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Port of Call: Problems of Justice and the Past in the Moroccan Mediterranean

By

Rosa Norton

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

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in

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in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Charles Hirschkind, Chair

Professor Stefania Pandolfo

Professor Anneka Lenssen

Summer 2024



## Abstract

Port of Call: Problems of Justice and the Past in the Moroccan Mediterranean

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This dissertation examines political unrest in arguably one of the most stable regimes in the Muslim world, Morocco. It does so through a consideration of problems of historical reckoning, in line with the rhetoric and political stance of Rifian activists who point to the fundamental incompleteness of the nation's postcolonial transition in the insistence on stamping out the radical legacy of the early twentieth-century Republic of the Rif and the challenge it posed to European colonial forces. The death of fish vendor Mouhcine Fikri in late fall of 2016 unleashed the strongest backlash against corruption and inequality in the country since 2011 and the wider context of the "Arab Spring." Tied indelibly to the port of al-Hoceyma and a Mediterranean coastline whose (increasingly scarce) bounty is tightly constricted through a web of rules, both official and unofficial, Fikri's death shifted the wider demands of national protest *al-hirak* (the movement) to a focus on historical regional tensions and in particular the status of *al-shamal* or the north. My research takes up questions of northern difference through a focus on the Andalusian city of Tetouan and in particular an infrastructural project to redevelop its Mediterranean port of Martil and the river connecting its northern hub to coastal waters. Closed since 1962, its abandonment coincides with a history of monarchical hostility toward the northern region as a whole following 1958 clashes in the Rif and a subsequent general move to disinvest from the Mediterranean coastline of the country. My ethnography probes attempts to resurrect Martil's river and port, an endeavor on the part of civic activists and local historians that brings with it a host of resurrected past futures embedded in a centuries-long enmeshment with Spain extending from medieval times through twentieth-century colonial rule. In articulating these "futures past," proponents of the port's reopening strike a delicate balance, at one and the same time elaborating a vision for the future of the north in line with its co-constitutive role in the production of both Western Europe and western Islam and at the same time navigating a northern political difference which continues to disturb and provoke.

## Acknowledgments

It is not lost on me that in a doctoral project focused on problems of remembrance, so much of the process of writing has involved an often tortuous process of continual lapses into an expansive field of forgetting and a subsequent need to revisit and recall in order to make a forward step. For bearing with me in this uneven and irregular trail I have much gratitude for my adviser Charles Hirschkind. He has not only borne with me, but always made me feel like a valued student and colleague whose work merits careful consideration and support. I would not be completing my PhD without his unwavering and deeply patient commitment to seeing me through the process. Stefania Pandolfo has shown an uncanny knack for understanding what I am trying to do before I myself can grasp it, and this project is indelibly formed by her approach and thinking along with Charles'. Anneka Lenssen served as a bright light and thought partner in various stages, and I cherished our wide-ranging and stimulating conversations in her airy office in Doe Library. Donald Moore's dedication both to his students and to the field of spatiality and power at large continues to inspire me, as does his critical spirit more generally. Bill Hanks provided me with much needed funds when my efforts to pitch my doctoral research to external funding agencies ran aground; his faith in my abilities meant the world to me as I hit the most significant challenges of my academic career, as did his cheerful stories about completely starting over at points in his own trajectory. It was a wonderful privilege to take classes with Saba Mahmood and Talal Asad, both of whom were pivotal in shaping my thinking broadly speaking as well as my initial interest in and enthusiasm over the field of anthropology. My time as a master's student in the Hagop Kevorkian Center at NYU was formative in my intellectual makeup, with the mentorship of Nadia Guessous and Bruce Grant in particular proving crucial, a generosity of spirit they both continued extending to me well past my time there. At Harvard College my early interest in postcolonial and Iberian-North African studies began with the teaching of Susan Gilson Miller, Leila Ahmed and Luis Girón Negrón, together with careful advising by Travis Zadeh and Liz Mellyn. Early encouragement over correspondence with Mary Elizabeth Perry and her work on gender and Moriscos was also appreciated.

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Exzentrius, Ayanna and Zuri Sturdivant along with Samia Arthur-Bentil are each homes away from home in north Texas (and now Kansas City) and I treasure their friendship. Lee Mwatha Mwangi helped support and sustain me during the later writing stages, as did his cats Baker and Tut.

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# Introduction

The city of Tetouan (Tetuán) sits tucked slightly inward from the Mediterranean; unlike Tanja (Tánger or Tangier), a little over an hour's drive northwest—which proudly proclaims its presence to the surrounding ocean with the trappings of military defenses and fortress walls—Tetouan is not readily visible from the coast. Rather, one must journey inward, a drive of some fifteen to twenty minutes, to arrive at its urban footprint. Once there, the view is striking. Nestled against the feet of a modest encircling mountain chain, Tetouan's city center is defined by the familiar European colonial division of space.<sup>1</sup> Off to one side sits the old *medina*, with its seven entrances and walls intact. Right outside its walls are the palatial buildings, patrolled by guards, belonging to the Moroccan royal monarchy. A wide, cobbled street, claimed more for pedestrians than for vehicles, houses many of the city's main institutions, ending a short way away in the circular Plaza Primo. The seat of Spanish power from 1912 to 1956, the remainder of a *kenisa* (church) stands as a prominent city landmark, one of only a small number of Catholic churches still operating in the area (“Take me to the *kenisa*,” I would often ask a private taxi as a shorthand for getting to the city center).

1492 as a signifier, a defining break, needs no introduction. It is the year Columbus arrived in the New World, bringing mass genocide and conquest in his wake and tapping into the material resources that would fund European colonialism in the coming centuries. It is likewise the year the conquest of the Iberian Peninsula was fully effected, with the final Nasrid Sultan of Granada, Boabdil, famously handing over the keys to his city in tears. Though it was Muslims who had surrendered political control, it was Jews who would feel the first brunt of the religious consolidation that followed; unlike their Muslim neighbors, Jews were summarily expelled that year under the orders of Fernando and Isabel, who proclaimed themselves the Christian stewards of a Spanish nation-state. A new era, a new political formation and subjectivity, the end of one

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<sup>1</sup> For more on urban design and Muslim cities—and the imbrication of the two with Orientalist discursive structures—see Janet L. Abu-Lughod, “The Islamic City—Historic Myth, Islamic Essence, and Contemporary Relevance,” *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 19 (1987), 155-176. On the legacy within Morocco of the architect and urbanist Henri Prost, who was empowered by General Louis Hubert Gonzalve Lyautey to build new quarters within Moroccan towns and cities to accommodate an incoming European colonial presence, see Susan Gilson Miller, *A History of Modern Morocco* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 92-94. “In the period from 1914 to 1923,” Miller writes, “nearly every major Moroccan city was reshaped by his hand.” Miller, 93.

conquest and the commencement of another—all these are symbolized, and variously heralded or lamented, by the date.<sup>2</sup>

Tetouan arose in ongoing dyadic tension with the late phase of Granadan Iberian rule. Its founders, led by the nobleman Ali al-Mandari al-Garnati (Mandari the Granadan), rebuilt it from the ashes of previous settlements in the decades preceding 1492. As Ibn Khaldun would anticipate in his masterful Introduction or *al-Muqaddimah* to expounding a philosophy of history, they too feared that the fall of Granada as a Muslim kingdom was imminent, though they may not have guessed it would happen so soon. Possessing the resources to act and plan ahead, al-Mandari and his coterie designed Tetouan as the new Granada, a future haven for the Andalusians who would one day no longer be welcome in their longstanding natal lands.<sup>3</sup> It was to be near enough geographically (a proximity that would in turn endanger it for centuries to come in light of Spanish imperial ambitions) and resonant with the city left behind, with hills that echoed the Sierra Nevada mountain chain and city walls that would claim the mantle of a continued Andalusian inheritance in the shadow of a lost Granada.<sup>4</sup>

It would be casting the story too simply, however, to narrate the city's founding as providing a haven from religious persecution alone. There were, after all, those with previous claims to the land whose autonomy the newcomers threatened. To the Berber tribes in the area, the Andalusians would not be an unknown quantity, necessarily; the Almoravid dynasty with its capital in Marrakesh to the south had held a longstanding relation with the Iberian Peninsula, crossing northward at the invitation of Muslim rulers in al-Andalus and ruling directly in the late eleventh century. They would nonetheless not be welcome with open arms, nor would the Tetouani attitude be a trusting one. Fleeing from one military defeat and absorbing waves of refugees in the coming century and a half—as Fernando and Isabel reneged on the initial terms

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<sup>2</sup> The Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish published various poems about the loss of al-Andalus that suggest a parallel between the loss of Palestinian lands and the expulsion of Andalusian Muslims and Jews. In “Eleven Stars Over Andalusia” he writes: “On our last evening on this land we chop our days/ from our young trees, count the ribs we take with us/and the ribs we’ll leave behind. On the last evening/ we bid nothing farewell, nor find the time to end.../Everything remains as it is, it is the place that changes our dreams/and its visitors. Suddenly we’re incapable of irony/this land will now host atoms of dust... Here, on our last evening/we look closely at the mountains besieging the clouds: a conquest...and a counter-conquest/and an old time handing this new time the keys to our doors./So enter our houses, conquerors, and drink the wine/of our mellifluous *Muwashshah*. We are the night at midnight,/and no horsemen will bring dawn from the sanctuary of the last Call to Prayer.../Our tea is green and hot, drink it; Our pistachios are fresh, eat them./The beds are of green cedar; fall on them/following this long siege, lie down on the feathers of/our dreams. The sheets are crisp, perfumes are ready by the door and there are/ plenty of mirrors:/enter them so we may exit completely./Soon we will search/in the margins of your history, in distant countries/for what was once our history. And in the end we will ask ourselves:/Was Andalusia here or there? On the land...or in the poem?” Mahmoud Darwish, “Eleven Stars over Andalusia,” trans. Mona Anis and Nigel Ryan with Aga Shahid Ali and Ahmad Dallal, *Grand Street* 48 (Winter 1994), 101.

<sup>3</sup> A museum exhibit in Tetouan, part of the Centro de Artes or art center near Bab Okhla, is dedicated to the history of the city's founding.

<sup>4</sup> The 20th-century historian Guillermo Gozalbes Busto would go so far as to draw a connection between the departure of these noblemen from Boabdil's ranks prior to 1492 and the city's fall to the Christian monarchs.

of Granadan surrender and forcibly converted Muslims to Christianity (*moriscos*, they would come to be known as) who were eventually likewise expelled altogether, in 1609—the Andalusian outpost in North Africa adopted the attitude of a city besieged, wary of its new and unfamiliar environs.

To those previously in the region, on the other hand, the newcomers' religious identity was far from certain, whatever they might proclaim. Andalusians were generally light-skinned and appeared to be Europeanized; especially as later generations of *moriscos* were expelled and showed up on the opposite shoreline, it was highly unclear whether these newcomers, forced to adapt and hide their religious practices and convictions if they attempted to follow them at all while they remained on the Iberian Peninsula, were truly Muslim.<sup>5</sup> The irony of Tetouan's founding, then, is the double bind formed in the wake of the consolidation of Europe's Mediterranean borders along Christian lines. Too Muslim or Jewish for the new Spain, racialized and rejected even if they agreed to the terms of conversion, the new city's majority Andalusian inhabitants were viewed as dubiously European by their North African neighbors. Such would be the enduring, complicated legacy of Andalusianness in exile.

As a North African city tucked only slightly inland from the southern Mediterranean coast, Tetouan remained vulnerable to aggression from its natal homelands, both a site of refuge and first point of defense.<sup>6</sup> For centuries, the threat of *reconquista* or a Reconquest that would extend across the seas and encompass North African shores remained an acute existential and geopolitical possibility. In 1912 this danger became fully realized when the Spanish claimed Tetouan as the seat of the Spanish Protectorate and their governance of the northern coastline in the wake of their agreement with France and England.<sup>7</sup> More of a denouement than sudden intrusion, their formal takeover of the city administration and military affairs followed decades of relative weakness after the Spanish invasion and sacking of the city in 1860, known as the Battle of Tetouan (Tetuán). From then until national independence in 1956, Spain would rule over the northern region, though in a much more diffuse and ad hoc fashion than the majority of the country experienced under the French.

More complex and ambiguous than an emancipatory narrative might indicate, the general state of the northern region (referred to as *al-shamal* or “the north” within Morocco) in the

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<sup>5</sup> For more on Morisco history and the Expulsion see Mohammad Daoud's *Tarīkh Titwan (History of Tetouan)* (1957), Mohammad Razuq's *al-Andalusiyyūn w hijratihum ilā al-Maghrib khilāl al-qarnayn 16-17 (The Andalusians and Their Migration to the Maghreb in the 16th and 17th Centuries)* (1989); Antonio Domínguez Ortiz and Bernard Vincent's *Historia de los moriscos: vida y tragedia de una minoría (History of the Moriscos: The life and tragedy of a minority)* (1978); Guillermo Gozalbes Busto's *Los moriscos en Marruecos (Moriscos in Morocco)* (1992); L.P. Harvey's *Muslims in Spain, 1500-1614* (2005); and Mary Elizabeth Perry's *The Handless Maiden: Moriscos and the Politics of Religion in Early Modern Spain* (2005).

<sup>6</sup> The definitive account of Tetouan's founding is *Tārīkh Titwān (History of Tetouan)* by Mohammed Daoud, written in twelve volumes and originally published in 1957.

<sup>7</sup> Under the terms of this agreement between colonial powers, Spain was awarded northern Morocco—as Susan Gilson Miller notes, premised on a 1904 Franco-Spanish agreement gesturing to Spain's “historic” claim in the region—and France the rest of the territory, while Tangier's special international status was not decided until the end of World War I in 1923. Miller, 88.

decades following Moroccan independence would be one of economic decline and systemic neglect on the part of the monarchical state. The city's once significant Mediterranean port, located in the suburb of Martil, would never reopen after flooding in 1962—part of a broader pattern of infrastructural neglect still visible across the northern region and gaining in intensity the further one goes east, where the Rif mountain chain which stretches toward the border with Algeria forms a site of political dissent and subsequent state reprisals that effectively doomed the northern region to a slow death under the reign of King Hassan II. The north's future and present situation under his son and heir, King Muhammad VI who assumed the throne in 1999, forms the shifting grounds for this project's investigation.

The fieldwork for this dissertation occurred over summer 2014 and the better part of 2016 and 2017, the great majority of it taking place in the city of Tetouan and Martil, its beach suburb some fifteen minutes' drive northeast. Initially intended as an inquiry into Tetouani remembrance practices oriented toward a natal Spain, my focus shifted over time, from Tetouan to Martil itself, and from there extending toward the Rif, the mountainous neighboring district to the east to which some Martilis and Tetuoanis are very closely tied.

I continued to look for effects of colonial occupation by Spain—the northern neighbor, representing as it does both a figure of religious enmity and of tangible and intangible lost kin—while remaining attuned to a centuries-long material and symbolic web of linguistic, artistic, scientific and cultural Andalusian or Andalusi practices and forms which precede and alternatively disrupt or reproduce the contemporary geopolitical formations of Western, Judeo-Christian Europe and Muslim North Africa. But what has come to be of particular concern in the discussions which follow is how these and other influences interact with the legacy of twentieth-century violence and structural neglect the north has suffered under the Moroccan state, along with twenty-first century attempts to repair, redress or silence that history.

While I initially approached the project with a focus on Tetouan as an exilic site, over time the focus shifted in response to events and as I thought more deeply with Martil as a marginal peri-urban space. In the long deadened tendrils of Wad Martil or Río Martín (the Martil River), I came to discern what Stefania Pandolfo in a different context terms a “certain intolerable of the Maghribi postcolonial present,” one which folds reflexively back on itself.<sup>8</sup> From this vantage point it is not (or at least not here and for my purposes) the celebrated Andalusian city of Tetouan but the at times sleepy, alternately chaotic and crowded coastal suburb of Martil that bears careful probing—not, indeed, the material Andalusian buildings and practices on display in Tetouan but the vacated and at times abject contours of the Mediterranean coastline that form a *lieu de mémoire* in Pierre Nora's sense.<sup>9</sup> The turgid waters of the deadened river, its stilled outlets lying so closely yet inexorably apart from the fresh waves of the

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<sup>8</sup> Stefania Pandolfo, *Impasse of the Angels: Scenes from a Moroccan Space of Memory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 6.

<sup>9</sup> In Nora's reading, the materiality of the “trace”—particularly conceived, here—ought to be interpreted not as indicative of memory but rather its total eradication; we are, he argues, increasingly preoccupied with pinpointing and preserving material remains of past life even as the material coordinates of everyday life cease to signify as compellingly at the collective level.

Mediterranean Sea, constitute a nexus of the “certain intolerable” of the Moroccan Mediterranean postcolonial experience which I seek to tease apart in Chapter 2.

