout history, they were partially assimilated into the new-coming society, such as in the initial Islamic conquests

⁸² Burke III, pg 49-50

⁸³ *id.*, pg 60

⁸⁴ *id.*, pg 56

⁸⁵ *id.*, pg 65

⁸⁶ *id.*, pg 70

of the seventh and eighth centuries. At others, they were marginalized or faced repression, such as the Arabization of Morocco during the independence era. Mohammed VI has seemingly ushered in a new era of liberalization and Amazigh rights since his ascendance to the throne in 1999. The introduction of Tamazight-language instruction into schools, the establishment of the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture, and the inclusion of Tamazight as an official national language suggest that this new era might bridge the gap between Arab and Amazigh in Morocco.

It might seem strange to focus on the British when analyzing European influence in Morocco. The French seem the more logical choice, as they ruled the country as a protectorate for forty-four years, and French remains the second language of the majority of Morocco's urban population. Nonetheless, the British Empire initiated European contact and conversation with Morocco when it was still closed off to the Western world. The British, then, were the first Europeans to encounter the Imazighen, and their impressions and writings laid the foundation for their treatment in all ensuing literature, and possibly even their political and social treatment by Morocco's recent rulers.

Chapter 2: Regarding British Sources

The sources used in this thesis to evaluate perceptions of Amazigh society come from two distinct time periods and locations: Britain in the nineteenth century, and contemporary Morocco. This chapter will examine the former group; I used British sources published during the time of Britain's most significant influence in the country (1820s-1900), and works of both scholarly and popular nature.

The sources I used to inspect British perceptions of Moroccan Imazighen ranged from scholarly articles to travel narratives to one dramatic novel. The main benefit these sources bring to this thesis is their first-person perspective. With the exception of the Mayo novel, each text is written from the personal experiences and the perspective of the author, in several cases recounting his travels within the country. Rather than coming from a secondary source, the perceptions and characterizations on display in these articles come directly from first-hand experiences. Even the two works that do not feature direct dealings within Morocco provide useful insights into the authors' opinions. Hodgson's "Translation of a Berber Manuscript" is inherently affected by the act of his translation, as no translator can remove his/her voice from the resulting translation; and Mayo's *The Berber*, though a novel, contains numerous breaks from the course of the narrative wherein the author provides his own insights, rather than those of his characters. A second reason I chose these specific sources is because of their accessibility. The fact that these articles and books were archived and preserved supports the argument for their importance and readership within Great Britain.

The academic articles were the shortest sources, the longest consisting of twenty-seven pages, and discussed Amazigh society and culture only tangentially. They generally focused on geographic facts and descriptions of the country and its inhabitants, akin to the information available on the CIA World Factbook. This made physical descriptions relatively easy to obtain, but descriptions of cultural practices and traditions were seldom to be found. The popular sources I used were all full-length books; two are travel narratives written for popular publishing rather than publishing in a journal, and the third is a novel. These sources contain many more depictions of Amazigh life and customs than the academic sources, and were thus much more useful in analyzing British perceptions of Amazigh-ness throughout this time period. What separates the two groups of sources is where they were published. The academic sources were published in official societies in Great Britain, while the popular sources appeared in magazines or were full length books published for public consumption. By using sources of both kinds, I was able to create a cohesive perception of the Moroccan Amazigh within British society as a whole rather than just one part of it.

Academic Sources

“Translation of a Berber Manuscript” appeared in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* in 1837. The manuscript itself was written by an Amazigh man named Sidi Ibrahim ben Muhammed under the direction of W. B. Hodgson, a former consul at Algiers, and therefore its contents were subjected to his review before publication. The article contains several snapshots of towns and villages in the Moroccan countryside, sometimes featuring the author’s narrative of an event, such as

the capturing and enslavement of Christian sailors or the defiance of a new Sultan, and other times merely giving geographic information about the town and surrounding region, such as population and number of troops there, as well as resources available. Though the article nominally addresses an Amazigh manuscript, it is often unclear in its text if the groups it is discussing are Imazighen or not; the only passages that are for sure are the story about the *Aith Hamed* and a section entitled *Aith Amran* —as *Aith* or *Ait* is the Tamazight word for “tribe”—, in addition to a section about the tribe *Tegergust*. In contrast to the other sources, the Amazigh groups mentioned in this article are those living in the Sus region near and on Morocco’s southern Atlantic coast. The other sources I encountered focus mainly on the Imazighen of the Atlas Mountains and, to a limited extent, those of the Rif in Morocco’s north. The groups described in this source seem to be a mix of Arab tribes and Amazigh tribes, as I found tribe names in both the Arabic language and dialects of the Tamazight language.

Joseph Thomson’s “A Journey to Southern Morocco and the Atlas Mountains” was first read at a meeting of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography in November of 1888, and was published the following year. Thomson, the namesake of the Thomson’s gazelle, was a Scottish geologist and explorer. Though he is more well-known today for his travels in eastern and southern Africa, he went on an expedition to Morocco in 1888.⁸⁷ This article chronicles Thomson’s journey to the interior of Morocco, an empire that, despite its extreme proximity to Europe, had many

⁸⁷ Encyclopedia Britannica

parts that “remained as completely unexplored as many districts in the heart of Africa.”⁸⁸ Thomson began his article with an acknowledgement of other expeditions into the country’s interior; he actually referenced Joseph Hooker’s excursion in 1871, which is the subject of another source that will be discussed below. Thomson’s mentioning of the Imazighen is quite sparse; this is partially due to a letter from the Sultan forbidding him and his party from entering the mountains, which suggests a less-than-firm authority over the population of the mountains by the Sultan. In fact, he never actually mentions them as Imazighen or Berbers by name. Rather, he refers to them as “armed mountaineers,” and only makes note of them when they actively barred his attempts to reach various peaks of the Atlas Mountains. However, from descriptions found in other sources, one can infer that he is indeed speaking of Imazighen in these instances.

The final article of academic nature I used is “The Berbers of Morocco,” written by Walter B. Harris and published in *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* in 1898. Harris was a long-term resident of Morocco, settling there in 1887 when he was only 19.⁸⁹ He would grow up to become a writer for *The Times* and, because of his access to Moroccan royalty, played a role in European domination of Morocco in the early twentieth century.⁹⁰ Additionally, his physical appearance allowed him to pass as a native Moroccan, granting him the ability to access

⁸⁸ Joseph Thomson, “A Journey to Southern Morocco and the Atlas Mountains,” pg 1

⁸⁹ John Fisher, “‘An Eagle Whose Wings Are Not Always Easy To Clip’: Walter Burton Harris,” pg 155-158

⁹⁰ *Ibid*

otherwise off-limits areas of the country.⁹¹ In contrast to the other articles available from this time period, Harris' piece seeks to explicitly discuss Morocco's aboriginal ethnic group. This article, despite its short length, gives more detailed characterizations of Moroccan Imazighen than do any of the preceding sources. It not only acknowledges the linguistic differences between Imazighen and Arabs (and between different Amazigh groups), it also gives glimpses and insight into various characteristics of Amazigh society and mindset, discussing such facets as religion, warfare, and honor.

Popular Sources

The earliest popular source I utilized is a novel written by William Starbuck Mayo, a successful novelist in London, in 1850 titled *The Berber; or, The Mountaineer of the Atlas: A Tale of the Sallee Rovers*. This novel reads like a modern soap opera, featuring long-lost brothers, Spanish maidens kidnapped by pirates, a mysterious handsome Amazigh chieftain, and an insane sultan. Throughout the course of the novel, Mayo takes breaks from the narrative to address the reader directly, breaching the literary fourth wall. These excerpts served as opportunities to for the author to clarify possible points of confusion for the average reader, such as the governmental structure of the Moroccan Kingdom, the system of royal tribute, and points of Amazigh culture important to the story. It is these excerpts, in conjunction with the parts of the novel centered around the Amazigh characters of the story, that provided valuable insight into how British civilians imagined Moroccan Imazighen at that time.

⁹¹ *Ibid*

A second popular source I used is “Morocco,” an article published in *New Monthly Magazine* in 1860. It discusses the kingdom of Morocco, its geography, and inhabitants in the context of the then-ongoing Hispano-Moroccan War. The author’s name is not given, but the magazine’s editor was William Harrison Ainsworth, who had been a historical novelist before purchasing the magazine. The article begins, and is littered, with a scathing harangue of the Moroccan government, and to a limited extent, its people. It is clear that the author supports the colonization of Morocco by Britain, as it would allow the British to civilize the Moroccan people. The article gives geographic insight to the contested territory in northern Morocco, from the Spanish cities of Melilla and Ceuta on the Mediterranean coast down to Rabat and Salé on the Atlantic to Fez and Meknes in the country’s interior. The minimal attention the author gives to Morocco’s Imazighen is in the context of possible additional opposition forces for the Spanish to face if the Imazighen were to interpret the Hispano-Moroccan war as an attack on Islam.

The third British source from the nineteenth century is *Journal of a Tour in Morocco and the Great Atlas* by Joseph Dalton Hooker, a renowned British botanist, explorer, and friend of Charles Darwin. This travel narrative, published in 1878, was popular enough to merit mentioning in Thomson’s work about his own trip to Morocco’s interior decades later. Divided into numbered chapters, Hooker’s narrative chronicles the voyage he and his companions took across the Atlas Mountains. En route to their destination, they also crossed the Rif mountains, though Hooker paid more attention to the characteristics of the mountains themselves than to those of their inhabitants. As a botanist, Hooker’s principal goal on this journey was to collect, classify, and categorize

the wildlife he encountered in Morocco. His recognition and documentation of Amazigh appearances, behaviors, and practices were only secondary objectives, but because of the length and detail of his narrative, he still provides profitable information to the subject of this thesis.

The most recent piece I evaluated is the book *Tafilet: The Narrative of a Journey of Exploration in the Atlas Mountains and the Oases of the North-West Sahara*, published in 1895 and written by Walter B. Harris. Harris' objective was to cross the Atlas Mountains to Tafilet, a small oasis town on the edge of the Sahara, where the Sultan had gone for a rare visit. His excursion brought him into contact with several different Amazigh communities, and therefore his writing offers the reader a glimpse into British understanding of the differences between Morocco's various Amazigh groups. Though not an anthropologist by training, Harris' observations in this narrative are the closest of these sources to a modern ethnography. Unlike the other sources, this book also contains several pictures of both the landscape and the people Harris and his company encountered whilst in Morocco.

Trends within Academic Sources

Among the scholarly sources, the only facets of Amazigh identity commonly discussed were their propensity for violence and their lower level of civilization. These factors, it can be inferred, were the most pronounced (read: different, or exotic) features in the eyes of the British travellers. The near-constant state of conflict in Amazigh society seems to have struck a chord in this collection of sources. This could be either because the authors found it so strange and foreign, or because they identified so strongly with it,

but on a deep, hidden level (many of the British projects of colonization involved violent suppression, not to mention all of wars in which the nation had been embroiled throughout its history). One facet of Edward Said's theory about Orientalism is the belief that Eastern culture embodied the desires and urges that were repressed in Western societies. That is why such scenes of violence, along with sexuality (which really did not come up in these writings on Morocco) are so ubiquitous in literature on "the Orient" — writing about the East gave the Western traveler the opportunity to openly discuss these intimate, suppressed impulses.⁹²

The British scholarly writers also altogether noted the different makeup of Amazigh civilization, which they interpreted as inferior to their own, as well as the rest of Europe. The Morocco that the British encountered had not gone through the Industrial Revolution, and the Imazighen did not live in Morocco's largest cities as the British societal elites and academics did. The rural, subsistence lifestyle of the Imazighen was a product of historical marginalization by the numerous civilizations which had subjugated the region, and the British saw it as second-rate. They equated the differences between Amazigh society and their own as objective faults.

Trends within Popular Sources

These sources were much longer in form than the scholarly articles, and therefore, the authors had more room to note and discuss the aspects of Amazigh society that they found peculiar and conspicuous. Among the popular sources, all of the authors noted the variability amongst the Imazighen, the animosity between the Imazighen and their Arab

⁹² Edward Said, *Orientalism*

neighbors, and the unique form of Islam practiced by the Imazighen, in addition to the propensity for violence and lower level of civilization previously discussed in the scholarly sources.

The British writers noticed the regional and tribal differences among the Amazigh groups they encountered. Just as there were and remain regional differences among the cities of Great Britain, so there were and still are among the various Amazigh groups of Morocco. Though they did not see the Imazighen as equals, these writers recognized in them a level of civilization close enough to their own to be nuanced and diverse rather than a single, uniform entity.

The British authors of popular sources also all commented on the antipathy between the Imazighen and the Arabs within Morocco. The ubiquitous acknowledgement of this hostility suggests that the relative level of the intensity of the animosity was quite high, otherwise it might have been overlooked. As with the references to violence in general, this consistent recognition of enmity is so popular either because it was seen by the writers as something quite foreign, or, alternatively, because it mirrored an aspect of British society that was otherwise masked or misrecognized. One need only to review Britain's history with France to see a dictionary definition of animosity.

The version of Islam practiced by the Imazighen was yet another point commonly acknowledged by popular British writers. The British were familiar with Islam from their dealings with the Ottoman Empire and Egypt, but the way in which the Imazighen practiced Muhammad's religion was quite unlike these more orthodox interpretations. Had the Imazighen practiced a more familiar style of Islam, British authors would likely

have noted that they were Muslims and moved on from the subject, as it would have required no further explanation. However, the use and place of religion in Amazigh societies, in addition to their intermingling of older traditions with Islam, gave rise to questions about the place of religion in British society, where wars had been waged and monarchs beheaded on the basis of religion alone.

Chapter 3: Findings in British Sources

In this chapter, I provide more extensive and in-depth analysis of the primary source material from nineteenth century Great Britain. This analysis is organized by theme or characteristic, with examples provided within each section from the various sources.

To begin, it is worth noting that the British did in fact differentiate between Arab and Amazigh in Morocco. Rather than simply lumping into one group all the inhabitants of this “China of the West”⁹³ (a likewise foreign land that lay much closer to home than China itself), the British nationals who wrote about Morocco acknowledged the distinction between the two groups. In fact, several travelers made the Imazighen the subject of anthropological and ethnographic study. This is logical, considering the policy of divide-and-rule that they implemented quite successfully throughout their empire in such places as India and Nigeria. Following this policy, British representatives sought to understand the relationship between Morocco’s Arab and Amazigh populations in order to manipulate it to their advantage. To do this, they subjected Morocco’s inhabitants to constant comparison in their writings; most descriptions of Amazigh life, society, and even appearance are given vis-à-vis the Arabs. The differences noted between the two in the sources were both of a superficial nature, regarding dress and appearance, and more substantive, addressing cultural and behavioral distinctions between the two populations.