While the north as a whole has long protested political and economic conditions, and met royal punishment in response, in recent years the Tetouan and Martil urban areas have avoided open rebellion.<sup>10</sup> There the national government’s right to rule is not directly at stake. Rif activists, in contrast, sometimes draw as we will see on regional symbols that directly contest royal sovereignty. They meet correspondingly direct and severe punishment. Restoration is the setting for Chapter 2 below, which takes up the thoughts of activists who work within northern Morocco’s existing political structures concerning the Martil valley’s long neglect. Chapter 1 and Chapter 3 look at other, periodically erupting and more confrontational dimensions of unrest in the contemporary north.

### **I. Contested Terrains: Territory and Domination in Modern Morocco**

Arriving in Tetouan in March 2016 for doctoral research (I had previously spent six weeks in the summer of 2014 there in a preliminary stage), I was dismayed to find all major messaging platforms, WhatsApp and the like, temporarily suspended. The shutdown was national in scope and was done in the name of state security. Fears around recruitment and sleeper cells of the Islamic State (ISIS or Daesh in Arabic) were notably heightened, and rumors swirled of local arrests being carried out to stem any such movements within the country. (When I relocated from Tetouan to Martil in May of that year, an acquaintance told me someone in my new neighborhood had been recently arrested under suspicion of ISIS-related activities.) In addition to fears of ideological infiltration from Muslim-majority countries to the east such as Syria or Iraq, a more proximate source of tension was the longstanding battle to claim sovereignty over the Western Sahara. Major Spanish celebrities like Javier Bardem were speaking out sympathetically in support of Western Saharan sovereignty, and the annual holiday

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<sup>10</sup> The last major fatalities in response to public protest in Tetouan occurred in 1984. About 20 protesters were reported killed in a demonstration in a conservative estimate, according to an article in *The New York Times* (which cited Spanish press estimates of 200 as exaggerated). The article notes that reporters were not allowed in the north of the country while military forces occupied Tetouan, Nador and other Mediterranean towns. Rising prices affecting everything from bread sales to student fees—exacerbated by three years of drought that witnessed the relocation of villagers to urban centers--were thought to be a main factor behind the protests. Henry Kamm, “Envoys Estimate 60 Have Died in Moroccan Riots,” *The New York Times*, Jan 24, 1984. <https://www.nytimes.com/1984/01/24/world/envoys-estimate-60-have-died-in-moroccan-riots.html>

commemorating the 1975 Green March later that year would be promoted enthusiastically as an instance of national reclamation in the name of territorial coherence and autonomy.<sup>11</sup>

In ordinary times and in most parts of Morocco, King Mohammed VI—by then some seventeen years into his reign as monarchical head and *‘Amir al-Mu‘minīn* (Commander of the Faithful)—enjoys widespread popularity and support. His claim to authority is grounded in a genealogy rooted most visibly in his grandfather, King Mohammed V, who continues to be beloved for his role in opposing European colonial reign and leading the country into its era of national independence. Dying shortly thereafter, in 1961, the ‘Alawi line of succession passed to his son, King Hassan II. Famed for his ruthless suppression of any hint of political dissent and unapologetic authoritarian style, Hassan II’s overtly repressive reign would come to be associated with the Years of Lead (*Sanawāt ar-Rusās* or *années de plomb*) famously written about by Tahar Ben Jelloun in *Cette aveuglante absence de lumière* (This Blinding Absence of Light), enduring from the time he assumed the throne through the 1980s. His son and successor King Mohammed VI projects a far more liberal image, and is popularly celebrated as at once a defender of the country’s nonsecular status as an Islamic nation-state and a stabilizing force amenable to some degree to democratic reform and sharing of power with the country’s elected parliament.

The most serious challenge to monarchical authority to date under Mohammad VI’s rule occurred in 2011, in what is widely referred to as the “Arab Spring”, though the term has since assumed a cynical cast in the wake of subsequent resumption of authoritarian regimes across most of the Muslim world and the spectacular violence that followed in Syria in particular. In July of that year, the king appeared on television to announce—in his usual restrained and monotone mode of delivery—a series of significant constitutional reforms responsive to popular demands for democratization. Among the most important of these (and in addition to strengthening the independence of the parliamentary body and prime ministerial role in particular) was the formal recognition of Amazigh as an official state language alongside Arabic.

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<sup>11</sup> The Green March refers to a campaign of unarmed Moroccan volunteers (some 350,000) that King Hassan II called on to enter the Western Sahara in November 1975. King Hassan II’s move to do this followed a decision by the International Court of Justice in the Hague’s in favor of the right of Sahrawi people to self-determination. Celebrated annually as a holiday within Morocco and framed by mainstream press sources as a major milestone in the postcolonial re-assertion of sovereignty following Spain’s relinquishing of the territory, *Morocco World News* has the following to say about it: “As Morocco commemorates this year the 48th anniversary of this unique chapter in the country’s ongoing quest to fully recover its southern provinces, memories of this momentous march toward full-fledged decolonization evoke deep patriotism and pride among Moroccans. In this sense, the commemoration of this historic march is a poignant celebration of Morocco’s triumphant endeavor to reclaim its southern territories... This annual observance not only reaffirms the cherished values of unity and sovereignty but also signifies the profound connection between Moroccan monarchs and their people.” Asmae Daoudi, “The Green March: A Unique Chapter in Post-Colonial Moroccan History,” *Morocco World News* November 6, 2023. <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2023/11/358776/the-green-march-a-unique-chapter-in-post-colonial-moroccan-history> Israel recognized Moroccan sovereignty in the Western Sahara in 2023, following the resumption of diplomatic ties between Israel and Morocco. The United States under the Trump Administration recognized Moroccan sovereignty in the territory in December 2020. For more on the continuing conflict and the fight for Western Saharan independence, see Jacob Mundy and Stephen Zunes, *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism and Conflict Irresolution* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2022).

Prior to this a widely spoken but marginalized language, its new legitimacy within the arena of state governance was a highly significant move to officially recognize and legitimize the largest ethnic group in the country, spread out across several regions and each speaking a linguistic variation of what falls under the umbrella term Amazigh.<sup>12</sup> (The Rif is one such region, with al-Hoceyma and Nador its largest cities.)

The significance of the move, and its reception as significant by a broad spectrum of democratic activists, speak to the degree of ongoing tension surrounding Amazigh identity and history within the Moroccan context. Suppressed heretofore from nearly any non-domestic context—within schools, state institutions or other bureaucratic spaces, and mainstream media—Amazigh language and identity exists somewhat uneasily within the modern nation-state formation, stretching as it does across North Africa and being far more prevalent as a spoken than written language (for reasons pertaining, at least in part, to its widespread suppression and delegitimization within educational and other contexts). Correlating in the case of both the eastern Rif and interior Atlas Mountains to a history of severe state neglect and widespread poverty, Amazigh as the largest indigenous ethnic identity within the country maps onto a series of binaries associated with discrimination and deemphasis within the modern context: African (not Arab), indigenous, illiterate, poor.

A resurgent interest in Africa as a dominant political or cultural identification—signified in part by the country’s rejoining of the African Union in early 2017, and ensuing national TV commercials and ceremonies hailing the event’s importance— notwithstanding, Morocco’s primary geographical imaginary is contained in its name: al-Maghrib, the westernmost part of the larger Muslim world.<sup>13</sup> As is the case with North Africa at large, African continental status is largely deemphasized in the wake of the decline of pan-Africanism more generally and the many ties that bound independence leaders to it. The Gulf in particular plays a dominant role in the country as a major investor and fellow monarchical political order. Modern Standard Arabic joins French as the two major languages of instruction and news media (with Spanish more widespread in the northern region), and Moroccan Arabic or Darija is the most widely spoken language, saturating the realms of both popular TV shows and song.

As the westernmost limit of what is commonly conceptualized as the Islamic world, Morocco in its modern configuration assumes the mantle of the Andalusian polity ruling the Iberian Peninsula to the north for some eight centuries, dissolving in a gradual fashion as an initial Umayyad caliphate with its seat in Córdoba gave way to the fragmented era of competing

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<sup>12</sup> The 2011 constitution also recognizes the Hassānīya language.

<sup>13</sup> While Morocco was one of the founding members of the Union, it exited in protest over the 1984 recognition by member states of the Sahwari Arab Democratic Republic. It rejoined on January 31, 2017, with the change heralded by much ceremonial fanfare played out on national TV. An edition of the magazine *Jeune Afrique* published October 22, 2017 poses the question on its front page, accompanied by a photo of the king: “*Que veut le Maroc en Afrique?*” (What does Morocco want in Africa?)—a question both marking current events and a pervasive geographical dis-identification with the continent.

Muslim and Christian rulers presiding over smaller kingdoms referred to as *taifas*.<sup>14</sup> King Muhammad VI's title, '*Amir al-Mu'minīn*', alludes to a line of succession the Moroccan monarchy bids to reclaim and resume, simultaneously leading the nation and sitting as modern Caliph, potentate and protector of the Islamic faithful as consistent with Qur'anic revelation and the *hadīth* or teachings of the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>15</sup>

## II. 'Abd al-Karim al-Khattabi and the Rif

Enter any given small shop, office, restaurant or in some cases someone's home, and one is likely to encounter a framed photo of King Muhammad VI throughout most of Morocco. He appears at different ages, most often seated, at times in black suit and tie and at others wearing more elaborate, formal robes. Occasionally photos depict him smiling in candid moments, more often his gaze is serious and carefully arranged. He is at once, as noted above, state potentate and nonsecular leader of the faithful, descendant of one of the more stable ruling regimes in the broader region. While the 2011 constitutional reforms moved to divest him to a modest degree of absolute authority in the name of a constitutional monarchical government structure, moves in this direction were limited to say the least.

In the months between the fall of 2016 and early summer of 2017, a competing image featured heavily in the fallout from the death of a Rifian fish vendor named Mouhcine Fikri. Fikri was from the town of al-Hoceyma, the epicenter throughout the twentieth century of prolonged and fierce clashes with the central monarchy that characterized the Rifian region—an impoverished mountainous area that suffered decades of systematic, even punitive, state neglect of which Fikri's gruesome death was widely understood to be a clear symptom. Crushed to death in a garbage compacter while attempting to retrieve confiscated fish, the photographic image of his pale and bloated corpse—mixed along with that of his fish, both resting on a pile of garbage—galvanized the most widespread protests since the 2011 era, with people in towns and cities nationwide demanding follow-through on earlier promises concerning increased democratization and decreased corruption and inequality. Reminiscent in its corporeal gruesomeness of the 2010 self-immolation of Tunisian street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi, an act of despair credited with kicking off the mass protests roiling the entire Middle East region the following year, the digital image of Fikri's ignominious final repose ignited a wave of outrage significant enough to demand state response and redress.

While the image of Fikri's corpse (circulating largely over digital platforms such as Facebook, as both grainy photograph and in rendered drawings), was certainly a key part of this unfolding narrative, the competing image I referred to above was not his but of another leader from a century-old history within the country, 'Abd al-Karim al-Khattabi. Posed, like King

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<sup>14</sup> The Umayyad caliph Walid I initiated political control over the Iberian Peninsula in 711 after a military victory against the Visigothic King Roderic. *Reconquista* or Reconquest is the term employed to describe the period from the eleventh to fifteenth centuries in the wake of the collapse of the centralized caliphate and subsequent increasing (if uneven) consolidation of control among Christian kings. Importantly and despite later narrative framings, religious divisions were not the only factor that determined political alliances or enmities during this era.

<sup>15</sup> For more on contemporary relationships to the Caliphate as absent institution, see Mona Hassan, *Longing for the Lost Caliphate: A Transregional History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).



Muhammad VI, in a seated position, his frank gaze meeting the camera directly in a black-and-white shot, his photo unlike the ruling king's does not saturate everyday life to the point of banality. Rather, in late 2016 and early 2017 protestors in the Rifian region actively inserted his portrait into their demonstrations, hoisting it overhead in rallies and sitting in front of it in addresses streamed over YouTube which attempted to reach beyond the confines of the Rif to appeal to the wider nation and indeed, the world, particularly the large diasporic Rifian population residing outside the country, mostly in Europe. Together with the tri-color Amazigh flag, his image's invocation formed a visual appeal to a subversive historical narrative, one at odds with mainstream representations of national independence and anticolonial struggle, and directly undermining 'Alawi sovereignty.

Born in the 1880s in the Mediterranean town of Ajdir near al-Hoceyma, Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Karim al-Khattabi was the son of a *qadi* or Islamic judge. He moved in a shared Moroccan-Spanish milieu prior to Spain's formal assumption of colonial governance in the north. While Muhammad Abd al-Karim studied primarily in Fès (first in madrasa and later at the renowned university of al-Qarawiyyin), his brother M'Hammad trained as an engineer in Madrid and Málaga, and both were fluent in Spanish and Amazigh languages alongside Arabic.<sup>16</sup> Based in the easternmost Mediterranean Spanish enclave of Melilla (which together with Ceuta has been claimed by Spain since the late 1400s) after his studies, 'Abd al-Karim worked as both a journalist and *qadi*. His opposition to Spanish interference in Morocco developed gradually and in the context of the complex maneuvering between the Spanish and French as colonial powers formally dividing the Moroccan territory amongst themselves following their 1912 territorial agreement with England, under which Tangier was declared a neutral International Zone and France assumed control of most of the country with the exception of the northern coastline allotted to the Spanish.

Following his arrest and subsequent escape from imprisonment in Chefchaouen in the World War I era ('Abd al-Karim aligned himself with the German-Turkish side in the context of pan-Arab and pro-Ottoman currents), and fearful of being delivered to the French-controlled Moroccan territory, 'Abd al-Karim and his brother M'Hammad declared their opposition to Spanish military forces in the Rif and launched a guerrilla war of defense in the name of defending tribal sovereignty and ending Spanish and French formal political control of Morocco as a whole. In 1921 they together with their allies and fellow militants proclaimed a new independent polity, the Republic of the Rif (*República del Rif* or *Jumhūriyya ar-Rīf* or *Tagduda n Arrif*). For the following five years, the insurgency they led posed a significant threat to European control of the Moroccan territory. The Rif War and 'Abd al-Karim's guerrilla tactics garnered the attention of anticolonial movements around the world, with 'Abd al-Karim al-Khattabi appearing on the cover of *Time* and being cited in later decades by Cuban and Vietnamese guerrilla military leaders.

This was particularly the case following the spectacular victory over Spanish forces in the July 1921 Battle of Anwal or Annual (referred to as *Desastre de Annual* or Disaster of Annual in Spanish historiography thereafter), during which Rifian forces killed an estimated 13,000

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<sup>16</sup> Miller, 106.

Spanish troops despite numbering less than half of the colonial army's size.<sup>17</sup> In putting down the insurgency and nascent polity, French and Spanish forces carried out some of the earliest known instances of chemical warfare in aerial bombardments, the effects of which are still felt in the Rif today.<sup>18</sup> Forced to declare defeat in 1926 after massive military mobilization on the part of the French army, 'Abd al-Karim al-Khattabi would spend his remaining days in exile, first on the island of Reunión and later in Egypt, continuing until his death in 1963 to fiercely critique and oppose European colonialism throughout the greater region and particularly in his home country.

Crucial to understanding 'Abd al-Karim al-Khattabi's subversive significance within the country today is that this critique extended to the 'Alawi Dynasty, led at the time by Moulay Yusuf ben Hassan, father of Mohammed V. In declaring their independence as a republic, the Rifians under 'Abd al-Karim rejected their governance by not only the Spanish or French but also the 'Alawi sultan. Critical of what he viewed as an overly submissive, collaborative stance toward the European powers, 'Abd al-Karim and the Rifians he led into battle against colonial forces declared themselves their own rulers. Directly threatened by their claim to sovereignty, the reigning sultan worked with the coalition of French and Spanish armies who bombed the Rif region, seeking to completely squash all resistance to their presence.<sup>19</sup> It is this history, and particularly its potential to recast the monarchical regime as colonial collaborator rather than national liberator, that renders its revisiting so subversive today.

Despite (indeed arguably strengthened by) the bombing and destruction visited upon the region, the Rif's critical stance toward the ruling Moroccan regime persisted after the 1920s

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<sup>17</sup> On the reverberations of the Rifian victory within Spain, Miller writes: "In all, the Spanish lost about nine thousand troops killed in the battle of Anwal and its aftermath, with hundreds taken prisoner; in addition, they left behind a huge quantity of rifles, machine guns and artillery... and [were] forced to abandon five thousand square kilometers of countryside—a dozen years of effort to implant its presence in those inhospitable mountains gone to waste. When news of the catastrophe reached Madrid, rumors of ineptitude and corruption in the army spread, precipitating a parliamentary crisis. The establishment of a military dictatorship under General Primo de Rivera (1870–1930) swept aside the liberal constitutional regime that was still in its infancy, setting the stage for fifty years of authoritarian rule, much of it under the dictatorship Generalissimo Francisco Franco, who first gained national attention as a result of his heroic role at the battle of Anwal." Miller, 107.

<sup>18</sup> See Rashīd Rākhā, Maymūn Sharqī and Ahmad al-Hamdāwī, International Symposium on Chemical Warfare Consequences: The case of the Rif (Morocco). *al-Harb al-kīmāwiyyah didd al-Rīf: a'māl al-nadwah al-dawliyyah hawla: isti'māl al-ghāzāt al-sāmmah, harb al-Rīf namūdhajan* (2004, Nador; English edition published 2005). See also Pablo La Porte, "La práctica internacional de las disculpas de estado: España, Marruecos y el Rif en el centenario del protectorado (1912-2012)," in *Revista electrónica de estudios internacionales* 24 (2012); Maymūn Sharqī, *Les armes chimiques de destruction massive sur le Rif: histoire, effets, droits, préjudices & réparations* (2014); Mustafā al-Murūn, *al-Tārikh al-sirri lil-harb al-kīmāwiyyah didda mintaqat al-Rīf wa Jibālah, 1921-1927* (2016).

<sup>19</sup> "Within the realm of Morocco historiography," writes Miller, "the Rif War is embedded in a larger and even more controversial question: At what point did resistance to the colonial powers actually begin, who should take credit for it, and who were its 'true' leaders? Some have claimed it was the first truly anticolonial war, the struggle of an oppressed people attempting to wrest their freedom from imperialist tyrants. On another plane, the memory of the 'Rifian Republic' was a constant reminder to those in power in Morocco—whether they were colonial administrators, Moroccan nationalists, or the 'Alawi monarchy after 1956—of the ability of this proudly self-reliant region to raise the banner of revolt in defiance of the claims of the state." Miller, 110-111.

revolt. In 1958 Hassan II led newly independent national military forces in putting down an uprising in the region. Assuming the throne upon his father's early, sudden death in 1961 and continuing throughout his long reign (he died in 1999), King Hassan II systematically stripped the northern region and the Rif in particular of its infrastructure and resources, a structural violence enacted through neglect that is felt most keenly in the town of al-Hoceyma. A massive relocation of Rifians ensued, mostly to Europe. As a Rifian woman once remarked to me in a conversation we had in passing inside a bank, whereas in the rest of the country they were periodically given such and such material resources to smooth over popular discontent, in the Rif they had been given passports (and shown the door, was the implication).<sup>20</sup>

### III. Overview of chapters

This was the past that most vividly informed the present during my stay in the Moroccan north. Mouhcine Fikri died on October 28th, 2016. In the months prior to his arrest in June 2017, influential protest leader Nasser Zefzafi delivered a series of speeches. Addressing both Moroccans living inside the country and those abroad, Zefzafi drew on a shared sense of frustration, hopelessness and outrage, charging unacceptable inequality and corruption. Posted to YouTube and promoted by various Amazigh political and cultural blogs and media sites, the videos reliably showed him seated in front of a portrait of 'Abd al-Karim al-Khattabi.

The first section of Chapter One below explores the explosive moment of Zefzafi's political challenge that led to his arrest and imprisonment. Up to this point a notable figure in the nationwide *al-hirak* (the movement) protest movement calling for democratic reform and lessened corruption in the wake of Fikri's dramatic death, Nasser Zefzafi entered an al-Hoceyma mosque in late May 2017 and came out a wanted man. Interrupting the sermon of the mosque's Imam warning listeners about the dangers of *al-fitnah* or social disorder, Zefzafi does not hold back. How, he angrily demands, can one speak of avoiding potential disorder when so many go hungry? The video clip of his intervention went viral, occasioning a digital war of competing images and slogans which centered on conflicting interpretations of the theological term *fitnah*. *La ila fitnah!* Or, no going towards *fitnah!* supporters of the monarchy intoned through digital platforms, while Rifian media and supporters countered with sarcastic images of scandalous decadence and decline undermining the supposed stability and legitimacy of the Moroccan sovereign order.

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<sup>20</sup> Today the large Rifian diaspora in Europe, notable for its numbers especially in Belgium, forms both a necessary part of the remittance economy keeping many families in al-Hoceyma and other Rifian towns afloat and a potentially problematic external critical force (albeit relatively minor) to the ruling monarchy. As I return to in Chapters One and Three below, the relative ease with which those diasporic Rifians not hampered by a fear of negative consequences for relatives remaining in the country can publish and circulate political critiques (many of them rooted in the history of the Rif itself and violence directed against it) over platforms like YouTube and Facebook forms an interesting "outside" to national debates and moments of unrest. Far from straightforward, these external interventions by would-be brethren now in Europe are often cast doubt upon as one in a web of external enemies (prominent among them, Algerians and Israelis) with interests opposed to national thriving and stability. Leftist Europeans advocating for Sahwari or Western Saharan sovereignty were also, if to a lesser degree, drawn to the Rifian cause in the 2016-2017 period, their political expressions of solidarity likewise construed as the unwelcome intervention of outside agents.

In assessing and condemning the Moroccan present, Zefzafi's argument is deeply historical, in fact illegible outside of a framework that takes the last century's events within the country as its point of reference. The relative stability the country enjoys, especially in contrast to other countries in the Muslim world—Syria and Iraq being the most pressing examples cited during my fieldwork—is according to this perspective a misleading index of future prosperity and peace, predicated as it is on a narrative of overcoming colonial oppression that is highly suspect in this interpretation. Zefzafi is explicitly theological in the register he strikes during the confrontation, invoking Umar and the Prophet Muhammad as examples of right guidance in confronting injustice.

The difference between what things are and what they appear to be is at the heart of Zefzafi's political intervention and the register of Rifian resistance he draws from.<sup>21</sup> It is this gap that the famed fourteenth-century philosopher and jurist Ibn Khaldun sets out to both foreground and theorize in setting out a theory and praxis of history, elaborated most famously in his *al-Muqaddimah* or Introduction. As I explore in Chapter One, the troubling circumstances of an Andalusian civilization to his north, at once at the height of its powers and nonetheless in decline, provides an urgent impetus for Ibn Khaldun's thinking.

In drawing a parallel between a moment of political crisis in Morocco as represented by Zefzafi's challenge and the writing of Ibn Khaldun around the probable calamitous loss of Muslim sovereignty within Andalusian lands, I argue that *al-fitnah* itself presents a useful epistemological framework for reading the two in tandem. Preoccupied with the difference between what is really gold or merely tarnished silver, or what bears the semblance of right and just order but contains the seeds of its own destruction, the theological problem of *fitnah* is deeply invested in the question of appearance versus reality, or representation. Though normally delegated to Islamic jurists to discern and ascertain, Zefzafi contends that a juridical apparatus working on behalf of the *makhzen* or Moroccan state loses legitimate authority to pronounce the difference. How, then, to parse present possibilities and predict signs of impending trouble?

As Émile Durkheim would some five centuries on, Ibn Khaldun argues that certain principles can be discerned and extracted from the rhythms and patterns of social and political life, when perused with sufficient distance and analytical probing (and with the help and guidance of centuries of Islamic principles of logic and reasoning). An Aristotelian, he connects questions of everyday *habitus*—and particularly, those developed into a particular skill or craft—to the pendulum swings characterizing the rise and fall of dynasties witnessed over centuries. As an inheritor of an artisanal tradition—both individual and a product of social processes—an artisan is at once of her moment and, in learning a craft, acquiring the *habitus* of generations. However, as Ibn Khaldun warned, the skills and practices associated with advanced and stable dynasties (such as that evident in Andalusian Granada prior to the city-state's fall in 1492) may belie an erosion of the animating force imbuing form with inspiration, a symptom of urban decay following metropolitan flourishing.

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<sup>21</sup> The arc and mystery of this difference can in a way be attributed to the impetus of social science. How to account for the relationship between that which is represented—events, biography, history, an interaction, action itself—and that which represents it, the iconicity of discourse?

As I detail in Chapter One, I made the acquaintance of a former fisherman who lived on my block, Adil, who spent part of his days carving miniature replicas of the large wooden schooners that once graced the coastline of Martil. His crowded workshop, jam-packed with odds and ends, the boats and mermaids sitting at odd angles with tools and spare parts, took on an extra charge in relation to the changed landscape directly outside. Whereas it once offered him a direct view of the Mediterranean waters upon which he had made his living, his workshop's view was nowadays obstructed by the tall condominium buildings that dot the shore.

The wooden replicas he carved became, in the aftermath of this severing of horizon, a silent commentary upon the era in which he lives. As he would exclaim to me—build a real boat and you would go to *lhabs*, or prison! referring to a law passed in the 1990s that curtailed the ability to produce new maritime vehicles under the auspices of the law. So he was left to carve schooners of a former era, that of *waqt al-bahr* or the age of the sea, an era which in his reckoning had definitively passed.

Adil's experience of the North African Mediterranean coastline can be read in one light as bearing witness to the cost of the increased importance of the nation-state in the twenty-first century. Whereas during the majority of his career Adil navigated the waters between Spain and Morocco or neighboring Algeria as an open maritime frontier, laws passed in the 1990s tightened restrictions on the borders demarcated by national zones as well as freedom to construct new seafaring vessels.

Such a restriction in the ability to earn a living by sea existed in parallel to a history of twentieth-century decline amongst Moroccan Mediterranean ports—constituted by the erstwhile port of Martil and those of al-Hoceyma and Nador—impeded by an antagonistic historical relationship to the 'Alawi regime and a subsequent lack of material investment characterizing the region. The death of Mouhcine Fikri, who traded in fish and was based in the port of al-Hoceyma, reflected a climate of policing and state sanctions borne by those in the region, and was responded to as such.

Chapter Two takes up the complicated legacy characterizing the relationship between the Moroccan monarchy and *al-shamal* or the north of the country in relation to an urban development project in the beach suburb of Martil, outside Tetouan. In some ways peripheral to the historic antagonism that takes al-Hoceyma as its epicenter, Martil's port closure in 1962 nonetheless is widely understood to be a product of this tense history and the general attitude of then King Hassan II toward the north in particular. Its proposed reopening thus elicits a delicate political dance, as citizens invested in its restoration articulate a politics of grievance that at one and the same time references this historical wrongdoing and credits his son, King Mohammed VI, with wisely presiding over its rectification.

During my fieldwork from the summer of 2016 through late fall 2017, I worked with civic association members involved with NAWAT, a *jama'iyah* whose stated mission was to “save” Wad Martil and see the Mediterranean port resurrected as it once was. Doomed to stop flowing after the port's flooding in the early 1960s, Wad Martil was widely referred to as *wad mayit*, or a dead river. Even to those not directly involved with plans for the port's proposed reopening, the consequences of its stagnation were widely felt, perhaps most visibly in the trash-lined still pool rimming the area between Martil's city center and Diza, an informal settlement

built on top of the former riverbed, not to mention the trade and other economic opportunities lost by its neglect and closure.

In the course of my research I came across a complex and deeply historically layered politics of nostalgia for the Spanish colonial past in the region. Coinciding uniformly with a pro-monarchical political stance in the present, this form of nostalgia dialogues with a centuries-long discourse surrounding the exceptionalism of Spanish empire in North Africa and in Morocco in particular. Grounded in the shared geo-political territory at times ensconcing the Iberian Peninsula to the north and Morocco to the south, the history of Andalusian governance exists in complex parallel with a late nineteenth and twentieth-century history of colonial occupation—brethren or invader, the two have a tendency to blend together in this case. Martil forms a particularly interesting site from which to explore questions of colonial nostalgia and its co-imbriication with a centrist pro-monarchical nationalist stance.

Chapter Three again takes up the most recent political uprising in the Rif, this time through an account of my friendship with the Rifian interlocutor I refer to as Hamid, whose hatred toward the Moroccan ruling regime and most things mainstream Moroccan in turn shaped his view of the role of Andalusian and Arab hegemony within the country, contributing in part also to his unusual decision to convert from Islam to Christianity and engage in covert (and illegal) missionary operations in the surrounding region.<sup>22</sup>

In drawing heavily on my field notes from the period, I hope to effectively convey the fervor and uncertainty characterizing the events of this time, as the Rifians I knew who lived in Martil and moved back and forth between there and al-Hoceyma experienced and relayed the events in their hometown. The possibility of revolution ushering in a real historical reckoning within and across Morocco animated daily conversation for an evanescent period prior to widespread arrests of *hirak* activists and general suppression of the movement following Zefzafi's interruption in the mosque.

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<sup>22</sup> I recognize this as a decidedly secular gloss on religious conversion experience. Though I am critical of explanations of conversion that cast the transition as a purely utilitarian or instrumental move to achieve a given political or worldly aim, in this instance my description stems from extensive conversations with Hamid and my interpretation of what he shared with me regarding the decision.

# Chapter One

## *Ma ma'ana al-fitnah?* (What is the meaning of *fitnah*?): Seeing the Past, Discerning the Present

ما يتبين به حال الإنسان من الخير و الشر، يقال: فتنت الذهب بالنار إذا أحرقتة بها لتعلم أنه خالص أو مشوب، و منه الفتانة و هو الحجر الذى يجرب به الذهب و الفضة.

*al-fitnah*: What distinguishes between a good or evil state in the human. In speech: The gold is subjected to the fire to see thereby whether it burns so as to learn whether it is pure or corrupted. And there is the discerner (weigher) which distinguishes with the scale gold from silver.

—‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, 5th c. A.H. (11<sup>th</sup> c. A.D.) Persian  
grammarian

On the eve of Ramadan in the spring of 2017, a singular scene of contention—captured by phone and subsequently circulated largely digitally—redefined the terms of resistance and protest in Morocco, disorienting and reconfiguring a heretofore more familiar terrain. The force of the shockwaves that ensued can be understood in multiple registers, all condensed into the temporal and spatial frame of a mosque in the Mediterranean port city of al-Hoceyma. A son of the city, Nasser Zefzafi, had emerged as a charismatic young leader of *al-hirak* (movement), one among many such figures across the nation harnessing popular discontent toward the ends of democratic reform and more equitable distribution of resources. The previous few months bore witness to the most significant wave of protests since the summer of 2011, when reverberations of the nearby “Arab Spring” roiling nearby Tunisia and Egypt had resulted in historic constitutional reforms aimed at a limited decentering of monarchical power and a formal recognition of Amazigh as an ethnic and linguistic constituent of the nation alongside its Arab/Arabic dominant counterpart. This wave of protests had also begun in al-Hoceyma, touched off not by a video but rather a photograph that ran rampant across digital spheres, in which the corpse of a fisherman, Mouhcine Fikri, is displayed clutched in the grip of a garbage compacter that ended his life. The sight of trash and pale human flesh co-mingling formed the powerful symbolic substrate of a protest movement anchored in the Moroccan non-elite, the country’s youth joining older generations of activists in demanding change once again, now.

With his interjection in the Hoceyma mosque, Zefzafi redirected the vector of national attention toward a less tangible—but nonetheless deeply visceral—discursive ground: *al-fitnah*, a

term difficult to translate but indexing social disorder and impending crisis. The moment was co-authored, its context an official sermon delivered by an imam in the historically rebellious port town. Though he never appears on camera, nor do the words of his sermon, the imam is exhorting his listeners to adhere to good order and avoid *al-fitnah* when Zefzafi arrives to challenge him. Beginning in the midst of his arrival, the scene features Zefzafi issuing an explosive challenge: “*al-fitnah, al-fitnah, ma ma’ana al-fitnah?*” (Fitnah, fitnah, what is the meaning of fitnah?). In so saying, Zefzafi registers his terms of resistance in a particular lexicon, one with deep roots in Islamic theology and history. In the uproar that followed, stirred up among many other significant factors by the sight of the young Rifian activist daring to interrupt and challenge an imam in the sacred space of the mosque, Zefzafi’s supporters and detractors would clash over the saturated term in a debate that took as its grounds and conditions of possibility the larger Muslim world as geopolitical body. It would end with Zefzafi and many others imprisoned behind bars in long jail sentences, largely disowned by national consensus for having gone too far and somehow said too much in the resounding echoes of the question. What is the meaning of *fitnah*?

As indicated by the literary theorist and grammarian 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī in the definition provided at this chapter’s beginning, *fitnah* is a diagnostic category, an indexical indicator of a state of disorder or possible catastrophic ends that must be discerned, or measured as al-Jurjānī puts it. As such, it requires an act of authorized interpretation, one typically located in an elaborated system of religious authority carefully configured under the auspices of Islamic jurisprudence. Chaotic as the scene surrounding Zefzafi’s confrontation of the imam is, the interjection is calibrated precisely toward this broader system of authority, one he measures and declares false—silver and not gold, in al-Jurjani’s parlance—in the Moroccan context. It is a version of the emperor has no clothes imbued with all the explosive power of a postcolonial pronouncement of failure, leveled at the monarch (King Mohammed VI) who inherited Morocco’s throne from King Mohammed V, the grandfather who led the nation in overthrowing the onus of European colonial oppression and in doing so declared Morocco an independent state governed by a monarch who would double as ‘*Amīr al-Mu’minīn*, Commander of the Faithful, a nonsecular potentate. Where the imam gestures to the possibility of being led astray toward a path of insecurity and devastation in the popular stirrings afoot—beware of *fitnah*, he counsels—Zefzafi names a different version of reality, one in which Moroccans are actively living amongst the ruins of a failed illiberal, neoliberal order. In doing so he overlays the image of Mouhcine Fikri’s corpse with a far more radical cast, insinuating not a breakdown in the system but a system rotten to its core, producing sordid fruit.