⁹³ Joseph Dalton Hooker and John Ball, *Journal of a Tour in Marocco and the Great Atlas*, pg 11

Dress and Appearance

The dress and appearance of Imazighen was the first thing British authors noticed. The travel narratives of Joseph Hooker and Walter Harris give lengthy descriptions of the clothing of Morocco's natives. Hooker describes the hooded, goat-hair cloaks worn by the men in the Atlas mountains, which Harris would later identify as "*khanif* or *haidus*,"⁹⁴ as "somewhat looser than the Moorish [here understood to mean "Arab"] *jellabia*."⁹⁵ Harris also described the garments of the Imazighen as "much curtailed about the legs, and instead of the dragging and mud-stained skirts of the Arab there appeared the sinewy limbs of the children of the mountains."⁹⁶

British writers extended the descriptive comparisons between Moroccan Arabs and Imazighen by addressing their physical characteristics and traits. The general trend in the sources was that British authors viewed the Imazighen as physically superior to their Arab neighbors. As one author cited, "Their mode of life renders them more robust and active than their neighbours of the plains."⁹⁷ Hooker described the women as being "rather better favoured than those we had seen in the lower valley,"⁹⁸ and Harris

⁹⁴ Walter B. Harris, *Tafilet: The Narrative of a Journey of Exploration in the Atlas Mountains and the Oases of the North-West Sahara*, pg 63

⁹⁵ Hooker and Ball, pg 216

⁹⁶ Harris, pg 63

⁹⁷ "Morocco," *New Monthly Magazine*, pg 10

⁹⁸ Hooker and Ball, pg 216

described the men as “good sturdy fellows... always laughing and running races”⁹⁹ and being of “handsome face and fine bearing.”¹⁰⁰

Harris also offered a quick sketch of an Amazigh salt mine that further illustrates this characterization of the Imazighen as superior physical specimens. While traveling with his company near Ouarzazate, Harris came upon a salt mine being worked by a number of Amazigh men and their mules. He described the men as “half-nude men with their rough picks hewing away and singing the while,”¹⁰¹ but the relevant part of the story comes when Harris describes the descent from the mine. The mine was situated above the road on a steep precipice, but man and beast both were able to navigate the treacherous terrain with ease and regularity— “The manner in which both man and beasts succeeded in descending seemed to us, as we stood and watched, incredible, yet we were told that he made the journey every day to this spot in the face of the precipice.”¹⁰²

Warlike Character

Though Imazighen dress and appearance was the first observation of British writers, the most frequently noted characterization of Imazighen by far was that of the excessively violent and militant mountaineer. This portrayal was present in every source I encountered. Various aspects of this representation were highlighted differently in each text, but the general idea of the Amazigh as excessively violent seems to have been

⁹⁹ Harris, pg 109

¹⁰⁰ *id.*, pg 111

¹⁰¹ *id.*, pg 112

¹⁰² *ibid*

universally acknowledged in the British media of the nineteenth century. There were three general characterizations of Amazigh warlike character. First was the society and psychology of Imazighen in general, being obsessed with weaponry and acclimated to daily skirmishes and warfare. Second were the numerous conflicts between the Imazighen and their Arab neighbors. And third was the state of near constant warfare amongst the Amazigh tribes themselves.

The British depicted the Imazighen of Morocco as comprising a society infatuated with weaponry that had incorporated violence into its daily routines. One author described them as “a warlike and semi-barbarous race,”¹⁰³ and Mayo, in an authorial aside to his readers, described Morocco’s Amazigh population as “very fond of their weapons, and of military games and exercises.”¹⁰⁴ Harris, too, described them as living, “a wild gipsy life, at war with all men.”¹⁰⁵ Hooker noted one practice that shows how every societal convention of the Imazighen he encountered had a dual purpose—practical and tactical. Hooker says:

The destructive practice of setting fire to the brushwood is the sole cause that prevents the northern slopes of the Great Atlas from being clothed with valuable timber. The motive is not only the desire to obtain pasture for sheep and goats, but also to deprive an enemy of cover for ambush during the frequent skirmishes that occur between neighboring tribes.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ “Morocco,” pg 15

¹⁰⁴ William Starbuck Mayo, *The Berber; or, The Mountaineer of the Atlas: A Tale of the Salee Rovers*, pg 155

¹⁰⁵ Harris, pg 146-147

¹⁰⁶ Hooker and Ball, pg 178

Hodgson shared another anecdote that highlights Amazigh society's emphasis on warfare. Though children were exempt from the violence of warfare and skirmishes in Amazigh society, it was common practice that, according to Hodgson's article, "when a boy arrives at the age prescribed for the fast of Ramadhan, his father purchases for him a musket and a sword."¹⁰⁷ Harris echoes this sentiment in his writing, noting that during conflicts, "no quarter is given, any one old enough to carry a gun or dagger, the two weapons of the country, [is] considered fair game."¹⁰⁸ This particular right of passage turned out to be of great importance, for Hodgson's article goes on, claiming, "no full-grown person ever goes to it without his musket and his sword."¹⁰⁹ Perhaps it is for this reason that, when the Imazighen of the Rif gathered for market days, they were invariably, "occasions of fierce and incessant quarrels among themselves, when it is not unusual for two or three persons to be left dead on the spot."¹¹⁰ Amazigh weapons proved to be used for more than market violence. One author wrote about the Imazighen he encountered, "The Berbers are all hunters and practised shots, being especially handy with their guns, upon which they expend large sums of money, and which they twirl into the air, catching them again with great dexterity."¹¹¹ Hooker emphasized this love of guns over other gifts in his narrative. According to him, the Imazighen were not interested in

¹⁰⁷ W. B. Hodgson, "Translation of a Berber Manuscript," pg 125

¹⁰⁸ Harris, pg 168-169

¹⁰⁹ Hodgson, pg 125

¹¹⁰ James Richardson in "Morocco," pg 15

¹¹¹ "Morocco," pg 11

the musical boxes and watches that he and his companions tried to give them. Rather, “fire-arms, not necessarily of modern make, are far more welcome than any other gifts.”¹¹² So great was the desire of the Imazighen for weapons that some were even pushed to the point of stealing. One of Walter Harris’ men had a powder-horn made of the horn of a wild Barbary sheep set in brass and silver stolen from him.¹¹³ Harris also offered another depiction of Moroccan Imazighen as a war-obsessed society when he delivered his opinion that “the Berber is never happy unless he has some one to kill, or is running a risk of being shot himself from behind some stone.”¹¹⁴

The second aspect of Amazigh warlike character these British texts emphasized was the frequent fighting amongst their various tribes. Harris described Morocco as “A country where blood feuds are forever being waged.”¹¹⁵ Hodgson’s translation text noted how such consistent conflict affected tribal dynamics when writing about the Tegergust tribe, which had settled by the Sus River. According to the article, “The tribe is divided into three sections, which fight with each other. They have each a Shaikh. These three divisions of the tribe are in a state of constant hostility.”¹¹⁶ The intra-tribal conflicts could go on for most of the year before being settled— “They go to each other’s villages at night and steal cattle and horses, and kill each other. During the day, they station two

¹¹² Hooker and Ball, pg 208

¹¹³ Harris, pg 116

¹¹⁴ *id.*, pg 99

¹¹⁵ Walter B. Harris, “The Berbers of Morocco,” pg 70

¹¹⁶ Hodgson, pg 125

horsemen, as guards, between the villages. The villagers thus remain at war, for months, or a whole year, until the son of Ben Naser comes through the country, and arranges the difficulties of all the villages.”¹¹⁷ Mayo echoed this sentiment of frequent Amazigh vs. Amazigh conflict in his novel, saying, “the Berbers are divided into tribes, between whom interminable feuds exist, some of which date back as far as the era of Mohammed. An almost continued state of hostility is the consequence.”¹¹⁸ According to Harris, such is the mutual animosity amongst the Imazighen that “marriage, or even cordiality, between the tribes is unknown.”¹¹⁹ In fact, Harris went on to say that hostilities are not just on the tribal level, but, “village against village, and even household against household... it was the custom for neighbours to fire at one another from their windows and roofs whenever the opportunity presented itself.” Harris even ventured so far as to suggest that the Amazigh societies of Morocco caused their own decline. He stated that “[t]he constant state of warfare existing amongst the Berber people has no doubt caused this disintegration of the larger tribes, by the changing, acquisition, and losing of territory.”¹²⁰ So prevalent was fighting among some Amazigh groups that they had to change the location of the market to minimize the opportunity for conflict:

The object of [the market’s] situation is that the spot is the only one clear from the forest, and therefore attack and fighting is less likely to occur than would be