*Fitnah* is a social condition, but it is not readily perceived. Its presence requires, rather, diagnostic capabilities, the interpretation of signs. Gender trouble, social malaise, corruption and dishonesty are all its hallmarks; the question of how to interpret such markers is a matter of urgent and antagonistic debate and social clashes which occasionally erupt into overt violence. Above all, *fitnah* is a matter of anticipation and recognition, of seeing the present as a series of swiftly moving still-frames headed toward a possible catastrophic end.

Diagnosis in this case cannot be separated from the one making the diagnosis, foregrounding the familiar problem of authorized knowledge within Islamic theological and juristic traditions. Problems of power and transmission—fallibility, of course, but more



pressingly, the seeming inevitability of corruptibility—are especially salient in an act of interpretation that is itself inherently potentially dangerous: diagnosing disorder and impending doom where others see order and stability, sounding an alarm that most will not want to hear. Further complicating matters is the problem of who in this constitutes the *umma* or community—signified by the postcolonial nation-state, the wider Muslim world gestured to under *‘Amīr al-Mu‘minīn*, or other, officially unrecognized but nonetheless potent ways of organizing geography and belonging? Who is to be warned? Who is authorized to do the warning? How to know *fitnah*, to distinguish aberration and error from structural rot? These questions define the parameters of the forcefield opened up by Zefzafi’s intrusion at the mosque and even more intrusive, insistent question, *al-fitnah, al-fitnah, ma ma’ana al-fitnah?*

In the first part of this chapter, I turn to the 8<sup>th</sup> c. A.H. (14<sup>th</sup> c. A.D.) North African scholar Ibn Khaldun and his work, the *Muqaddimah* or Introduction (written as the first in a series seeking to elaborate a new philosophy of history). Known in the contemporary moment primarily for his cyclical model of history characterized by empires’ patterns of rise and fall, there is, I submit, an urgent philosophical problem animating Ibn Khaldun’s masterwork which at times goes overlooked, one closely related to the problem of *fitnah*. As I discuss below, Ibn Khaldun’s overarching focus on decline and ensuing disaster is written in tandem with the spectacular fall—still yet to be fully effected, at the time of his writing—of Islamic governance in al-Andalus or the Iberian Peninsula, a fall that effectively hailed the end of western Islam and, it could be argued, indirectly ushered in European colonization in North Africa’s early modern period.

Far from confidently setting out a reliable model of power’s operations in human governance across history and regions, the *Muqaddimah* is palpably troubled, haunted even by the looming failure of an empire that by its end date in 1492 would have spanned (albeit in different configurations) the better part of eight centuries and born the richest of fruits in terms of artistic and scholarly production. Discernment, or a reading of the signs, for Ibn Khaldun (informed, as I will return to below, by the Aristotelian tradition and its influence on the Andalusian sciences) is a deeply material problem, one embedded within the everyday processes humans engage in collectively. Craft, ethics, and human flourishing are in his view inextricably entwined by threads that the analyst or philosopher must in turn carefully pick apart to fully see and grasp the significance of.

The problem of caliphal authority and its breakdown, in light of the dissolution of the Umayyad caliphate based in the southern Andalusian city of Córdoba in the eleventh century and that of the Abbasids in mid-thirteenth-century Baghdad, is of paramount importance to Ibn Khaldun. The *Muqaddimah*’s central problems—discerning decline and impending ruin among the appearance of order and security, and the kind of authorized knowledge within an Islamic tradition of governance that might be empowered to name it and, just as crucially, be heeded—are, I suggest, likewise germane to the problem-space animating the political crisis of 2017 as Zefzafi newly framed it in light of his intervention.

In confronting and rejecting the imam’s authority to guide Muslim congregants in al-Hoceyma on behalf of the monarchy—a monarch whose official title lays claim to the role of *‘Amir al-Mu‘minīn* or Caliph—Zefzafi articulates a nonsecular critique of the state of the state. Whereas heretofore the great majority of *hirak* discourse centered squarely in the language of democracy, rights and reform of the state, Zefzafi’s confrontation with the imam in turn confronts

the logics of the Moroccan monarch as defender of the Muslim faithful and inheritor, in an important sense, of the Caliphate associated with western Islam. It is in this traversal, rooted as it is in a longstanding argument over twentieth-century colonial history and a refusal or inability to reckon with the haunting figure of the Republic of the Rif's brief history and repression, that the country was subsequently thrown into a heightened state of discursive conflict over how to understand its present and future trajectory in the spring of 2017.

Zefzafi's choice to lodge a register of critique in reference to Islamic principles—in his invocation of Umar, the second Caliph after the Prophet Muhammad; his challenging of the monarch's right to claim the title of *'Amir al-Mu'minīn*; and the choice to enter the mosque and reject the imam's right to speak authoritatively on the matter of *fitnah*—discomfited many on the Moroccan left. As I note elsewhere, a friend of mine from al-Hoceyma who identified strongly both with a Rifian political sensibility and yearned for a social order in which he could be openly queer expressed the jarring effect watching the video of Zefzafi in the mosque had on him: he was all for the Rif, he told me, but was not interested in supporting a political movement that might lend itself to the likes of Da'esh, or ISIS. Though anecdotal, his reaction captures an important aspect of Moroccan statecraft and its various constituents, whereby King Muhammad VI at one and the same time might be seen as shepherding the country's faithful and safeguarding the modified liberal rights and entitlements of its citizenry. Accustomed to a political order in which an institutional platform of Islamism is expressed in various parties on the whole aligned on the right and contests left-wing platforms ranging from Communist to reformist, many leftists otherwise sympathetic with *hirak* aims were alienated by Zefzafi's intervention. This response amplified the outrage expressed by pro-monarchical centrist to right-wing sectors in response to the perceived violation (to both the nation-state and the wider *umma* guided by the King) proffered by Zefzafi's challenge.

The force and perceived danger of this critique is spatial: in the sacred space of the mosque, in the port city of al-Hoceyma that has for so long formed the epicenter of political unrest in the Rif region. It is also temporal: on the eve of Ramadan and after months of ratcheting up tension levels in the wake of Mouhcine Fikri's violent death, in the short years after the greatest threat to monarchical power seen under Mohammed VI's reign. In meeting the imam's warnings around *fitnah* with a cross-examination of the term and an insistence on re-reading the present as not a time of stability and order but the deceptive time of *fitnah*, Zefzafi in a sudden flash elucidates—gives shape and form to, in a moment in time—a longstanding Rifian narrative of the Moroccan past and present trajectory that refuses to conform to the discursive parameters of the hegemonic nation-state.<sup>23</sup> The haunting figure of the short-lived Rifian Republic casts a palpable shadow in this moment, a not easily sated ghost calling for a reckoning.

In the second section of this chapter I turn to a series of encounters between myself and a retired fisherman who lived down the street from me in Martil (a Mediterranean beach suburb

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<sup>23</sup> “To be sure,” writes Walter Benjamin in the third of “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” “only a redeemed mankind receives the fullness of its past—which is to say, only for a redeemed mankind has a past become citable in all its moments.” Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), 254.

outside of the city of Tetouan) that took place between 2016 and 2017. Adil, as I will call him here, spent the better part of many days, and even stretching into the night, either seated in front of or rummaging around a workshop crowded with objects, among them model boats he had carved which testified to a different Mediterranean, and indeed a different spatiotemporal regime altogether—one he referred to in the course of our discussions as *waqt al-bahr* (the time of the sea). This site formed the basis of all our encounters, as I would either walk down our street to go talk to him or stop on my way back from another destination, occasionally joined by his wife passing through or another neighbor.

Structured spatially by the space of the workshop, our meetings likewise followed a kind of implicit formal pattern, one which traversed a well-worn arc of time (the time of Adil's life he chose to share with me) intimately conjoined with the workshop's inner and outer walls, the corners he would point to in telling me how the space of the workshop we inhabited at that moment had come to be—a palimpsestic narrative I came to hear as a form of profound political critique. Returning always to the reference point of the sea, Adil's narration of having been removed or cut off (both literally and figuratively) from the sea as life source was also, I suggest, a way of thinking the region's stagnation and decline, one told not from the familiar, instrumentalizing perspective of European colonizers but anchored, instead, in a collective and deeply impactful estrangement, seemingly irrevocable, from *waqt al-bahr*, the time of the sea. It was a narrative he told to me primarily vis-à-vis the boats he carved and kept there, miniature model boats consigned, fittingly, never to sail.

In pairing a reading of Ibn Khaldun's treatise as it speaks to the problem of *fitnah* with Adil's boats, I gesture to a few broad points of convergence: first, both are dealing more broadly with a problem of decline and regimes of power specific, at least in certain respects, to the vantage point of the North African and Muslim Mediterranean. Second, both are urgently preoccupied with problems of authority and justice. Third, crafts figure in both as sites of ethico-political critique. These thematic convergences are, I suggest, related in significant ways to shared questions of power and geography formed at the meeting point of continents and spatial regimes, anchored in an Islamic tradition and formed in dialectic with the West and the loss of Western Islamic power signified in the fall of al-Andalus.

These thematic convergences in their historical and geographic specificity in turn give weight and force, I suggest, to the significance of Nasser Zefzafi's challenge in the mosque, and the counterforce that overwhelmingly arose in rejection of his challenge. At stake is the legitimacy and right to assume the mantle of leadership of the Muslim world in its western regions, as the most prominent nonsecular state apparatus in North Africa. In the third section I undertake a formal analysis of the five and a half minute digital clip, paying especial attention to the multiple publics contained within its frame. I go on to examine the eruption of responses that emerged in the days and weeks after in the digital realm, centered as they were on disputing the valence of *fitnah* and its potential applicability to current and future events.

The fourth and final section of the chapter recounts conversations I had with a cousin of Mouhcine Fikri's, Idriss. An erudite young man who I made an acquaintance with at a chance meeting in a Martil cafe some months after the fisherman's death, I continued to meet and have conversations with him in the final months of my fieldwork over the summer and fall of 2017. Unlike Hamid, with whom I experienced the buildup of revolutionary fervor and who is the

primary interlocutor in Chapter Three, Idriss by virtue of both timing and temperament was always more circumspect regarding the political events of the day and the likelihood for revolutionary change to transform social and political structures. Writing and publishing in a national newspaper a response, at once minute in its detail and sweeping in its analysis, a few days following his cousin's tragic death, Idriss' account of the years leading up to Fikri's end demonstrate with unmistakable and yet measured outrage how much of the daily toil and struggles of his life were echoed in his crushing death.

### **I. Theorizing Across Rupture: Ibn Khaldun's *al-Muqaddimah* and the Fall of al-Andalus**

The jurist and philosopher Ibn Khaldun would never set eyes on Tetouan. At the time of his death, it had not yet materialized. He was, nonetheless, intimately aware of the pending need for such a city; the magnum opus he is today known for, *Kitābu l-'ibar*, of which the Introduction or *Muqaddimah* is most widely read, is infused with an urgent awareness of its coming need. Writing at the turn of the fifteenth century in present-day Algeria, he writes presciently of a world order on the verge of a major, perhaps irreversible shift. Though its ultimate demise would take place after his death, one gets the sense that the philosopher would not have been shocked by the 1492 fall of Granada and with it, the truncation of the Western Islamic world, henceforth firmly outside the shores of a Europe still in nascent formation.

Born in Tunis in 1332/732, Ibn Khaldun and the Mediterranean world he surveys belong to a geographical lifeworld in which the north-south divide carried a different valence than in the contemporary moment. He authors the *Muqaddimah* in a sojourn amongst the coastal mountains hugging present-day Algeria's coastline that coincided with a semi-retirement from public life following, most recently, an unsuccessful stint advising the Nasrid Sultan of Granada, Muhammad V, which culminates in his banishment from his court. Though it would mark the last time he would cross northward across the sea, the region of al-Andalus—of which Granada by his time functioned as a floating, imperiled island—was both his natal land and the site of the Islamic philosophy formative to his thought. Called on to serve as a jurist, princely adviser, and esteemed counsel throughout his long career—when he was not imprisoned or otherwise held in contempt of the courts he had erstwhile served—Ibn Khaldun traversed the northwestern, southern, and Levantine coast of the sea as a coherent (if multiply governed, fractured and contested) territory, Western Islam segueing into the westernmost reaches of the Levant and as far east as Yemen, the land his ancestors had originally hailed from before settling in al-Andalus.

Surveying the world from the perspective of the southern Mediterranean coast in the late fourteenth/eighth century, Ibn Khaldun writes from a place of caution and deep, wearied introspection. Though Granada at the time had not yet fallen as the last of the Andalusian Muslim kingdoms, his own parents had lost their possessions with the fall of Sevilla in 1248, migrating to Tunis only to succumb to the plague whilst there. The *Muqaddimah* as a meditation on empire and history emerges out of this space of rupture and disaster; the former Umayyad caliphate stretching across much of the Iberian Peninsula had been reduced to a single kingdom, a pattern that echoed across the fragmented North African coast, divided up between fragile dynasties—the Marinids, Ziyānids and Hafṣids, governing present-day Morocco, western Algeria and eastern Algeria stretching to Tripoli, respectively—all of which maintained power by entering into temporary alliances with nearby rulers, whether Muslim or Christian, and were

each in turn marked by intrigue and internal dissension.<sup>24</sup> As Muhsin Mahdi underlines in his definitive account of the work, the *Muqaddimah* and three Books that followed it were intimately in dialogue with western North Africa and the specter of decline it represented at the time in the larger Muslim world.

Beyond the short-sightedness of rulers and the lust for power that predictably structures the activity of governance, the plague that took his parents looms large in the *Muqaddimah*, both for its vastness and for the illusion it punctures, one might venture, of seeking refuge and stability in exile. “Cities and buildings were laid waste, he writes. “Roads and way signs were obliterated, settlements and mansions became empty, dynasties and tribes grew weak,” he writes. “The entire inhabited world changed...It was as if the voice of existence in the world had called out for oblivion and restriction, and the world had responded to its call. God inherits the earth and all those who dwell on it.”<sup>25</sup> What, he asks, are the conditions that structure the world that arises in the wake of this devastation? How do such conditions relate to the past civilizations which we know of not only through the material ruins and relics they have left behind but also through their transmitted forms that we continue to inhabit (if with a crucial difference)? It is his aim, Ibn Khaldun states, to write a history of the Maghrib and the world that listens to these now vanished pasts, under the watchful eye of a God that was God not only of the Arabs; he signals his aim to make a space for perhaps incommensurable difference in the very act of transcription itself, working off of a system of marked approximation rather than substitution.<sup>26</sup>

Trained in a tradition of Islamic scholarship which inculcates its practitioners in a fully elaborated system of evaluation and inspection in the transmission of *hadīth* (or Prophetic sayings) in particular, he expresses concern that even this careful, systematic labor risks mishandling if done without appropriate attention and care to the conditions which envelop any given speech act or historical fact. The scholars of his day are, he avers, far too quick to project current conditions onto the past deeds and narratives they help to transmit—this despite the tremendous evidence, in the Mediterranean world in particular, of the catastrophic rhythms of the world which so regularly result in the near complete annihilation of ways of life.

Rupture, Ibn Khaldun suggests, forms a normal aspect of history rather than an exception, though it is to be treated no less gravely as such in regard to the possibility of epistemic accessibility: “When there is a general change of conditions,” he writes, “it is as if the entire world had changed and the whole world been altered, as if it were a new and repeated creation, a world brought into existence anew.”<sup>27</sup> The events which remain intact from these otherwise lost lifeworlds must be well situated in their former context as well as carefully scrutinized for their own inner logics and purposes, and never presumed to map out readily onto present conditions.

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<sup>24</sup> Muhsin Mahdi, *Ibn Khaldūn's Philosophy of History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), 37-39.

<sup>25</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 30.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 31-32.

<sup>27</sup> Ibn Khaldun, 30.