¹¹⁷ *id.*, pg 125-126

¹¹⁸ Mayo, pg 152-153

¹¹⁹ Harris, pg 96

¹²⁰ *id.*, pg 116

the case amongst the palm-groves; for, ignoring their constant wars with the Berbers of the surrounding country, the tribes and even villages of Askura are continually fighting amongst themselves.¹²¹

Harris reiterated his opinion of the Imazighen in his second work on Morocco. Referring to their conflicts as a state of “eternal war,” he is quoted, “It is a case not only of tribe against tribe and family against family, but often even of individual against individual.”¹²²

The last characterization of Moroccan Amazigh warlike character is that of the Amazigh fighting against the outsider. Frequently, this outsider is the Arab-dominated Moroccan state, but there are also several references to historical battles with the Spanish. Even the British travelers, who carried letters of permission from the sultan, were at some risk. Thomson and his party were traveling through the mountains when they came across “an excited crowd of armed mountaineers, all of them making threatening gestures, but two especially furiously attempting to extricate themselves from more peaceable companions, with the very evident object of shooting me.”¹²³ Although the sultan exercised nominal sovereignty over the Amazigh inhabitants of Morocco, the two parties in fact had a quite tenuous relationship. In the provinces of Rif and Garet, Richardson observed “the emperor exercises an extremely precarious authority” over the region’s “warlike and semi-barbarous race of Berbers.”¹²⁴ Hodgson’s translation text tells

¹²¹ *id.*, pg 136-137

¹²² Walter B. Harris, “The Berbers of Morocco,” pg 64

¹²³ Thomson, pg 10

¹²⁴ James Richardson in “Morocco,” pg 15

of a three-day battle between an Amazigh tribe and an armed unit of Moroccan troops on the Elgas River. Though they fought fiercely, the Imazighen lost the battle, and the heads of fourteen of their chiefs.¹²⁵ William Starbuck Mayo referenced the hostility of the Moroccan Imazighen in his novel as well. According to the narrator, there settled outside of the capital city of Meknes an Amazigh tribe called the Ait Amore, who were much feared for having “defeated a body of troops that the sultan had sent against them, and had even issued from their strongholds in the hills, and were ravaging the country west of the capital.”¹²⁶ Such violence against imperial troops was, at times, escalated enough to make even the sultan feel insecure. One author described the situation thus: ““In a country like Morocco, of widely distinct races and hostile tribes, all naturally detesting each other, the emperor finds in [his cavalry] his only safety.””¹²⁷

However, the Amazigh communities seem to have been able to put aside their animosity towards their Arab neighbors when it came to defending their shared religion. For the sake of Islam, British authors noted that they would redirect their violence towards anyone who threatened the religion. For instance, during the Hispano-Moroccan War of 1859-1860, the two groups fought alongside one another against this common enemy and outsider:

In the case of the proclamation of a holy war, as in the present instance, the Berber tribes, including the Amazight, the Shuluh, as well as all the other Kabayil

¹²⁵ Hodgson, pg 117

¹²⁶ Mayo, pg 125

¹²⁷ James Richardson in “Morocco,” pg 11

of the distant Atlas, and even the warlike Tuwarik of the desert, swell the number of the enemy by some hundreds of thousands of sober, intrepid, and enduring fanatics.¹²⁸

Furthermore, the Imazighen made up a great part of the Muslim forces that conquered Andalusia in the eighth century. Mayo acknowledges this fact in his novel. When one of the story's main characters, a young Spanish girl, finds herself whisked away from danger by a mysterious stranger, she inquires about her rescuer's identity. He reveals his Amazigh heritage, and suggests that she, too, likely has Amazigh blood. In response to her disbelief, the man tells her of the Muslim conquest of Spain, saying:

... 'twas the Berbers who conquered Spain. 'Twas the Berbers, in the gallant bands of Tarik Ibn Zeyed and his master Mirza Ibin Nasseyr, who overthrew the gothic monarchy in Spain. 'Twas the Berbers who composed the vast array that, under Yusef Ibn Tashfir, defeated the hosts of Alfonzo on the Field of Zalaca. 'Twas the Berbers who, under the great Yakoob Almanzor, routed the king of Castile on the plains of Alarcos, and who swept triumphant through the country to the hills of Asturias; and it was the Berbers who followed Mohammed Ibn Abdallah by hundreds of thousands to the fatal field of Las Narvas.¹²⁹

The Imazighen battled the Spaniards once more at the end of the nineteenth century. Harris commented on their military success, saying, "That the Riffis, in common with the other members of the Berber people, are possessed of great courage there is no

¹²⁸ "Morocco," pg 11

¹²⁹ Mayo, pg 145

doubt, for the manner in which they fought and practically routed the Spaniards in the vicinity of Melilla in 1894 clearly demonstrated the fact.”¹³⁰

When encountering all of this evidence, one is left with the impression that British authors traveling in the country viewed Amazigh societies in Morocco at this time as merely collections of warriors who resided together. They did not note any division of labor or education system, but instead focused on the occurrences of violence. British travelers believed that violence was a common and integral part of life in these communities, and that “bloodshed and murder [were] of everyday occurrence.”¹³¹

Distinctions between Different Amazigh Groups

In addition to recognizing the difference between Arabs and Imazighen, the sources further documented the distinctions between various Amazigh groups. They identify four distinct Amazigh groups within the empire of Morocco. This is their distribution, according to Harris:

- (i.) Shelha proper, as spoken generally throughout the Atlas, from the tribes of Ghiata, Aït Yussi, and Beni Mgild, to the southeast of Fez, as far along the Atlas as about due south of Marakesh; (ii.) Riffia, spoken by the Riffis inhabiting the mountains of the north coast, from the south-west of Tetuan to the French frontier of the province of Oran; (iii.) Susía, spoken from along the Atlas and the Sus valley to the south, from where Shelha proper terminates, about due south of Marakesh, to the Atlantic coast; and (iv.) Drauíá, the common tongue all along

¹³⁰ Walter B. Harris, “The Berbers of Morocco,” pg 65

¹³¹ Harris, pg 97

the valley of the Wad Draa from Mesgita, where the junction of the Dads and Idermi form that river to where it flows into the Atlantic.¹³²

Differences between these groups are both social and physical, while their linguistic differences were only noted by Walter Harris in his *Tafilet* narrative. In Mayo's novel, the chieftain of the Beni Mozarg explains this to the Spanish damsel he rescues when she tells him that she thought all Imazighen were uncivilized. "Whoever told you so, señorita, does them great injustice. True, there are very different degrees of civilization prevailing among the numerous tribes and families into which they are divided. The Beni Mozarg, a branch of the great tribe of Ait Amore, are as far removed from barbarism as the inhabitants of any district of your own Spain."¹³³

Even neighboring tribes can have significant differences, as Hooker acknowledged when he wrote, "...remarks *àpropos* of the Berbers of Dads are not equally applicable to those of Aït Atta for instance, though these two tribes are neighbors."¹³⁴ He went on to remark "how impossible a task it would be to enter at any length into the peculiarities of a race which at different points presents such vastly different characteristics, both in the physical aspect of the country they inhabit and in their manners and customs."¹³⁵ Even geographic features received different names from different groups— "a mountain known here by one title is a few miles farther on spoken

¹³² *id.*, pg 100

¹³³ Mayo, pg 127

¹³⁴ Hooker and Ball, pg 92

¹³⁵ *id.*, pg 93

of by an entirely different one.”¹³⁶ The tribes were so disconnected that, as noted above, “marriage, or even cordiality, between the tribes is unknown.”¹³⁷

Additionally, there is great phenotypic variability among the Imazighen of Morocco. In one scene of Mayo’s novel, the sultan is concerned about the activities of an Amazigh chieftain whose tribe resides within a day’s ride of the capital city of Meknes, but whom none of his advisers had ever seen. One of them claimed that he is almost black in skin color, but the *kaid* (essentially a minister, or deputy) of the gardens objected stating, “No; he is white, with fair hair: the Beni Mozarg are the whitest of the tribes; you can tell them in a moment from all other Berbers who throng the *socco* on market days.”¹³⁸ Therefore, the reader is left to infer that Amazigh skin color can run the gamut from light to dark.