In foregrounding rupture as a central and necessary problem, Ibn Khaldun points to the role of reason in investigating transmitted knowledge—a line of inquiry that places him firmly in the argumentative lineage of the 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> c. Andalusian jurist Averröes (Ibn Rushd) and a highly fraught, central debate concerning reason and revelation and the role of philosophy in the Islamic sciences ongoing at the time. Though Frank Griffel in his remarks on the relationship between Averröes and the massively influential Islamic jurist and thinker of the era preceding him, the Persian theologian al-Ghazālī, insists that the “feud” as it is sometimes narrated between them is more crude caricature than grounded reality, there was nonetheless an urgent question animating Averröes’ engagement with the theologian and mystic concerning the role of *falsafa*, or philosophy. His *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* (The Incoherence of the Incoherence) responded to al-Ghazālī’s earlier, more widely read and influential *Tahāfut al-falasifa* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers). In the latter, al-Ghazālī takes issue with a widespread epistemic practice in the Islamic sciences, reflected in the massive energies poured into translation of ancient texts, Greek in particular, to draw on the wisdom of the ancient, pagan philosophers in interpreting sacred Qur’anic revelation. Incorrectly rendered as a totalizing attack on philosophy, al-Ghazālī’s point of departure with Averröes—and following him, Ibn Khaldun—was nonetheless fundamental.<sup>28</sup>

Neither the speculative theology (or *kalām*) advocated by al-Ghazālī nor the mode of interpretation Averröes expounded accepted the strictures on Qur’anic interpretation (such as that embraced by the Andalusian Maliki school) which would limit authoritative interpreting to an earlier era and charge its jurists with applying these decisions to cases as they arise. Where they diverged was in the method of interpretation available: al-Ghazālī favored the use of reason in interpretation, or *ta’wīl*, with the Qur’an as the ultimate and singular source of authority, whereas Averröes points to a rational method that necessarily exists apart from revelation yet ought to be understood, he asserts, as working in tandem with it—the science of demonstration, first developed by Aristotle and explicitly rejected by al-Ghazālī as heretical. Also glossed as *hikma* or wisdom, it is both that which is inherently available to all through syllogistic reasoning grounded in methodical reflection and practiced correctly only by a very few. By placing his *Kitābu l-‘ibar* in a genealogy of its practitioners—Plato, Aristotle, Farabi, Avicenna, Ibn Bajja, Ibn Tufayl, and Averröes—Ibn Khaldun is, as Mahdi notes, signaling his willingness to operate in a sphere outside the domain of the Law or revelation, in the spirit (one infers) of Averröes’

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<sup>28</sup> Frank Griffel points to an error in historical interpretation as particularly significant in what he argues is a misunderstood or misrepresented antagonism between the two scholars. The founder of the Almohad movement in North Africa, Ibn Tūmart, was highly influenced by al-Ghazali and had trained under his followers during an early stay in Persia. Rather than this representing a problem for Averroes (as claimed by the Orientalist Ernest Renan in his framing of al-Ghazali as heralding an anti-philosophical trend within the Islamic sciences), Griffel argues that the jurist was quite at home in the new order, both epistemically and in the positions he held. If anything, he contends, it may have been the tradition of Andalusian Maliki jurisprudence and its longstanding antagonism to the Greek sciences and rationalistic methods that landed Averroes in temporary disrepute at court. Frank Griffel, “The Relationship between Averroes and al-Ghazālī as it Presents Itself in Averroes’ Early Writings,” in *Medieval Philosophy and the Classical Tradition: In Islam, Judaism and Christianity*, ed. John Inglis (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

conviction that doing so is not only permissible but indeed enjoined by the divine will revealed in the Qur'ān.<sup>29</sup>

The traversal of this delicate domain, what Daniel Heller-Roazen refers to as “simultaneous sameness and difference” bonding the Law to the wisdom of the ancients, forms the shifting epistemic grounds upon which Ibn Khaldun writes what he proposes as a new science, one that will not content itself with transmitting past events but rather will look for their inner structure, infer meaning and seek to group its subject matter accordingly.<sup>30</sup> Such is the labor, Mahdi contends, signified by the keyword in the work's title, *'ibar*. The term, he writes,

means passing on, over, through, by, or beyond: and these acts are usually related to the banks or borders of a river, valley, chasm, or a rock hole. The various concrete and conceptual meanings are derived from this basic act of two points...It connotes the existence of a barrier, but also the bridging or crossing of that barrier. It means vanishing and death, but also the duration in which the consideration of death enhances life. It indicates the examination of the immediate world of sensible things, but also the penetration of the mystery that lies behind them, and the relation between the two. Finally, it points to the chasm that may exist between two persons, and also the possibility of communication between them.<sup>31</sup>

Writing a history of the world intended for a broad audience, and not the few who might be entrusted with right interpretation, Ibn Khaldun signals from the beginning a textual layering, a gap which the learned might pursue in parsing his meanings. Such a gap, as Mahdi argues, is not only textual but saturates the thematics of the work's philosophical inquiry.

In flagging the centrality of inner meaning versus outer appearance, and the work of interpretation involved in bridging the two, Ibn Khaldun takes as a central case-study the state of affairs he encountered during his ill-fated stint as an adviser in the Nasrid court of Granada. While on one level the tenuousness and much reduced grip on power of Muslims in Iberia was quite evident to all by the mid-fourteenth century, the inheritance of Andalusian civilization, most evident in the continued flourishing of the arts and sciences, produces a set of conditions in which the adviser's warnings go unheeded. The paradox he apprehended in this situation—the continued prospering of civilization thwarting a possible return to basic principles which might avert otherwise inevitable calamity—would underlie much of the theoretical impetus underlying

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<sup>29</sup> Mahdi 81-82. “Consider, you who have sight” (Qur'ān 59:2) is one of five verses Averroës cites in developing this line of argument in his *Decisive Treatise*. Daniel Heller-Roazen, “Philosophy Before the Law: Averroës' *Decisive Treatise*, *Critical Inquiry* 32 no. 3 (Spring 2006), 420-422.

<sup>30</sup> Heller-Roazen, 436

<sup>31</sup> Mahdi 65-66.

the work.<sup>32</sup> How to understand and predict the quiet unraveling of a seemingly secure political order, read the signs of impending disaster? And what, just as significantly, endows such a diagnosis with authority in broader Muslim structures of power?

Analytically, the problem of diagnosis on this scale requires a way to recognize and engage with the potentiality of matter. Returning to the above-mentioned philosophical disputes, the theory of history here expounded draws heavily on the Aristotelean concept of the human as formed by his or her habitus—practices which are rooted in corporeal procedure (whether physical or mental—Ibn Khaldun makes it clear in his discussion of the crafts, particularly the sciences and writing, that the difference is not fundamental) that in the process actively rework not only the intellect but soul, here understood as existing alongside the corporeal in intimate but nonetheless separate conjuncture. People in their everyday occupations are engaged in activities which fundamentally rework and expand the soul's capacities (“it is unavoidable that actions influence the soul,” he writes) in ways that leave indelible traces, transmitted generationally yet necessarily begun from the beginning at the level of the body and mind in every human lifespan.<sup>33</sup>

For Ibn Khaldun, the primary opposition is not corporeal versus mental but a spectrum of potentiality the traversal of which places prophecy and its attendant revelations in a coherent spectrum of human possible development. Prophecy here is a deeply human activity which only a very few might access, and the vast majority should not hope to. While only a very few people are selected by God from birth to achieve prophetic status, he argues, their access to the angelic or divine realm represents not a qualitatively different perceptual or experiential level but rather, a (in some cases predestined) further progression along the spectrum than most humans ever attain. The rest of us approach this level of existence when we sleep, nearer than many ever

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<sup>32</sup> There is an urgent sense in the *Muqaddimah* that inheritance be perceived as a critical existential problem rather than a thing to be used at one's will. Ibn Khaldun narrates his encounters with disappointing rulers (possibly the prince of Granada whom he had invested so much hope in) who cite the past deeds and sayings of their lineage to justify their actions, as though the past were little more than a catalogue of anodyne elements to be perused and wielded for personal convenience. The consistent tendency to do so, he argues, is responsible for the pattern of dynastic rule which cannot sustain an extended cross-generational reign without succumbing to corruption or decadence and eventually, failing. In schematic form, this general trend takes place over four generations, which he defines as “the builder, the one who has personal contact with the builder, the one who relies on tradition, and the destroyer” (Ibn Khaldun, 106). The Bedouin nomads who live apart from sedentary, urban life figure in this account as those who have the least strong sense of an inheritance to be enjoyed and taken for granted and most keenly embed their actions within the sphere of present relations, or *'assabiya* (group feelings). As such, Ibn Khaldun neither holds them up as the exemplars to which all other humans ought to aspire to model themselves after, nor does he condemn them. Relatively unrestrained by the past's lessons, they are capable of great destruction as well as badly needed revitalization. It is a mistake, he writes, to assume that either good qualities or feelings of kinship are able to be inherited; their inclusion as part of a legacy exists at the imaginary level alone.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 313.



realize.<sup>34</sup> And when awake, we operate within a shared domain, absolute stranger neither to the angelic realm of conscious existence nor the substrate of *sensibilia* in which all living beings partake. In this sense, the traversal implied by the work's title is more fundamental than assessing an inner meaning, in the sense that any meaning arrived at depends upon the movements of the assessor, herself necessarily in flux.

If the *Muqaddimah* does not readily reveal its points, it may well be in part because flux operates at two distinctive yet conjoined levels in the text, the singular and collective. Flux, here understood as a nonlinear yet nonetheless progressive orientation of human animating potential, can be applied to understanding the trajectory of the individual as well as a larger collective endeavor. A human life that achieves the full capacities of any given endeavor, as he posits is the case in Spain in regard to the state of craftsmanship on display there, may nonetheless be ensconced in a broader societal context that has fallen irreparably away from its orientating praxis. It falls to the philosopher—crucially, however, supported by a societal context that supports this nonidentical vision of human potential, individual and societal, that ascends even to the level of prophethood—to assess the gap between the two scales and sound the alarm if needed. The necessary substrate may be the commonly perceptible (and all the radical potential thereby entailed), but the interpretive act is nonetheless circumscribed to the very few.<sup>35</sup>

Ibn Khaldun's is both a theory of Islamic society that subscribes to a vision of monarchical-theological power and lies outside of it, its judgement relying always on the power of interpretation, of bridging the gap between actual and potential, delegated ideally to the outside philosopher-observer and understood to be highly dangerous outside of this authorized realm. Those who come under some of its most severe criticism, however, are endowed with all the glories of an illustrious inheritance yet fail to observe and be mindful of the gaps across which they operate and continue in seeming prosperity. Such is the situation facing western Islam, and the provinces of al-Andalus in particular, at the time of his writing.

## II. *Waqt al-Bahr*, The Time of the Sea

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<sup>34</sup> Ibn Khaldun is careful to specify that while the model of the memory-trace or retentive imagination might not apply to prophetic vision, ordinary and prophetic dreaming do share in common an orientation to an outside that can only hope to be apprehended through a form of perception. The difference marking a space between “confused dreams” and dream-visions—or death, for that matter—lies in the progress of a soul and the corresponding level of differentiated perception that is both “appropriate” and “available” in light of this progress. Ibn Khaldun, 368.

<sup>35</sup> This sense of radical sharedness of potential capacities is balanced in the text, among other things, by the argument around the role of the traditions we inherit and train in which mediate one's habits and actions. These structure a set of conditions not entirely of our making, but which nonetheless intimately constitute us—conditions that carry their own particular histories and forces, and which crystallize as traditions in various states of flourishing or disarray. What would it mean, the text seems to ask, to treat inheritance as a burden to be wrestled with as well as a gift, to above all stop taking it for granted at the time of greatest enjoyment of its fruits (as the Spaniards above all others are failing to do)? To do so would involve a reckoning with a collective's relation to the past that refuses complacency and recognizes it as in active relation with the living, with its own demands and logics, its at times onerous legacies to discharge.

It was always the same, our conversations. Not the words necessarily but rather a similar route, a spatial reckoning we traversed each time. *Here*, the cracked frame protecting a color photograph of him with his children—still young—and his boat. Tucked away in the upper corner of the crowded garage Adil presided over, it was our constant referent. *There* is where we were standing, he would tell me, gesturing from the photo to a spot on the ground not far from where we sat. *Over there*, due north if you kept close to the coastline, was and still is Cabo Negro, its bluffs rising up from the waves, though you could no longer see it from where we were. *Looking up*, the same sun, if only in a very narrow window. But the sea, where had it gone?

Adil was one of the few Moroccans I met who had been born in and grown up in Martil. Not Tetouan, not the surrounding mountainous chains from which many northerners traced their descent. His father had come over from the Rif region and started farming back when most of the plots were worked by Spaniards; Martil was special, Adil often told me, because of the quality of its sand. Its water was sweet, *haloo*, and things grown in its soil had a different taste. He would tick off the different crops they had grown in familiar recitations—that was when the region fed its own people, not like now with the trucks coming from the interior laden with agribusiness produce. He didn't trust such fruits.

He laughed when I said I like to go to a certain stand because it has all *bldi* stuff. How do you know it's *bldi* (organic/from the country), is it just because they say it is? He gestured for me to follow him into his workshop's second room, where he showed me some potatoes he had in a sack. To me, they just looked like potatoes, but he said he got them direct from the producer and they were from Martil itself, not the *dakhliya* (interior). It's the *raml* (sand), he said a couple of times, it results in a different *thoq* (taste) here, if you plant things in this soil.

Nonetheless, for Adil it had always been the sea, not land, that would be the territory he worked. Whereas a farmer might expect to make on average maybe 6 dh a day (USD 6 cents), in those days a fisherman could make ten times that per boatload of fish, able to count on the surrounding waters to yield plentiful catches. He had been a fisherman in a less regulated maritime era; nowadays, for example, there was an agreement between Spain and Morocco that let fishermen from nearby Ceuta/Sebta (under Spanish control) cross over to haul fish. In his day, he told me, Spanish fishermen had just come over from Sebta and plundered. That was before the 1990s, when increasingly stringent laws were passed to regulate the movement of shipping circuits. Before they had banned the building of new boats, in 1992.

Was it to prevent illegal immigration? I asked. No, they didn't care about that, he responded definitively, it was because of two things: terrorism and arms sales. Those were the things they were worried about, and that was why the law to stop new boat building had been effected. Anything else, hashish, contraband, illegal immigration, that was all a matter of general indifference, he said. But anything that could later come to be construed as their part in terrorism or arms sales flows was something

there was a great attempt to curb.

Adil was a fixture on my street; except for a period when he was taken seriously ill for a few months and needed an operation in the Tetouani state hospital Sidi Riml, he could nearly always be found either sitting just in front of his workshop, nursing a cold cup of coffee with milk, or standing rummaging or tinkering with its contents. The chaotic workshop he maintained was full of a jumble of mostly wooden scraps and objects; perched atop some of these heaps, I soon realized, teetered striking wooden carvings of large boats complete with sails and masts, the kind with sails running down their length that would have in a former era traversed the coast and Rio Martil on their way back and forth from Tetouan. In addition, there were a few mermaid busts he said were *huria al-bahr*, and the pieces of various housing improvement projects he had going at any given time. Toward the back of the shop sat two-story replicas of *villas* or the local style of mansion complete with driveway. As we talked he would at times step gingerly around, locating bare patches of ground not visible from where I was standing, pointing out all the different kinds of wares he had.

During most of the year he made what must have been a very modest income repairing people's old chairs or selling furniture he constructed out of wood. During the summer, he occasionally received orders for his boats, mostly from Saudis and other foreigners visiting the Mediterranean seaside. His wife would occasionally appear when I visited him in his shop; the first time I met her, she laughed—an unguarded, full laugh—and told me that she was always trying to get him to clean up what he had so it would be less crowded and more presentable but that he refused to get rid of a single piece. He chuckled too, when she said this, and said it was true.

One April day I took Adil a box of sweets. He seemed quite bemused by the offering and I couldn't tell whether he liked them or not, though he took a few. He said he had just eaten lunch, *tajine d hot* (fish tajine), so he shouldn't indulge too much.

I asked him if I could sit on one of the tires nearby and he pulled out a stool and covered it with a newspaper, gesturing for me to sit. Shortly after I had sat down, before we had really started talking much, a fight broke out in front of the small *sha'abi* restaurant next door. A young man who had just come up to Adil smilingly, speaking a little Spanish jokingly I supposed for my benefit, was involved along with another guy and a middle-aged man they both had an issue with. It followed a familiar pattern, men in the area—shopkeepers and passerby—rushing to separate the two parties, then alternately pleading, joking, and lecturing, laying hands on their shoulders in order to calm them, persuade them to walk away and leave it. Adil sat unmoving through the whole thing, watching it in quiet disgust. People, they get upset about nothing, he commented to me afterward.

I asked him by way of making conversation whether he was looking forward to summer and he exclaimed no, look at what just happened and with not too many people around yet! Imagine what it would be like once everything was super

crowded like it gets. I paused a moment, then asked: but don't you depend on the income from people who come by, wanting to buy your boats? He waved dismissively behind him: this, this hardly makes any money. It's just something to do that's better than sitting the whole day and not working at all. Like that day, he hadn't done any work. It was better to occupy himself with something, he thought, than to spend every afternoon like that.

There was an actual living to be made by fishing, he said, maybe 50 or 60 dh (roughly 5 or 6 USD) a boatload of fish. He had had to stop in the early 2000s because of his failing eyes, which he attributed to the bright lights—something like 800 volts—that were attached to each of the four corners of some of the bigger boats he had worked on, he said in order to attract fish. He got out a notebook and started sketching a boat, explaining to me the differences you find between them in response to my questions about the kinds he had carved. Most of the ones he had carved had sails, whereas the kind he had actually worked on didn't. There was the schooner type boat he would work in with just a handful of other people, and then there were bigger ones where 10 to 15 men at a time would work together. If I got it correctly, each kind could have the lights affixed in order to get more fish to come to the boats. I asked him whether other people he'd worked with had had their eyes similarly affected, and he said maybe three people he knew had similar problems.