At Odds with Arabs

Another prominent characteristic British authors noted was the animosity felt by Moroccan Imazighen toward the empire’s Arab inhabitants. Likely influenced by their experiences during and after the Islamic conquests of the seventh century, or possibly because of their conflicting ways of life, Morocco’s native population retained in contempt of their Arab neighbors through the nineteenth century. I have already referenced the frequent military conflicts between the two ethnic groups, but the animosity that British writers describe is more complex than just physical violence.

¹³⁶ *id.*, pg 118

¹³⁷ *id.*, pg 96-97

¹³⁸ Mayo, pg 74

Harris suggests that this malice originated with the Arabs' initial conquest of North Africa, saying:

... for since the first conquest of the country by the invading Semites, a deadly hatred has existed, which burns to-day as fiercely as ever, fanned into rebellion and warfare whenever the dominating Arab power attempts to enforce tribute, or practises some nefarious act of treachery, in which act the Moorish Government is unequalled, upon the more confiding and more manly Berbers. Everything in fact has tended through all these centuries to widen the breach between them, until to-day, even when inhabiting common soil in the cities, the two races remain entirely separate.¹³⁹

One practice that solidified this animosity is that of Arabs monopolizing resources. Hooker describes communities on the edge of the Sahara wherein Moroccan Arabs had control over the valuable oases which make life there possible. This practice pushed the Amazigh communities to thievery just to survive:

But when we learn that all the fertile oases of the Sahara have been monopolised by a small class of Arab descent, who rest their claims on religious authority, it is not apparent that there is any alternative for those who do not belong to the privileged class; and, under such an anomalous condition of society, the energy of the superior race will show itself in robbery, where that becomes the only means of obtaining a livelihood.¹⁴⁰

This disdain for Arabs was even inculcated in Amazigh children. According to Harris, the children regularly built small dolls and figurines for playing. Oftentimes, these figurines were cast as Arab horsemen, and, “[t]he horsemen were generally stood up a

¹³⁹ Walter B. Harris, “The Berbers of Morocco,” pg 62

¹⁴⁰ Hooker and Ball, pg 233-234

few yards off and pelted with stones until broken, the excited urchins meanwhile shouting, ‘The Arabs! The Arabs!’—the common war-cry of their tribe when fighting the latter race.”¹⁴¹

This ingrained malice was furthermore directed at members of the sultan’s government, and even the sultan himself. Take for example the letter regarding tribute that was delivered to the sultan’s bedchamber on the orders Casbin el Subah, leader of the Ait Amoor, in Mayo’s novel:

To the powerful Muley Ismael, emperor of Morocco, Soos, and Tefilet, whom God preserve in the paths of justice and mercy. Know that thy demand for more tribute than the free Amazerg of the hills has of his own accord consented to pay is unjust. Know also that thy design to ravage the country of the Ait Amoor is known to me. Be warned in time and let there be peace between us. I fear you not, and wish you well, in token whereof I pin this paper with my dagger to your pillow and not to your heart.¹⁴²

The disdain of the Moroccan Imazighen towards their nominal government is demonstrated once more in Harris’ narrative. When the sultan planned to travel through a region inhabited by a community of Imazighen, he was received out of obligation. However, the “different and semi-conquered nation, would provide nothing or little for his welfare, and whose reception, if hearty enough in words, would lack an real enthusiasm.”¹⁴³ Harris goes on later to point out the disdain of the Imazighen towards

¹⁴¹ Harris, pg 162-163

¹⁴² Mayo, pg 70

¹⁴³ Harris, pg 5

their fellow countrymen, even suggesting that if the Imazighen had it their way, they would oust the Arabs completely from the land— “Certain it is that the deadly hatred still existing between the two races is keenly alive to-day, and were the Arabs less strong, or their position more open to attack, there is no doubt that they would have been ousted long ago from so fertile and rich an oasis.”¹⁴⁴

Strange Version of Islam

The one aspect of Arab society that the Imazighen have wholeheartedly incorporated into their own is the religion of Islam. Before the Islamic conquests brought Arabs from the east, most Imazighen of Morocco practiced either a pagan religion or Christianity. However, since the Arabs swept across North Africa, the Amazigh communities in Morocco have almost ubiquitously accepted Islam at least nominally. Hodgson’s Tamazight translation article claims that one of the very limited number of Tamazight-language books was a religious text:

The Shaikh *Hamed ben Muhammed ben Naser*, on whom be the blessings of God! composed his book in the *Shilha* language, and called it the Book of the *Amazigh*. This book treats of those duties which are of positive precept, and of the *Sunnah*. It treats of the duties of fasting, and instructs as to what is lawful and forbidden among men.¹⁴⁵

Mayo also acknowledged the Amazigh acceptance of Islam in his novel. In one of the sections where he leaves the story behind as narrator and writes directly to his readers, he states, “Among the Berbers, in the present day, the Mohammedan religion

¹⁴⁴ *id.*, pg 138

¹⁴⁵ Hodgson, pg 120

prevails, mixed up, however, with many old peculiar notions and observances, some of which unquestionably date their origin from the time when the whole of Northern Africa was nominally Christian.”¹⁴⁶ Harris states that, even though the Imazighen accepted the religion of the Arabs, “they do not seem to be fanatical, and are altogether in their natures much less passionate than their Arab neighbours.”¹⁴⁷ The image this creates is of a society that incorporates new, outside influences with its old, deeply-rooted practices in a form of reconciliation between the two. According to Hooker, the Imazighen were rather lax in their adherence to the Qur’anic dogma they had accepted, but they were extravagant in their veneration of Islam’s saints, to the point that rivaled the Arabs. While traveling with a company of Imazighen, they came across a shrine, and this was the reaction of the company: “As we came in sight of the *zaouia*, each of our troop, Shelluh [Amazigh] as well as Moor [Arab], commenced to recite prayers, and then, after prostrating himself on the ground, with his face towards the sanctuary, proceeded to add a stone to certain heaps that stood beside the track.”¹⁴⁸

The other religious aspect that seemed of paramount importance to the Imazighen Hooker encountered was the existence of *djinns*, or spirits. Hooker and his company wanted to reach the peak of one of the mountains through which they were passing, but the Amazigh companions with whom he was lodging wished for them not to approach it, for they considered it hallowed ground. Hooker ignored their warnings, and when he and

¹⁴⁶ Mayo, pg 155

¹⁴⁷ Walter B. Harris, “The Berbers of Morocco,” pg 66

¹⁴⁸ Hooker and Ball, pg 191

his associates approached it, and their Amazigh servants with them, a fierce storm broke out. This greatly frightened his Amazigh men, and one of them proceeded to sacrifice the chicken he was carrying with him— “We had not before noticed that one of the Shelluhs carried with him a live cock under his arm. In a state of the utmost excitement, he now proceeded to cut the animal’s throat, in order thus to appease the wrath of our supernatural foes, then renewing the appeal to us to forego further provocation.”¹⁴⁹

Anti-Christian/European

In addition to a strong disdain for Arabs, the British writers of the nineteenth century frequently highlighted a perceived animosity of Imazighen towards Europeans. In fact, at least one author conducted his entire journey through Morocco in the guise of an Arab rather than reveal himself as a white European. In the sources I encountered, this phenomenon was localized to the population of the region around the Rif mountains on Morocco’s northern coastline, as opposed to the other regions of Morocco with significant Amazigh populations. Hooker described the presence of a Christian on the highest mountain as a “profanation.”¹⁵⁰ Richardson issued a general warning to sailors near north Morocco: “Should any unfortunate vessel strike on these coasts, the crew find themselves in the hands of inhuman wreckers. No European traveller has ever visited these provinces, and we may state positively that journeying here is more dangerous than in the farthest wastes of the Sahara.”¹⁵¹ Hodgson’s article shared with his readers a

¹⁴⁹ *id.*, pg 223

¹⁵⁰ *id.*, pg 9

¹⁵¹ James Richardson in “Morocco,” pg 15-16

cautionary tale for Christians dealing with the tribe Aith Amran. According to the text, a Christian vessel landed on the tribe's shore, wanting to barter and trade with the inhabitants. The tribe members agreed, and enticed all but four of the sailors to come ashore to collect water for the return voyage. While they were away, the Imazighen sent a small vessel of men to the Christian ship, who took it by force, killing two, and capturing the other two. The tribe captured the rest of the Christians who had disembarked to gather water, and sold the lot into slavery among the various neighboring tribes, as well as their ship.¹⁵² Taking these readings together, the reader is left with an image of a strongly anti-European community in northern Morocco, where the Christian traveller had to fear not only thievery of his possessions, but also being sold into slavery.

Lower Level of Civilization

The Imazighen of Morocco were portrayed as wild and uncivilized. The words "mountaineer" and "tribesmen" were often used as replacement terms to refer to Morocco's aboriginal people in the majority of the sources I encountered. Hooker was rather blunt in his appraisal: "But we were scarcely prepared to find that the utmost excesses of barbarism are matters of daily occurrence in a country so close at hand."¹⁵³ Harris, too, was quite direct: "They are honest, thrifty and shy, pleasant and good-natured, but as a rule stupid."¹⁵⁴ To further his point, Harris also acknowledges the illiteracy of the Imazighen, saying, "No writing in their tongue exists, though Riffia, as it

¹⁵² Hodgson, pg 122-123

¹⁵³ Hooker and Ball, pg 11-12

¹⁵⁴ Walter B. Harris, "The Berbers of Morocco," pg 72

is called, is when necessary written in Arabic characters.”¹⁵⁵ Hodgson gives them a little more credit, stating in his article that he knew of three Amazigh manuscripts,¹⁵⁶ but even this acknowledgement brings with it a sense of disapproval and patronization.

One way to portray a society as uncivilized is to present it and its members as unchanging throughout the course of time. William Starbuck Mayo does just this when he says of the Imazighen, “Such are the Berbers of the Atlas, in our day; and such in general, have they ever been.”¹⁵⁷ Walter Harris made a similar observation:

“They [Berbers southeast of Fez] seem to have lost none of their pristine fierceness, and to have adopted none of the manners and customs of their conquerors beyond their religion; for the brown tent in which they moved from place to place long before the Arab invasion is still found amongst them, and their traditions, pre-Arab, are still handed down from mouth to mouth.”¹⁵⁸

Harris revisited and reinforced this idea of the Imazighen failing to make advancements throughout the course of time in his writings three years later when he said, “But the fact that they [the Berbers] have never come into contact with outside influences, with the exception of such Arab ideas as have penetrated into their country, must have tended much toward their retaining their primitive customs.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ *id.*, pg 66

¹⁵⁶ Hodgson, pg 115

¹⁵⁷ Mayo, pg 156

¹⁵⁸ Harris, pg 146-147

¹⁵⁹ Walter B. Harris, “The Berbers of Morocco,” pg 68

The British depicted the Imazighen as primitive and less civilized in comparison to their own society. The British considered a society to be civilized if it mirrored their own, or that of another western European country. Richardson put his estimation of the Imazighen quite plainly in one article, when he was quoted saying, “Had the British government continued its occupation for half a century, and kept in check the Maroquine tribes, it is probable that by this time the greater part of Morocco would have been under British rule, when we might have founded a flourishing colony, from which all North Africa might have received the elements of Christian civilisation.”¹⁶⁰ Hooker, too, was of the same mind, saying, “People constantly forget how wide the gap is that separates the mind of a modern European from that of the inhabitant of a barbarous country.”¹⁶¹ He returned to this perception later in his journal when he realized that the Imazighen amongst whom he was traveling did not understand (or perhaps just didn’t care much for) his purported reason for traveling, which was ecological surveying. He said of his hosts, “To them one pursuit of civilised man is as unintelligible as another, and they can conceive no other serious occupation for men not forced to labour than war or hunting.”¹⁶²

Although the British considered them to be of a lower order of civilization, they did note several impressive architectural feats of the Imazighen. Hooker was impressed by the irrigation infrastructure the Imazighen had built: “Throughout the valley we were

¹⁶⁰ James Richardson in “Morocco,” pg 16-17

¹⁶¹ Hooker and Ball, pg 150

¹⁶² *id.*, pg 190

struck by the proofs of native industry and skill given by the numerous irrigation channels, such as one sees in Piedmont, and in the tributaries of the Rhone valley in Switzerland.”¹⁶³ However, other praise had a hint of condescension. Walter Harris, when remarking about towers he saw in Amazigh communities, had this to say— “a rough measurement of one of the towers gave an altitude of at least 70 feet, no mean height when it is taken into consideration that they are built without any of the appliances we know in Europe, and altogether without mortar or lime.”¹⁶⁴

Conclusion

It is clear from these texts that British writers, and British society by extension, sought to obtain a robust understanding of Amazigh society, whether for the sake of scientific curiosity or for the sake of exploiting and controlling it. Rather than being oversimplified, the image of the Moroccan Amazigh presented in the British media in the nineteenth century is multi-faceted and complex. While there are certain facets that were stressed above all others (militancy and lower level of civilization), these characterizations of the Amazigh population of Morocco acknowledged that they were more than just bloody war machines. According to these authors, the Imazighen had their own cultural systems into which they integrated aspects of outside societies, such as Islam. They also highlighted the hostility of the Imazighen towards both their Arab neighbors and the Europeans just across the Strait of Gibraltar, recognizing that they were two distinct feelings, rather than just a baseless attitude of outright hostility towards all

¹⁶³ *id.*, pg 196

¹⁶⁴ Harris, pg 115

non-Imazighen. Through all of these characterizations, the main overarching theme in British depictions of Imazighen is an Amazigh animosity toward anyone understood to be an “outsider.”

Ch. 4: Regarding Contemporary Moroccan Sources

Morocco has recently borne witness to an Amazigh cultural movement. Coinciding with the ascent of King Mohammed VI to the throne in 1999, this movement has resulted in increased Amazigh visibility in Moroccan media. This increased visibility makes it possible to discern how Moroccan society is interpreting the members and activities of this cultural movement, which is focusing on obtaining equal rights as Moroccan citizens. This chapter will examine how Moroccan media outlets are representing and characterizing Amazigh activists in contemporary Morocco through five news articles published in Moroccan media outlets in the past 3 years.

The Articles

The articles to be examined in this chapter all discuss recent events in Morocco that involve Amazigh activists. They were chosen for their relevance to the topic of Amazigh characterization in contemporary Morocco, their ease of access for the average Moroccan, and their proximity to the Amazigh movement. The contemporary portion of this thesis seeks to elucidate how current Moroccan media characterize Amazigh identity in the context of the recent Amazigh rights movement, and these articles all provide examples of events related to that movement. Additionally, these articles are popularly available and easily accessible to anyone in Morocco with Internet access, the same group that Moroccan Amazigh activists are trying to reach. Finally, the articles come from popular news agencies located within Morocco itself. Tamazight-language news is scarce in Morocco; there is one television news channel and a few radio stations, but Tamazight-language print media is virtually non-existent. Most reporting on Amazigh

issues is done in French or Arabic. Therefore this body of sources gives the closest possible interpretation of the Amazigh rights movement in Moroccan popular media.