Back when he was a younger fisherman, he said, there had been an abundance of fish, nothing like now. I asked him why the numbers of fish had declined and he said because they had used tactics like bombing underneath the water to scare the fish and grab up as many as possible; nowadays there were far fewer in comparison.

The decline in fish figuring in Adil's lament entered a series of parallel diminishment: degradation of the soil and its harvest and above all, the impoverished vista. Unlike many of the civic association members I worked with in Martil, though, Adil made reference neither to a distinctive "northernness" in need of protection nor a threat of infiltration posed by informal settlement and migrants from the central and southern parts of the country coming in search of work. The problem, in his view, could be located precisely in the wall he stared at every day, the one obstructing his view of the water.

He started to sketch a house next to his boat on the notebook. People used to build houses like this, he said, indicating a low-lying structure, and to put a certain kind of material on the roof that made it so that in summer it was cool inside and in winter, warm. He gestured again to his photo of him and his children with his boat, its glass totally cracked. See, see how the houses (tiny in the background) were small and low? See how you could see Cabo Negro there in the back? See how the sand went all the way up? We were standing right here,

right in front, and he gestured to the concrete pillar framing the photo. This shocked me—I knew as he had said before to me that it was in the same place, but I didn't realize it was actually the same column as the one we were sitting in front of.

I used to look up from where I'm sitting here, he continued, and see the sun up high, the water out front, the mountains off in the distance. Now what do I look at? he said, looking up. This wall! That's all I see. I used to see the sun, he repeated.

Time for Adil could be traced more through building practices—or their cessation—than governance, it seemed. Born in the mid-1950s in Martil, he had been a boy of about seven when its port had shut down; it could have been bigger than the one in Tanja, he told me once, but then someone from the early Moroccan government had come and moved the machines needed to keep the pathways clear in Martil's river (he thought they had been moved to Muhammedia on the Atlantic coast). And then that had been it, without something to clear the way the river had died and with it the port. Though it was hard to say exactly, I got the sense at times that for Adil the question of who was in power was incidental—people in power moved in and did with the land what they pleased.

Martil, he told me in one of our many conversations about land, had been all farmland and farmers when he was young. And the Spanish, he added, matter-of-factly. And where had it gone, all this land? I asked him in one of our early discussions. *Bnao!* (*they built*) he had exclaimed, laughing.

That apartment, for instance, he said gesturing to the one two houses down from mine that is being newly constructed, that is illegal. But it doesn't matter, the people who build them just bribe them and it's fine, they build a few more stories than they're supposed to be able to. I said that from my perspective—as I have gotten used to the new apartment building next to us being singled out as especially abhorrent and never really understood why—I didn't see much difference between that condo building and the ones in front of it. After all, they were all the same height, more or less. No, we are talking about this side of the street! he said, definitively. It's this side of the street I'm talking about. That side [across from us, blocking our view of the ocean], that's a totally different thing. That was taken by a wazir from the *dakhlia* (minister of the interior) shortly after the photo on his wall was snapped. Ohh, so he bought the land and built on it? Bought it! He didn't buy anything. He just took it, stole it. They had stolen.

Yes, from where I used to sit here I could not only see the water, I could see the fish! I could tell what direction they were swimming based on the tides, after all I am a fisherman. But you can't see well? That was in that time, my eyesight wasn't always like this. But now anyhow the fish have gone, too. *Kulhum haribou!* (all of them fled) he exclaimed with a dry laugh. I felt my throat

closing a bit at this point and feeling saddened, almost like I might cry. That is sad, I commented. Sad! It's more than sad, he responded, gesturing again to the high condo walls before him. He never raises his voice, just talks in a kind of wry, raspy voice, a little weakened by his current condition but in the same style as when I met him last year.

*Kulhum haribou.* Adil and his wife's children had all fled, too, all but one. The 1988 photo anchoring all of our conversations, our traversal through the forced reconfiguration of Adil's lifeworld, showed him and his children standing around one of his wooden schooners. They had still been young in those days, growing up in a different Martil, one where their father had been able to support his family through his livelihood on the water. That was before 1992, when the government had done a survey of all existing boats, according to Adil, and prohibited the building of new ones. Before, also, that stretch of the Mediterranean had become a prized vacation destination for wealthier Moroccans coming from other parts of the country who transformed the coastline with new construction. Subsequently, four out of five of his children migrated north to Europe under what is referred to as *l-harg*, or burning.<sup>36</sup> These days they would come back to visit during the summer months from time to time, but not to live.

As Adil corrected me, the lament we moved through in our interactions was more than a nostalgic look at the past, filled with pathos: it was a critique, an evaluative assessment. For him it had a distinct moral quality, the changed coastline, the abrogation of his access to the water and a fair living, his diminishing eyesight following from overly aggressive extractive techniques and the subsequent loss of ability to support his family and their forced, perilous migration north. A theft had taken place in the erection of the wall, a loss of access to his natural rights to resources and the ability to move unrestricted, within reason, upon the land and sea upon which he was born.

Earlier that Sunday afternoon I was taking the garbage out and stopped to talk to Adil. I found him in wry spirits and it seemed like he felt like talking. Somehow or other the subject of hashish came up—I think it may have been because he asked me about my sister's impending visit and I said we were going to Tanja amongst other cities, and he said he used to work out on the other side of Tanja, where they traded in *hashish* and *harag*. I asked him if he had worked in hashish and at first he replied with a joke. Smoked it, sure! But then he said that he had briefly, but had gotten out. The likelihood of you being paid honestly is very low, he said, there's very little money in it. The likelier thing is that you end up killing someone, being killed, or going off to lhab (prison), and what did

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<sup>36</sup> In "The Burning" Stefania Pandolfo examines how in the extremities involved in *l-harg* ('the burning')—named as such for the sacrifice of one's personhood and literal burning of identity papers to evade detection by European authorities—"there is reference made to a heterogenous configuration relating to the figure of a 'burned' life—a life without name, and without legitimacy; a life of enclosure in physical, genealogical and cultural spaces perceived as uninhabitable; and the search for a horizon in the practices of self-creation and experimentation drawing on an imaginary of the elsewhere and of exile." Stefania Pandolfo, "The Burning": Finitude and the Politico-Theological Imagination of Illegal Migration," *Anthropological Theory* 7, no. 3 (2007), 333.

he want any of those things for? He was better off as he was now. The sea by Tanja was difficult, because of the meeting of the two currents. Not like the one we have here, which is *saafi* (calm). There's a *wad* a few kilometers out of Tanja they call Tahadarat, because you can hear the talking in the meeting of the different currents. We had a port here, you know, and if it had stayed open it would have been greater than the one in Tanja. But they closed it.

I have lived in this spot since the 1960s, the wazir who took the land in front only came in the 80s, but nonetheless he took all of it, and now his sons control it. He said something about the particular wazir responsible for his misfortune being from the ministry of the interior, and that he had gone off to live in France eventually and died there. *Kaydiyo haqna w kayakoloh* (they take our portion and they eat it), a bunch of thieves they are. I've noticed that whenever he talks in this vein he never lowers his voice, nor does he raise it: unlike what I'm used to, his critique is delivered unchanged, in the same wry voice he always uses. There is something about him that seems immune to fearfulness or the kind of pragmatic caution used to negotiate everyday life, but perhaps I risk romanticizing him somehow.

We started talking about phosphate and the country's other natural resources, how they got shipped to the US among other places, he had met someone involved in the trade who said it took a month each way to ship. But the wealth didn't get back to the people, it stayed at the top. It's like in your country, do the people who control the petrol profit from it, or does everyone? I said it was similar. So, it wasn't a problem unique to the Maghrib. But if we didn't have the imbalance, the severity of the problem, we would be better off than Europe, so rich is the land and coast. Look at Spain today, with its *azma* (crisis): I took it his point here was that the country's natural resources were so great they prevented a similar crisis from happening here. So is there no *azma* here? I asked. He looked at me and answered by putting a question: *wax kain azma w kaysayib lkhobz?* (can you say there is a crisis while the bread is flowing?).

Can you say there is a crisis while the bread is flowing? Though we never talked about the protests roiling the country off and on over that past year and I wouldn't know how Adil viewed them, the above conversation took place in the fall of 2017, after a year of at times intense unrest in the country surrounding the death of the al-Hoceyma based fisherman Fikri.

At its core, what divided people during this time was a question of how to define order and disorder, crisis and precious calm and security. A hermeneutics of suffering, of discerning and distinguishing the signs of erupting crisis and impending devastation not unfamiliar from that informing Ibn Khaldun's philosophy of history emerged as the central, burning question of the day.

For Adil, it seemed to me, the great calamity had already come, that which followed the banning of new boats, the gradual depletion of the surrounding coastal waters, and the

construction of the large condominiums blocking his access to the Mediterranean. It was not a personal crisis, exactly—painful as it may have been—, but rather a collective and spatial divesting of resources, a cutting off of access to the riches of land and sea. For him, there was the time of the photograph and the time that came after. All else that followed—his building of model boats in the wake of being prohibited from building real ones, his chaotic homage to the trappings of the sea in lieu of being out on the water or even able to directly view it from where he sat day in and day out—these were ways to pass the time, the time of polluted soil, barren waters and their unnatural fruits.

In connection with the now foreclosed view, Adil said something about *waqt al-bahr* (time of the sea), and framed it as a definite time that had now passed. The sea, he said, gesturing, it used to cover all of this, it used to stretch much further than it does now, up to Sidi Riml, you still see the *cochillos* (shells) as evidence of what used to be there.<sup>37</sup> In those days, people were *sahih*, strong-bodied, and many meters taller. Now, a very tall person might be two meters, but even those are rare, in the time of the sea it was very different. Now the sea recedes and recedes, and men grow shorter and shorter, consuming food that isn't direct from the land. I had a kind of vertiginous feeling when he was talking, as though everything he and I have ever talked about was converging now: food, land, sea, space. *Foqash kan waqt lbahr?* (When was the time of the sea?) I asked him. He responded with a grunt and a wave like it was a foolish question, but it was vague. Then he said, gesturing off in the direction of the old port, we had Imarsa, it was here for some centuries. We had large vessels like these ones, he said, gesturing behind him to the wooden vessels with great masts he had carved.

In the weeks before I left Martil for the last time, I passed by Adil's workshop a few more times. The first time, he had a few wooden boards laid out side by side that he was using to build some kind of a pen for a dog. As I alluded to in the Introduction, I asked him in jest if it was a boat, and he exclaimed to the effect of "a boat! A boat and you'll go straight to *lhabs* (jail)! Haven't been able to do that since 1992, not a real boat anyway. Not like that one," pointing back to the cracked photo in the corner. *Bin adam kaydoz lwaqt* (people find ways to pass the time), he said as he had before, gesturing to the scraps of material around him and the boats he builds: this had nothing to do with what he used to do.

Another time, approaching him for a final goodbye, I was surprised to notice a framed picture of King Mohammed VI hanging in his workshop that I had never noticed before. Was it there the whole time, and if so, how could I have missed it? I had passed him by the other night and he had made fun of me for being bundled up when it wasn't that cold out. *Kont 'ala lbahr!* (I

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<sup>37</sup> The protagonist in Mohammed Dib's *Qui se souvient de la mer* (Who Remembers the Sea)—set in Algeria and published just before the country's 1962 independence—describes a vertiginous set of old and new city collapsing and rising within the same grounds, haunted by the grounds of an ominously receding sea: "People shambled along silently at a seemly pace," he writes. "I sensed what they lacked: the presence of the sea. We know now only the dry, mortal waiting of a world of stone. The sea came to haunt me once again. I thought back to the old days when we still had it at our feet, when it transformed all sounds into a fabulous tale and spoke to us of innocence. Had you told us then that it would one day leave us, we wouldn't have believed it. Patience. Our fat was moving toward us on sure steps. The peace of the sea surrounded us." Mohammed Dib, *Who Remembers the Sea*, trans. Louis Tremaine (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents, 1985), 71.



was by the sea!) I had protested. *'Ala lbahr? Hta ana kont 'ala lbahr* (By the sea? Me too, I was by the sea as well). They came and built around me.

### **III. “Zefzafi perturbe le prêche de l'imam dans une mosquée à Al Hoceima” (May 26, 2017 YouTube Video, Zefzafi interrupts the sermon of a mosque in al-Hoceyma)**

Recorded on someone's phone, the clip opens in media res, with the young protest leader Nasser Zefzafi passionately decrying what is later revealed to be the local imam's official sermon for Friday prayers. The interruption at the mosque—or rather, its recording and mass circulation over the digital sphere—would singlehandedly change the direction of the protest movement, prompting the government to undertake a mass crackdown that would result in sweeping arrests and eventually, lengthy prison sentences (20 years in Zefzafi's case) for visible leaders in the movement.

Among the constituents of *hirak*, as I noted above, the spectacle of this pivotal incident was met with considerable ambivalence: while most were sympathetic to the passion and frustration Zefzafi evinces in his outburst, it also singlehandedly shifted the terms of the protest movement from the more familiar terrain of demand for increased democratic rights, representation, and a countering to widespread corruption to something altogether more dangerous: the legitimacy of monarchical rule and the intermingling of sacred and secular authority that characterizes Moroccan forms of governance. Officially arrested later that summer on the charges of threatening national unity and obstructing freedom of worship, Zefzafi's arrest precipitated that of a wave of other prominent activists who, while not directly involved, became guilty by association.

To anyone following the speeches delivered by the young leader leading up to the arrest, this expanding of scope would not come as a total surprise, however: regularly posing in front of an image of 'Abd al-Karim al-Khattabi, Zefzafi consistently links contemporary injustices and problems of poverty to much longer arcs of state repression, effectively articulating a far more radical historical and political critique of the state than that which—even in its stated commitment to human rights and some forms of freedom of expression—can be countenanced in the current Moroccan political order.

The videoclip that would transfix and perturb the nation just as the country was settling down into the holy month of Ramadan is an inherently multivocal text. Though it features Nasser Zefzafi, there are indications of several publics contained in the video at once. The first might be said to be the person behind the camera himself, who at one point cannot contain his excitement and begins to chant, only to be swiftly silenced by an older man in front of him, who holds out his hand to object. The older generation of men present in the mosque that feature in the video are also the most ambiguous of its publics: they alternate between paying attention to Zefzafi and talking amongst each other, their faces often grave. As the leader finishes his outburst, their bodies move to form a bridge, seeming to want to afford him safe passage out of the space. Then there is a younger generation, much more visibly attuned to the presence of the phone capturing the moment; their faces, unlike the older generation of men, are turned towards the camera screen and they jubilantly hold up three fingers (land—language—culture, the Rifian symbol) and shout *allahu akbar!* (God is great) at spontaneously agreed upon times.

In the first half of the clip, Zefzafi's body is angled to address an absent antagonist—the imam who delivered the sermon, we presume—who never appears onscreen; he does not need to, for the viewer to feel his presence. Finally, there are the silent figures behind Zefzafi, who move in and out of the shot, seemingly going about their business in the mosque even at this most turbulent of moments. What are we to make of their non-attention, does it speak to the ebullience of the political moment in al-Hoceyma, where such outbursts are commonplace; a reluctance to participate stemming from a sense of danger surrounding it; or something else?

Zefzafi's disruption in the mosque moves in rapid succession through three central claims challenging the link between monarchical power and an absolute claim on religious authority. First, he declares that the mosques belong to God, and not the *makhzen* (shorthand for royal governmental power). In so saying, Zefzafi intervenes in two temporal streams, one more recent and the second arcing back across the twentieth century and the country's history of colonization. The first, more recent stream dates from King Mohammed VI's accession to the throne in 1999 and his move to formalize the relationship between mosques and state power. Whereas previously, mosques had employed people from the community to act as imams, under his rule (and in line with actions taken by other regimes in the North Africa-Middle East region to curb the threat of Islamist politics) imams were to receive a salary directly from the state. In the events that unfolded leading up to the constitution of 2011, in the greater context of the Arab Spring, there had been controversy over an imam taking the state point of view over an issue and delivering a *khutba* (or sermon) in this vein. The controversy had been great enough that in 2014, it was formally announced that politics were to be kept out of the space of the mosque absolutely. But the sermon delivered on May 26 had broken with this precedent, admonishing the people of al-Hoceyma to value stability and order and abhor *fitnah*, or disorder, a move read by Zefzafi and other attendants at the mosque that day as implicitly and coercively (in the sense of rhetorical persuasion) addressing the current situation there.

Unlike other regimes (such as Hosni Mubarak's in Egypt) which moved to formalize the relationship between state and mosque in the early 2000s, however, the Moroccan monarchy has never anchored its authority over the religious realm in the logic of secular statecraft. Rather, as Edmund Burke III explores in *The Ethnographic State* (2014), French colonial intervention helped to secure the conditions of royal authority as vested in a Moroccan Islam rooted in "the unbroken history of Moroccan kingship extending from the seventh-century arrival of Islam in northwest Africa."<sup>38</sup> As such the king is not only sultan (generally connoting secular power) but also caliph, signified in his title *'Amir al-Mu'minīn* (Commander of the Faithful). By insisting on the differentiation between the mosque as belonging to God and not the *makhzen*, Zefzafi comes perilously close to subverting this long temporal chain of religious charismatic authority.

In a second, related intervention Zefzafi specifically picks up the *'Amir al-Mu'minīn* title as bearing further scrutiny. He does this most directly by invoking the example of 'Umar, the caliph and companion to the Prophet Muhammad. In a tense standoff with the imam, who (still off-camera) challenges his qualification to stand as an authority on religious matters, Zefzafi

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<sup>38</sup> Edmund Burke III, *The Ethnographic State: France and the Invention of Moroccan Islam*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 2.

invokes the example of ‘Umar, who told his followers not to ignore bad deeds as if they were not happening, but to instead come and be accountable for them.

Specifically, he cites a *hadīth* related to a challenge ‘Umar ibn al-Khattāb—the second Rashidun caliph to assume the role of ‘*Amir al-Mu‘minīn* after the death of the Prophet Muhammad—issues to his followers on the matter of authority and leadership.<sup>39</sup> Rather than take his word as authoritative in accord with his status, he insists to an audience of his followers: “O people, whoever among you sees crookedness, let him straighten it,” to which one amongst the crowd is said to have responded, “By God, if we saw crookedness in you, we would straighten it with our swords.”<sup>40</sup> ‘Umar is said to have responded approvingly to this affirmation of independence in evaluative judgment on the part of his listeners.

In citing this *hadīth* and repeating it multiple times, Zefzafi articulates a critique of the monarch, pointing to an alternate precedent set by the ‘*Amir al-Mu‘minīn* which invites rather than seeks to control challenges to authority. Exclaiming several times in rejoinder to the challenge that he does not have the right to speak on religious matters that he is more learned than the imam, in any case, Zefzafi cuts across time to lay claim to the example of ‘Umar the rightly guided caliph, in the process framing as suspect the tradition of Moroccan Islam that would posit itself as heir to this tradition.

Without ever explicitly naming the monarch, Zefzafi continues later in the clip to riff on the aptness of the title “Commander of the Faithful” in the context of the contemporary Moroccan state. How, he queries, is this title appropriate for a leader of state who presides over the national Mawazine music festival, where women’s bodies are routinely exposed? In a state that claims to be Islamic, how is it that the violation of the region’s women and children by people coming from the Gulf is sanctioned? (Here he is referencing the allegation, widely rumored in the Rif region, that royalty from the Gulf states were invited to the Mediterranean by King Mohammed VI and engaged in the exploitation and degradation of Rifian women and children in the process.) Picked up by some media outlets as a jihadist for this component of the improvised declaration and alarming many who embrace the country’s delicate navigation under the king of Islamism and liberalism, Zefzafi is consistent in his focus on the meaning of words and the gap between their realization and commonly agreed upon ideal. Nowhere is this probing of language and meaning more evident than in his taking up of the word *fitnah*. *Fitnah, fitnah, ma ma’ana fitnah?* (what does *fitna* really mean?) he exclaims emphatically, pumping his arms. How can one warn of a pending or possible disorder, he goes on, when the people do not have enough to eat?

In the time period that followed, as Zefzafi’s sensationalized arrest was broadcast and he was sentenced to 20 years in prison, the social mediascape proliferated around the meaning of this word, his supporters backing him in his assertion, while detractors stamped images of his face with the slogan *la ila fitnah!* (no going towards *fitnah!*) and warned that Zefzafi and the

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<sup>39</sup> According to *Islam Web*, this *hadīth* does not belong to the *musnad* or “supported” collection that can be traced back to a Companion of the Prophet and back to the words or deeds of the Prophet himself. It not falling into this highest order of verified *hadīth* does not render it inherently suspect, however. “Fatwa,” *IslamWeb*, 6 March 1433 H./2012 AD. <https://www.islamweb.net/amp/ar/fatwa/175037/>

<sup>40</sup> *IslamWeb*.

other members of *hirak* threatened to take Morocco down the road to perdition as witnessed in war torn countries in the Middle East (Syria and Iraq being the omnipresent examples). At the heart of this heated debate was the question: were Moroccans in fact already living in the midst of ruin—here, the ruins of a neoliberal order, one which had cashed in an illegitimate coin by assuming the mantle of anticolonial liberation despite a history of colluding with European powers against the Rif—or too readily taking for granted its relative absence, especially in light of the wars ravaging other parts of the Muslim world?

Women's bodies in particular, as often happens, assumed the role of easy proving ground for each respective sides' virtue. As mentioned above, the state-sponsored Mawazine Festival, which recruits global talent to perform each year in Rabat, became a particular focal point. Zefzafi asked how an Islamic state could countenance women's exposed bodies in such forums, and Rifian partisans on Facebook in particular circulated unflattering images of women baring varying amounts of skin, sweaty, the Moroccan emblematic star emblazoned on their exposed chests in what was meant to be a damning portrait of a state proclaiming its rule in the name of Islam. Memes juxtaposed pious gatherings of faithful at mosques with the inscription "Our Mawazine," alluding to a pious Rifian resistance, in contrast with the neon lights of an arena set to welcome its next musical performance. Another meme highlighted the disjuncture between the bright lights of the Mawazine Festival shining upon women performers' bodies and that of the hunched over figures of *porteadores*, or the women who strap enormous bundles on their backs to carry them across the Ceuta and Melilla borders (thereby qualifying their goods as duty free).<sup>41</sup>

The opposing majority—identifiable through the tripartite "Allah—al-Watan—al-Malik" or God—Nation—King slogan that graced memes and car bumper stickers or graffitied walls predominantly during the time—retaliated by undermining the virtue of prominent female Rifian political activists, the most prominent of whom at the time was Nawal Ben Aissa. A post centered on a different female activist mocks the so-called "Princess of the Rif," depicted alternately as donning a *hijab* and the Rifian flag and in another photo, winking at the camera while holding a lit cigarette and a beer, which the post identifies as what she gets up to when in Holland, implying that her involvement in the Rifian cause falsely presented her as non-Europeanized. A video circulated of Zefzafi out on a boat skimming the waves of the Mediterranean, seated beside women in bathing suits in a move meant to counteract the moral high grounds he had claimed in his outburst.

On Facebook, images of Zefzafi's grinning face were alternately stamped with the caption *infisali* (separatist), *mujrim* (criminal), and *khayin* (traitor). Perhaps most telling is a cartoon in which a cutout photograph of his face is imposed onto a scene in which an affiliate with Da'esh or ISIS holds a banner flag that is stabbed into the back of a praying Muslim. The black-and-white flag reads: "Da'esh Jumhūriyya al-Rīf al-Zefzafiya" or "Da'esh, Zefzafian Republic of the Rif." In disputing both the imam's cautioning against *fitnah* and impugning King Muhammad VI's right to bear the mantle of leader of the Muslim faithful—and what is more,

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<sup>41</sup> See for instance Suzanne Daley, "Melilla Journal: A Borderline Where Women Bear the Weight," *The New York Times*, Mar 30, 2014, [https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/31/world/europe/a-borderline-where-women-bear-the-weight.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/31/world/europe/a-borderline-where-women-bear-the-weight.html?_r=0)

critiquing the character of the Moroccan state as at one and the same time embracing Islam and a liberal approach to, among other things, women's modesty standards—Zefzafi occasioned a response that went beyond the familiar allegations of separatism and lack of patriotism to get at the wider political spectacle occasioned by Da'esh and a new iteration of political Islam. Less commented on was his critique of a regime such as that of Saudi Arabia and the entrenched privileges it shares with the Moroccan monarchy in the name of shepherding the faithful.

#### **IV. By Way of an Answer: Neither an Open Nor a Closed Letter**

The mood and political tenor of *al-hirak* took an abrupt turn following the conclusion of Eid al-Fitr in summer 2017. Arrests were made, and people in al-Hoceyma who were not willing to risk arrest stopped participating in mass demonstrations. Reports from friends moving back and forth between there and Martil told of the widespread use of teargas by police, with multiple people telling me how their families were affected and the hospitals were full of people suffering effects from the gas. While there had been some interest among European leftists in supporting the Rifian cause in European Union fora, enthusiasm for the issue would cool considerably following meetings in which there was a failure or refusal among delegates for the cause to connect their set of demands with those of the Western Sahara, which some among the Spanish left in particular have been involved in advocating for for decades. All told, the promise of widespread structural change, particularly concerning the Rif, seemed suddenly far removed once again.

It was in this context that I met Idriss, seated outside the popular Cafe Río one July night along with a number of other Rifians who lived part or full-time in Martil. The mood among the group was varied, with one amongst them stating for example that despite what you hear people saying or media portrayals—from which you might think the whole of al-Hoceyma was engulfed in chaos—he had just returned from spending all of Ramadan there and found conditions relatively calm, albeit with pockets of conflict. A lot of people, when they had seen the police response following Eid, had stopped going out or joining the protests in the street at all, he said. Another talked about how family had been affected by the teargas released in the streets, and were having issues with breathing. They asked if I had been to visit the city and I said that I had not, and expressed some hesitation about visiting as an American researcher. “Don’t you want a free *masaje* (massage) from the police?” Idriss joked, before clarifying that any beatings would be reserved for them, not me. (Tourism was one of the few sectors people in al-Hoceyma depended on outside remittances, and there were concerns that both Europeans and Moroccans might avoid the city in light of news coverage.) At some point Mouhcine Fikri came up and he stated that he was his cousin: “*kan ibn ‘amti w sadiqi*,” he had been his paternal cousin and his friend. He had published an editorial back in the fall concerning what had happened and offered to share it with me.

Idriss worked in the cyber security sector, reading and writing in his free time.<sup>42</sup> He came from a long line of *faqīh* or Islamic jurists, including a great-grandfather who had studied at al-Qarawine in Fes. Growing up with Islamic texts everywhere in the house, as a young boy he had devoured them earnestly, reading everything. (Though it seemed like he was fated to share his family's profession and for a time he identified as Salafist, he eventually grew disillusioned by older learned men's inability to answer the broad-ranging lines of inquiry he broached and their disapproval of certain questions.<sup>43</sup>) Above all, his overriding interest was in psychology and the social sciences; our first conversation touched on the theories of Karl Popper, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and the psychic disorder of Bovarism it describes, and the intersection of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* with the set of physical and psychological distortions therein described. He shared an interest in the history of al-Andalus, and after we met sent me a PDF translated into Arabic of Ignacio Olagüe Videla's *Les Arabes n'ont jamais envahi l'Espagne* (The Arabs Never Invaded Spain). While this is an especially favored text among converts to Islam within contemporary Spain, Idriss' interest in it lay in a different aspect: its suggestion that the founding of Andalusian civilization was an indigenous rather than externally motivated event accorded with the work of others, Ahmad Tāhirī among them, that the idea that al-Andalus was founded by Arabs was a myth and that in fact the establishment of a successful Umayyad caliphate in Córdoba had far more to do with the presence and history of the Imazighen: history, he stated as I had heard other Rifians do, is written by *al-muntarisin* (the victors).<sup>44</sup>

Dated November 2016—published in *Hespress* a few short days after his cousin's death—Idriss' letter is an address to King Mohammed VI and his fellow Moroccans. Specifically, he writes it in response to the question posed by the king to the legislative session in Rabat following news of Fikri's death, "*aina al-khila?*" or where is the defect or flaw? In commencing, after thanking his fellow countrymen on behalf of his family for their sincere outpouring of grief in response to his cousin's death, he states that his is neither an open letter nor a closed one, going on to list at some length all the other things it is not: neither the makings of a conspiracy theory nor the work of the Polisario nor that of "savage Zionists"—thereby

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<sup>42</sup> At the time of our meeting he was working on a book that argued that centralization of government was a product of French colonialism imposed on the Maghrib, which had historically been governed instead by federalist systems going all the way back to the Almoravid dynasty. The implication was that one solution to the country's territorial contestations would be to convert back to a federalist, decentralized political system of representation.

<sup>43</sup> Idriss spoke to me of having intervened in some Facebook circles of young people being recruited by Da'esh, and how he had been able to talk to them as someone who was learned in the tradition. One young man, for instance, had threatened to kill him and he had responded with seriousness that in that case, he would need to take the following steps according to the *fiqh* in order for it to be a just execution, asking whether he was prepared for such an undertaking. The young man had eventually expressed respect for him, and the group he had been talking to ultimately decided not to head over to Syria.

<sup>44</sup> Charles Hirschkind in *The Feeling of History* discusses the central status of this text amongst *andalucistas* and its converse suspect connotations amongst Spanish historians, most of whom agree that it is "a dangerous fiction," not least for its author's ties to the fascist thinker Ramiro Ledesma Ramos. Charles Hirschkind, *The Feeling of History: Islam, Romanticism, and Andalusia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021), 86.

sketching the field of discursive paranoia that arises in moments of heightened political dissension. It is, rather, an internal conversation, one held amongst fellow citizens whose collective pain in beholding Mouhcine Fikri's fate suggests that there is something deeper joining them together than merely the artifice of solidarity.

Fikri was ground to death by a trash compacter, and the stories that circulated following the event involved a callous policeman who oversaw the grinding without compunction. Idriss peppers his editorial with the verb for grinding, *tahana*, and its nominal forms, mill and flour. "We reject, from now on," he writes, "grinding in the cold and silence. We do not want to be lined up waiting our turn in the long line at the doorstep of the great mill whose fuel is marginalization, exclusion, monopoly, domination and theft, the switch to operate it lying in the hands of any who would wrest his share in this part of the world."<sup>45</sup> The way to do this, he asserts, is to avoid the empty comfort of such seemingly promising terms as "sustainable development," "major projects" or "decent living," and instead commit to a conscious, objective appraisal of collective social forms and institutions. (Such terms, he writes, console but do not cure the oppressed, effectively binding them to a Sisyphean endeavor in a homeland "that resembles a punctured sack whose holes have been growing ever larger in the past sixty years; we do not know its size nor who punctured it nor who is now carrying it, nor do we know who will pay the price for what is continuously falling out.")<sup>46</sup> In so saying, Idriss alludes to the country's 1956 independence—the first indication that the critique he articulates is more radical than standard reformist fare.<sup>47</sup>

In narrating the story of Fikri's life as he had witnessed it, Idriss postulates an answer to the king's question. Born on September 21, 1985—three days after Idriss' own birth—Fikri was born into a family of ten children living in Imzouren, some 18 kilometers away from al-Hoceyma. His mother Khadijah is illiterate, despite persistent efforts to overcome this obstacle. His father, Ali Fikri, is a retired teacher who Idriss describes as "a quiet and conservative learned man, who enjoyed the respect of all without exception." Two of their children were in ongoing psychiatric treatment, which Idriss identifies as due primarily to social causes, including "blocked horizons." Ali Fikri had moved mountains to support two other brothers in obtaining degrees in physics and chemistry from Mohammed I University in Oujda, but both were unemployed.

The sixth child, Mouhcine Fikri was according to Idriss the most enthusiastic, hopeful and open-hearted of all his siblings. He dropped out of school after ninth grade despite his father's objections, compelled not by struggles with schoolwork but by the exigencies of the

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<sup>45</sup> My translation.

<sup>46</sup> My translation.

<sup>47</sup> In our conversations about the 1958 conflicts in the Rif in particular and the subsequent militarizing of the region after clashes with King Hassan II, Idriss framed them in relation to a disagreement about the continued role of France especially in the country, and the incompleteness or *shakli* nature of the agreements regarding who stood to profit from industry in the country as well as questions of territory.

family's financial situation. Early on, he worked in the market as an assistant to a spice vendor, then as a seller of plastic utensils, before deciding to enroll in the Institute of Marine Fishing in al-Hoceyma. This occasioned him to move to al-Hoceyma rather than traverse the distance between the two towns, and thus he came to share a room with Idriss for more than seven years in their family home, during which time he became his friend and brother.

Newly graduated, Fikri commenced work as a sailor in al-Hoceyma's port but did not last more than a year due to the harsh working conditions prevalent there and developing hemorrhoids, which Idriss recounts he would scream in pain from in the bathroom adjacent to their shared room as he sought relief. Searching for alternatives, he began a pattern of taking on debt, acquiring an initial loan from various members of his large family to buy a Mercedes 310 which he would utilize as a transport vehicle: fish, sheep, sweets and people, pretty much anything was fair game except drugs and cluster bombs, according to Idriss.

Despite his ability and willingness to work hard, however, Fikri encountered problems of the kind that confront most honest people, writes Idriss, in pursuing a living in the country. Riding along with him on various hauls, Idriss witnessed similar scenes play out time and again, the more so banal and tedious for their regularity. Regardless of whether his fish were transported legally or illegally—he could, in fact, have been transporting copies of the Holy Qur'an or the Moroccan constitution, Idriss asserts—along the way Fikri would encounter men along the road that, as part of the state apparatus, demanded a share (“Sardines from al-Hoceyma, we will have dinner”). Stopped along the way to a weekly market in Katama: “Enough with the sardines already, what else is there in al-Hoceyma besides sardines?” And so it goes, he continues, until the extortion of sardine meals turns into hotel-style dinners.