The first two articles come from the news outlet Hibapress, and both were published in 2011. Hibapress is an independent news website that publishes in both French and Arabic. The first article discusses the Amazigh New Year celebration of that year, the beginning of the year 2961 according to the Amazigh calendar. According to the article, the Middle Atlas Imazighen celebrated the new year by renewing their calls for the consideration of the day, January 13, as a national holiday.¹⁶⁵ The second Maghress article focuses on an activist group called The Amazigh Spring. This group aims at preparing for an Amazigh revolution, an “uprising for the sake of nobility, justice, freedom, and true democracy,” but claims it will be an intellectual, rather than physical, uprising.¹⁶⁶ The third article was published in September 2014 by the outlet Akhbārūna al-Maghribīyah, another online news agency. This company focuses on the Arab world in general and Morocco in particular, publishing only in Arabic. The article details the abuse of a group of elderly Amazigh men at the hands of Moroccan government personnel for boycotting a poll conducted by the High Commission for Planning. The men were boycotting to express their objection to the systematic isolation of their region, as well as many other regions where Imazighen are found.¹⁶⁷ Published in July 2014, the fourth

¹⁶⁵ Suham Ashṭo, “Amazīgh al-Maghrib yaḥtafalūn bi-al-sinah al-Amazīghīyah al-jadīdah wasaṭ maṭālib bi-i’tibārihi ‘Yūman waṭanīyan’,” *Hiba Press*

¹⁶⁶ “Majmū’at al-rab’ā al-Amazīghī bi-al-Maghrib,” *Hiba Press*

¹⁶⁷ Abdul Elih Busahāba, “Shuyūkh Amazīgh yata’arridūn lil-ta’dheeb min ṭarf al-makhzan ba’d muqāṭi’ati-him lil-iḥṣa’,” *Akhbārūna al-Maghribīyah*

article in this section comes from the company Akhbār al-Yaum, which is based in Saudi Arabia, but covers all of the Middle East and North Africa. The article recounts the breaking up and dispersal of a peaceful demonstration in Casablanca by Moroccan government forces. The demonstration, held in front of the Algerian Consulate headquarters, was held in a spirit of solidarity with Moroccan and Algerian Amazigh participants condemning the mistreatment of the Mozabite people who reside in Ghardaïa, Algeria, who were subjected to ethnic discrimination, crimes stemming from Arabism, and even slaughter.¹⁶⁸ The last article comes from the online newspaper Hespress in August 2014. Hespress prides itself for being the first online newspaper in Morocco, and its goal is to “provide accurate, balanced, and forward-thinking information on the development of Morocco.”¹⁶⁹ It highlights the Timalsah Carnival, a festival thrown by the Amazigh associations of the Greater Dades region of southwestern Morocco. “Timalsah” is the Amazigh word for their traditional robe, and the carnival was a celebration of Amazigh culture, as well as the first step in an initiative to showcase the cultural and tourist-attracting attributes of the region.¹⁷⁰

Findings

These articles contain four important characterizations of contemporary Moroccan Imazighen. The first two are found within the common theme of the first four articles,

¹⁶⁸ “Hatha ma taf’aluhu as-sulaṭāt al-maghribīyah ma’a kull min yu’ayyid al-Amazīgh,” *Akhbār al-Yaum*

¹⁶⁹ Hespress Facebook “About” section

¹⁷⁰ Abdul Ṣamd ‘Ayyāsh, “al-Shabāb al-Amazīghī yabḥath ‘an al-hawīyah min khilāl Carnival al-Zay al-Ṭaqlīdī,” *Hespress*

specifically the disparity between the Arabs and Imazighen and the non-violent Amazigh support for equal status with and treatment by Morocco's Arab majority. The third is the way they identify as a group. Lastly is the importance they are placing on cultural aspects of their identity, rather than just language.

One characteristic the British writers in Morocco in the 1800s noticed was a social, economic, and political gap between the Arab and Amazigh populations. The fact that Amazigh activist groups exist to support equal rights with the Arab population shows that there remains, at the very least, a perception of an inequality between the two ethnic groups. There is good evidence to support this perception. The Islamic New Year, but not the Amazigh New Year, is a national holiday.¹⁷¹ Amazigh sheikhs in a village were mistreated physically and verbally when they chose not to participate in a population survey.¹⁷² There was no Tamazight-language television channel until the reign of Morocco's current king,¹⁷³ while there have been channels in Arabic and French since the television became popular in Morocco. Though the gap between the Arabs and Imazighen in Morocco is shrinking, it still remains as an important aspect of the way the Amazigh population identifies itself.

The second characteristic that is prevalent in the articles is the peaceful nature of the Amazigh struggle for equal rights. In a largely Arabized country, Amazigh society has been marginalized since coming under the jurisdiction of the Moroccan *Makhzan*. Rather

¹⁷¹ Asṭo

¹⁷² Busahāba

¹⁷³ Asṭo

than trying to achieve their goals through violence or intimidation, contemporary Moroccan Amazigh activists are choosing to fight their battles through peaceful means of protests, festivals, and political statements. This characterization is in direct contradiction with the images of Amazigh culture provided in the British sources previously discussed, which portrayed Imazighen as excessively violent. Rather than armed insurrection or threats of violence, Amazigh groups are attempting to make themselves heard through democratic means. King Mohammed VI has been instituting reforms in favor of Amazigh rights since his ascension to the throne, the establishment of a Tamazight-language television channel among them.¹⁷⁴ This has helped create an atmosphere in which the Imazighen believe they can effect change in their situation through official and legal means.

Each Amazigh New Year provides one platform for peaceful demonstrating. In addition to celebrating the holiday in 2011 with festivals of traditional songs and meals, Amazigh activists used the occasion to renew calls for the inclusion of the Amazigh New Year in the list of official Moroccan holidays.¹⁷⁵ The activist group Amazigh Spring aims to support the Amazigh case through “civil and pragmatic dialogue in an intellectual fight far removed from extremism and bigotry.”¹⁷⁶ The leaders of Tamazouzte who refused to participate in a government survey in September of this year did so peacefully, even

¹⁷⁴ Ashṭo

¹⁷⁵ Ashṭo

¹⁷⁶ “Majmū’at al-rabī’a al-Amazīghī bi-al-Maghrīb”

though they were not treated likewise.¹⁷⁷ And even when protesting to denounce the heinous maltreatment of the Mozabite people in Ghardaïa, Algeria, the Amazigh demonstrators did so peacefully.¹⁷⁸

By their insistence on non-violent means, Moroccan Amazigh groups are, whether consciously or subconsciously, flipping the traditional narrative, casting the Moroccan government as the instigator of violence rather than themselves. It was the *Makhzan*, rather than the Amazigh groups, that first reached for violence in the cases presented in two of these articles. When some of the sheiks of Tamazouzte, a small town outside of Marrakech, refused to comply and participate in a population poll conducted by the High Commission for Planning, they were subjected to “beating and acute physical assault from a lieutenant colonel and men of his forces,” in addition to verbal abuses.¹⁷⁹ Similarly, *Makhzan* forces swooped in to suppress the demonstration outside of the Algerian consulate in Casablanca, confiscating many cell phones and cameras and arresting one activist.¹⁸⁰ In these instances, it was the members of the *Makhzan*, rather than the Imazighen, who were the aggressors. While the Amazigh activists utilized peaceful and democratic means to try to accomplish their goals, the Moroccan government used violent and autocratic methods to suppress dissent and maintain the status quo.

¹⁷⁷ Busahāba

¹⁷⁸ “Hatha ma taf’aluhu al-ṣulaṭāt al-maghribīyah ma’a kull min yu’ayyid al-Amazīgh”

¹⁷⁹ Busahāba

¹⁸⁰ “Hatha ma taf’aluhu al-ṣulaṭāt al-maghribīyah ma’a kull min yu’ayyid al-Amazīgh”

A third characteristic of contemporary Moroccan Imazighen is in the ways that they identify themselves as a group. Rather than stressing individual tribal affiliations, in recent years Amazigh activists have increased their scope to the regional, and even international level. This is evidenced by the solidarity between Moroccan and Algerian Imazighen in their joint demonstration in front of the Algerian consulate in September,¹⁸¹ as well as the Timalzah Carnival in the Greater Dades region organized in August of this year.¹⁸² The image of the Amazigh population existing in rival tribes constantly contesting one another has eroded as Moroccan Imazighen have expanded their networks in cooperative efforts to achieve greater gains toward their common goals.

Lastly, Morocco's Amazigh citizens identify themselves by way of their dress and culture. The traditional robes displayed at the Timalzah Carnival¹⁸³ were displayed as a symbol of Amazigh identity. This facet of identity echoes the observations of nineteenth century British writers, which noted physical differences in dress to distinguish between Arab and Amazigh. The Imazighen are also proud of cultural elements that were absent in nineteenth century British media. The Imazighen pride themselves on having one of the oldest calendars in the world,¹⁸⁴ and celebrate their festivals and holidays with traditional songs, dances, and meals.¹⁸⁵ These facets of Amazigh culture were conspicuously absent

¹⁸¹ "Hatha ma taf'aluhu al-ṣulaṭāt al-maghribīyah ma'a kull min yu'ayyid al-Amazīgh"

¹⁸² 'Ayyāsh

¹⁸³ 'Ayyāsh

¹⁸⁴ Ashṭo

¹⁸⁵ Ashṭo and 'Ayyāsh

from British writings in the nineteenth century, which instead focused more on Amazigh dress and appearance, as well as conflicts among the Imazighen and between them and the Arabs of Morocco.

Conclusion

After examining these articles, it is clear that Moroccan Amazigh activists are trying to carefully portray themselves in a certain way. It is also clear that they are doing so in an effort to cast off previous conceptions of Amazigh identity. However, with no direct references to any previously conceived ideas about Amazigh identity, it is difficult to state with any certainty where the source, or sources, of these ideas lie. Nonetheless, it is clear that today's Moroccan Imazighen wish to be understood as a peaceful group intent on accomplishing their agenda through legal political means, in contrast to their former characterization as an ethnic group that solves its problems with violence. Additionally, rather than remaining a group that exists outside the boundaries of official Moroccan society, Amazigh groups are working toward their equal inclusion within Morocco, though a gap still remains. To that end, Moroccan Imazighen have expanded their networks from the local tribal level to the regional, and even international, level. Finally, although Morocco's Amazigh population is seeking parity with their Arab counterparts, they are retaining and celebrating their ethnic identity by their traditional dress robes, which have been a symbol of their identity at least since the entrance of the British into the country in the nineteenth century.

Conclusion

There is a dearth of research regarding Moroccan Imazighen, and this project is but a stepping stone toward amending that. Examining the similarities and differences between these two pools of sources helps elucidate the amount of cultural influence the British had within Morocco regarding perceptions and characterizations of the Imazighen, in this particular case. In a broader perspective, such examination could lay the groundwork for a blueprint for understanding how foreign countries can influence the perception of minority groups in a target country without any sort of direct intervention.

The current Amazigh movement in Morocco is clearly reacting to characterizations of the Amazigh population made by outsiders. It remains unclear whether those characterizations are at all linked to the British pioneers who entered and explored Morocco in the 1800s, but the nature of the relationship between their characterizations of Imazighen and those of contemporary Moroccan news media certainly merits further investigation. Because of the British Empire's position in the country— it was the first European country to establish any economic or political relations with the Kingdom of Morocco, and therefore the British were the first non-Africans to encounter any Imazighen in centuries— any possible British influence on contemporary characterizations of Moroccan Imazighen warrants additional research.

In the sources examined, Amazigh activist groups presented an organized, peaceful front intent on achieving their goals through legal means. In doing this, the activists emphasized some aspects of their society and culture that resonate with British observations from the nineteenth century, as well as others that do not. There was a clear

link to and pride in their historic ties to the region, as well as their traditional dress, which was noted extensively by the British. However, the traditional dances, songs, and food they highlighted were not noted by the British authors.

A number of characterizations made by the British were actually contradicted by the contemporary articles. First, the use of technology to expand and organize the Amazigh movement noted by Moroccan news outlets displays an equal level of “civilization” with that of the Arabs and Europeans, rather than one of a lower level. British sources characterized Imazighen as delayed in the development of their society. They noted the pervasive illiteracy in Amazigh society as one marker of this, in addition to portraying Amazigh society as unchanging throughout the course of time. However, in Moroccan sources, it is clear that these characterizations are no longer accurate. Amazigh society has, in fact, changed since the nineteenth century. As noted by the contemporary sources, Imazighen have assimilated into the Moroccan legal system and are using those channels to accomplish their goals. This might have happened as a result of the “Moroccanization” of the country after achieving independence in the 1950s. During that time, the nation’s leaders were working to establish a post-colonial identity, and therefore began viewing the Imazighen of the country as a part of the new nation and began expanding the nation’s infrastructure— most notably the education system— to include them.

Second, British writers stressed the individual familial and tribal ties of Amazigh society, whereas the Moroccan news articles highlight a much larger sense of community at the regional and even international level. One article highlights a regional celebration

of their culture and society held by Amazigh activists. Another article depicts them calling out to the international community for support in achieving their goals. This request for international support also contradicts the British characterization of Amazigh society as vehemently anti-European. This is likely attributable to changes within Amazigh society since the time of the British writers, but even if that is the case, it suggests that Amazigh society is capable of change and advancement.

Two characterizations of Imazighen by nineteenth century British writers were neither truly supported nor contradicted in the contemporary articles. There is no mention of the way in which Moroccan Imazighen practice, or do not practice, Islam or any other religion. Additionally, animosity of Imazighen towards Arabs was neither highlighted nor refuted; it seems that the only problem the Imazighen have with their neighbors is their unequal status.

Though these current characterizations of Morocco's Amazigh movement vary vastly in their alignment, or lack thereof, with those of nineteenth century British writers, the same topics appeared in both pools of sources, with only two exceptions: a unique Amazigh version of Islam and Amazigh animosity towards Arabs. This strong link suggests a correlation between the two. But simple correlation is not demonstrative of causation. Further research into these characterizations could determine whether these characterizations truly originated with the British, or if the British were biased by the almost exclusively Arab Moroccan government. Additionally, further research could determine whether the characterizations of the Imazighen in contemporary Morocco are in fact reactive to past characterizations made by outsiders, such as the British, or perhaps

the French during their era of colonization in North Africa, and if so, through which channels such characterizations came. The most direct approach would be to interview current Amazigh activists to elucidate what factors have motivated their characterizations of themselves. It would also be intriguing to compare those results with interviews of Moroccan Imazighen who do not identify as activists regarding their own characterizations of *Amazighité*, the essence of Amazigh-ness. Such knowledge could shed light on the amount of influence an outside nation can have on the perceptions of minority ethnic groups within their own country, without any official policy of colonization or intervention.

When I think back to those experiences with that Amazigh shop vendor now, two things come to mind. First, I think of the stereotype: all *hanūt* employees are Imazighen. It is invariably a disparaging stereotype based on ethnic differences. However, it is a stereotype, or a characteristic, that originated and is propagated within Morocco, rather than outside it. As such, it signifies that Moroccan society is moving past its history as a French colonial holding and independently reclaiming its identity. It would be interesting to see if Amazigh society within Morocco will make that move soon, or perhaps already has. Secondly, I think about the way he presented himself to me. As an outsider, I was more than just a customer; I represented an opportunity for that man to make a presentation of *Amazighité*. Although he lives in the city, he is still connected to his Amazigh identity, heritage, and language, and therefore, is able to portray his own characterization of what a Moroccan Amazigh is to a larger potential audience than other Imazighen living in the Moroccan hinterlands. He has more opportunity to encounter

outsiders, like myself and other tourists, and experiences more friction with a largely Arabized Morocco, which could either suppress one's ethnic identity or bring it out in even greater force. The Moroccan Amazigh movement is all about achieving Amazigh parity with Arab Moroccans, and is therefore built on an acknowledgment and reclamation of Amazigh identity. If it is going to succeed, the movement will need popular support from average Moroccan Imazighen, like Muhammed, my friend from the *hanūt*.

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