Seeking a necessary change in fortunes, Fikri took on yet another loan, but with a different plan. Rather than work on behalf of fish merchants as a transporter, this time he set about becoming a merchant and transporter at one and the same time. He purchased 3 million *centime* worth of seafood of all different kinds, and struck an agreement with a Fesi merchant with whom he had worked before to sell him his goods. Upon learning of his new venture, however, those who controlled the fish trade in al-Hoceyma banded together—“not wanting yesterday's slave to become today's master”—and struck agreements with their contacts outside the city not to buy from Fikri. His promised purchase in Fes evaporates, and despite traveling from city to city he cannot find anyone willing to buy from him. The seafood, meanwhile, went bad, and he had to admit a total loss. “Broken and defeated,” he returned to al-Hoceyma and bade his time, forced to let his small truck collect dust in an alleyway as he sought other means to earn a living.

Not to be intimidated into giving up, Fikri worked tirelessly in order to save up another sum and purchase yet another quantity of fish. Though he encountered a similar set of resistance as before, this time he brought a friend along with him and together they were able to work fast enough between the two of them in order to sell off some of the goods, in the end losing only 2000 dh (\$200) worth. Idriss writes that Fikri returned home triumphant on this day, as though he



had defeated the blockade altogether. “And he said to me verbatim,” writes Idriss, ““No one can break me, and I will succeed in spite of all the thieves of the port.”

Despite his cousin’s death and the wave of arrests that followed Eid al-Fitr that year, many of whom were of people Idriss knew and worked with, he was perhaps the most cautiously optimistic of the Rifians I spoke with regarding the future of the region. The first night I made his acquaintance he pulled out a copy of the Republic of the Rif’s constitution, ready to hand on his phone. There was his surname, that of his great-grandfather. His grandfather had participated in the clashes with the monarchy in 1958 and his father in turn had taken part in the 1980s *intifada*. What was needed, he said, was to write everything down, so that we can understand the why of it all. After all, that is what makes us human, our ability to ask the question, why? Then, if we’ve done that, the people who pick it up again in some years down the line can return to our notes, be informed by them and carry on.

## Chapter Two

# Martil (Río Martín): Resurrecting Futures Past in the Moroccan Mediterranean<sup>48</sup>

As Michel-Rolph Trouillot notes, despite its inherent ambiguity as a term referencing both an event and its narrative retelling—what happens and what is said to have happened, the one never entirely extricable from the other—history cannot escape the demands of fact altogether.<sup>49</sup> The port of Martil’s abandonment and closure in 1962 under the current king’s father, Hassan II, indexes not an incidental oversight or embarrassing symptom of negligence or the like on the part of the postcolonial state but rather a material manifestation, no less real for its concrete absence, of a largely hostile and at times abusive relationship between the monarchical dynasty currently in power and the northern region, *al-shamal*. Guilty by association, both cultural and in the form of family ties and constant streams of migration back and forth in an east-west movement across the coastline, Tetouan and its suburb of Martil are indelibly linked to the troublesome Rif mountains to the east as together making up the northern region of the country. In the decades after Hassan II used the military to put down regional revolt in 1958, Martil acutely needed assistance that the national government did not provide.

As it happened, however, during the period of my fieldwork the Kingdom, in association with local authorities, did begin a project to restore the Wad Martil Valley, or what had been left when the Martil river was not reopened—its bed left to sit for fifty years—after its 1962 flooding: permanently out of reach in the meantime, by only the shortest of distances, of Mediterranean waters. In August 2014 a decree established the Oued Martil Valley Development Company (Société d’Aménagement de la Vallée de Oued Martil or STAVOM), which began operations in Spring 2015. The company is linked to the Agence pour la Promotion et le Développement du Nord (APDN), a more general initiative begun in 1996 under the current King’s father. Targeting both Tangier-Tetouan and Taza-Al Hoceima-Taounate, the APDN presents itself online as Morocco’s “first national development agency with a territorial vocation.”<sup>50</sup> The Kingdom (and indeed since 2017 for the Martil Valley also the UPFI, the Urban

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<sup>48</sup> I borrow Reinhart Koselleck’s concept and phrase here.

<sup>49</sup> Here Trouillot is referencing relevant debates among historians differing in approaching historical narrative as inherently constructivist versus those who insist on a positivist bent to historical praxis. He lands somewhere in the middle, arguing that a constructivist stance can be taken too far if it disregards the importance of evidence in the writing of history. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 3-6.

<sup>50</sup> APDN’s website predictably spotlights the King’s “royal activities in the north.” (<http://www.apdn.ma/>)

Projects Finance Initiative, an international funding consortium focusing on the southern and eastern Mediterranean) is offering development and funding, where it sees fit, to the historically restive northern communities, and the Martil Valley is now a recipient.

After some months working primarily in Tetouan (orbiting around two institutional sites—the historical association Tetouan Asmir and the Centro de Artes or artistic center, which was originally funded and overseen by Spanish colonial forces and dedicated to the transmission of Andalusian craft), my attention shifted from Tetouan to the site of this initiative. I moved to Tetouan’s suburb, Martil, and began to focus particularly on its empty river bed, upon which an informal low-income community made its home and about which many Tetouani and Martili citizens were concerned. And I began to work more closely with NAWAT, a Martil-based civic association or *jama’iya* dedicated to assuring that the proposed reopening of the abandoned port once located there would take into account the major historical significance of the site, both pre-1962 and as a future Mediterranean hub fully equipped to resume its place as a major maritime site.

Referring to a fruit kernel, nucleus, or central point in Arabic (*nawah*), NAWAT’s official title is *jamai’ya min ajl inqath wadi Martil* or the Association to Save Wad Martil. In a series of articles published in regional weekly papers over the course of 2014 and 2015, the small civic association (comprised of around a dozen members) is featured meeting with members of parliament and gaining their assurances that the restoration of Wad Martil is squarely on their radar. In one news clipping, for instance, Dr. Habib Shobani, minister of parliamentary relations and civil society, is quoted as stating: “it is necessary that this mistake committed against historical memory be corrected.”<sup>51</sup> Another minister, Mohammed al-Soulimani from the then ruling conservative Justice and Development Party or PJD is cited in a June 2014 issue of *La Chronique* affirming the importance of “returning it to life and restoring its connection to the sea, as it once was.”<sup>52</sup> In blog posts and articles, the role of civic associations and civil society is stressed as particularly significant in light of the 2011 constitutional reforms.

Here the Kingdom’s overtures to approach the north with restorative plans and resources were met by local Martili activists enthusiastically seeking the Kingdom’s help. Nonetheless (or as a consequence), the language of historical grievance and restoration remained somewhat ginger, calibrated to the rejuvenation of civic society as a positive, cooperative force righting the wrongs of the past, consistently alluded to but rarely elaborated in detail. I spent time with several prominent leaders of NAWAT, hoping to sort out both how the region’s history informed their thinking and how a local development project under the aegis of a national government dealing with unavoidably visible results of decades of social and infrastructural neglect, might find its footing.

## **I. al-Andalus and Tetouan**

Fès, Tetouan and Rabat are the major northern cities associated with an Andalusian legacy, both in terms of sustained settlers’ lineages and transmitted traditions and forms and

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<sup>51</sup> My translation.

<sup>52</sup> My translation. *La Chronique*, June 14, 2014.

architecture, as is the town of Chefchaouen or Chaouen, famed for the blue-hued medina walls commonly associated with an Andalusian aesthetic. Andalusian or Andalusí identity in contemporary North Africa bears the urban connotation of the later *taifa* era of Muslim rule in the Iberian Peninsula, when city-state kingdoms were the major political unit, along with an exalted lineage stretching back to the Umayyad seat of power in Córdoba as well as Sevilla and Granada. The illustrious poetic, musical, artistic, scientific and philosophical accomplishments of the many centuries of Andalusian Muslim reign endow its signification with an elitism and prestige, and many of the founders of Morocco's Hizb al-Istiqlal or Independence Party claimed Andalusian origin. While the Alaoui monarchic dynasty itself historically identified more closely with the southern and interior regions of the country, in the contemporary era Arab and Andalusí intermingle as signifiers aligned with authority and wealth (both in the sense of cultural capital and material resources) in the country.<sup>53</sup>

In addition to a connotation of urbanity and wealth, proximity to whiteness likewise distinguishes Andalusian descent in North Africa, both at the physiognomic and symbolic level. Whereas in other locales and contexts Arab and white European subject identification are held as distinctive or even binary, then, here they largely coincide. Over the course of fieldwork I came across this field of associations repeatedly, with some who identify as Andalusian embracing the exclusivity of its purview and others acknowledging (whether implicitly or explicitly) its dominant associations but insisting it could also indicate cultural or acquired rather than solely innate or genealogical markers.

Today, associations such as Rabat Fatah and the local historical association, Tetouan Asmir, exist alongside an intermittent stream of cultural, academic and archival sites—variously centered in institutions or individuals—that safeguard and promote the importance of the Andalusian inheritance within the country. By far the most ubiquitous art form commonly associated with an exilic heritage is Andalusian music (and its vernacular variation, *malhun*), which enjoys broad popularity and is commonly broadcast through media channels during

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<sup>53</sup> Beebe Bahrami's chapter in *Charting Memory: Recalling Medieval Spain* (2000) represents an early contribution to thinking ethnographically with Andalusian identity as it relates to possible global or cosmopolitan identifications within northern Moroccan cities. In the field of ethnomusicology, the work of Jonathan Glasser (2016), Dwight F. Reynolds (2021) and Jonathan H. Shannon (2015) has been especially significant regarding the legacy and practice of Andalusian music within North Africa. Eric Calderwood's *Colonial al-Andalus: Spain and the Making of Modern Moroccan Culture* (2018) explores the co-constitution of North African and Andalusian cultural forms within northern Morocco and especially the city of Tetouan. Focused on the impact of Andalusianness or *andalucismo* within Spain itself, Charles Hirschkind's *The Feeling of History* (2021) directs our attention to the entangled network of poets and artists, many born in the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, and the modern constitution of a bicoastal identity through their activities and writings. Within Morocco, Muhammad Razūq's 1987 *al-Andalusīyyūn w hijratihum ilā al-Maghrib khilāl al-qarnayn 16-17* is considered the touchstone of research done on the topic of Andalusian families and their role within Moroccan state and society.

significant religious periods and in a range of contexts.<sup>54</sup> Alongside the impactful performative recognition of Amazigh as significant ethnic and linguistic identification, the 2011 constitution more quietly includes Andalusian as another constitutive element of national identity.

Despite the prestige commonly understood to accompany its invocation, many who dedicate themselves to the promulgation of its cultural and historical significance within the country today frame their efforts as a valiant battle against the odds. Whether beset by economic forces, with mass consumer capitalism chipping away at artisanal craft productions' viability, or generational tides, with young people associating Andalusian music with older and more outdated ways, the will to remember and keep alive can never be taken for granted. Many of the historians and civic association members I worked with over the course of research approached their work in this spirit, appealing to their publics and to King Mohammad VI himself to invest materially and culturally in the continuation and revisiting of the Andalusian legacy. Some, though certainly not all, approach this work in the spirit of preserving and defending an Islamic heritage that is distinctly Western—not, in the common usage of the term, a Western European legacy but an older and partially vanished Western Islamic world, one distinct from the contemporary iterations of Islamic culture and governance particular to the regimes of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf or *sharqi* (Eastern) region.

Accustomed to an adversarial dynamic in postcolonial societies seeking to cast off the exploitative yokes of their former colonizers, I was often perplexed and discomfited by a marked nostalgia for the Spanish colonial that pervaded much of the historical preservation impetus behind both Martil and indeed Tetouani actors. How, I often wondered, did my interlocutors—proud Moroccans and Muslims—not experience their nostalgia for the Spanish colonial era within the north as a fundamental contradiction? The answer as I came to understand it was twofold: first, and as already noted, yearning for the urbanity accompanying the Spanish occupation of Tetouan and Martil was directly correlated to a recognition of what followed—namely, the sinking of the region into oblivion and a cruel, studied neglect under Hassan II's long rule—a far cry from the emancipatory narrative typically ascribed to liberation from colonial rule. And second, unlike French colonialism in the rest of the country (which came, as has been widely written about, with its own forms of elitism and cultural capital that were in turn employed strategically by French colonial officials in keeping the Moroccan population subject to their control), Spanish colonial rule in northern Morocco was from the very beginning in complex dialogue with historical narratives and awareness surrounding the much longer history of cultural and political commingling of the Iberian Peninsula and its southern, North African

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<sup>54</sup> In his wonderful study on the contemporary role of Andalusian music within North African musical communities—most closely, in the work, within Algeria—Jonathan Glasser parses the musical elements that comprise the Andalusian tradition today. According to him, the *muwashshah* is “quintessentially Andalusian,” a distinctive poetic framework that Glasser states likely emerged “as a distinct form in both classical Arabic and Hebrew in the eleventh century.” He continues: “In the Maghrib, the *muwashshah* is not only central to the *nūba* traditions but also shares many formal elements with the texts that make up the body of urban colloquial repertoire sometimes known as *qsāyid* or *malhūn*, of which *hawzī* and *‘arūbī* are part. Some Maghribi scholars treat such poetry as North African version of the medieval *zajal*, transformed in this instance to reflect the diction and landscape of the Maghreb rather than of al-Andalus.” Glasser, *The Lost Paradise: Andalusian Music in Urban North Africa* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 84-86.

neighbor, separated as they are by the narrowest of straits.<sup>55</sup> Even in the sacking and occupying of Tetouan from 1860 to 1862, Spanish military invaders and ordinary soldiers carried with them an awareness of the history of religious strife and coexistence between monotheists in Spain, and the subsequent expulsion of their former brethren and rulers whose descendants they were now seeking to subject to their control across the waters.<sup>56</sup>

The ongoing entanglement of 20<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish occupation with the longer history of al-Andalus indeed became a colonial instrument of warfare in its own right, as General Francisco Franco (onetime Tetouani resident in the period prior to the Spanish civil war's beginning in 1936) and the colonial apparatus under him set about purposefully constructing a discourse of *hermandad* or brotherhood meant to serve Spanish interests and facilitate the conscription of Moroccan troops to fight against the republicans in the country's civil war. While this instrumental use of the legacy of al-Andalus is generally well known and understood among academics—and has nourished an established field of historiography promoted by groups like Tetouan Asmir in publications enlisting the work of mainly Spanish and European scholars in addition to Moroccan—it is nonetheless a common attitude among middle-aged and older northern Moroccans (most of whom were educated in Spanish-language schools), that Spanish colonialism was altogether a different animal than that of the French, with the Spaniards who governed before the country's independence treating other Moroccans more like long-lost kin than colonial subjects.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> For more on this see especially *De al-Andalus a Tetuán: Actas del homenaje al profesor M'hammad M. Benaboud*, ed. Mohamed Cherif (2010) and Susan Martin-Márquez, *Disorientations: Spanish Colonialism in Africa and the Performance of Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

<sup>56</sup> In *Disorientations*, Susan Martin-Márquez elucidates how a discourse of lost fraternal connection could both serve the cause of war and oppose it. Citing the Canarian literary realist author Benito Pérez Galdós's 1905 *Aita Tettauén* (The War of Tetuán), Martin-Márquez discusses one of his protagonists, Jerónimo Ansúrez, an Africanist who opposed the invasion. In an excerpt from the novel, she quotes him as follows: "Take away a bit of religion, take away another bit of language, and the kinship and family resemblance jumps out at you. What is a Moor if not a Muslim Spaniard? And how many Spaniards do we see who are Moors in Christian disguise? (*Aita* 13), Martin-Márquez, 125. From his perspective, the invasion and sacking of Tetouan is less a religiously authorized conquest and more an act of civil war. According to Martin-Márquez, Galdós considered this "the most difficult novel he had ever written," and spent years before its writing gathering materials and undertaking a reading of the Qur'an. She speculates that Galdós' innovation in narrative multiplicity and authorial decision to narrate parts from a Muslim point of view "very likely reflected his own experience of life on the 'periphery' as a native Canarian." *Ibid*, 123.

<sup>57</sup> In a fascinating article on the role of tourism within the Spanish protectorate, Eloy Martín Corrales writes about the complicated status of origins when it comes to Andalusian art and its legacy within the country. As he puts it, the impetus to enlarge and make more profitable the sphere of Moroccan tourism—predicated in large part on Andalusian artisanship—became a key factor granting Spaniards authority to govern the territory. Aware as they were of the monuments and style of art still dotting southern Spain, Spanish colonial officials positioned themselves as stewards of a shared Hispano-Moroccan patrimony. Eloy Martín Corrales, "Los inicios del turismo en el protectorado español de Marruecos (1912-1936)," in *De Al-Andalus a Tetuán: Actas del Homenaje al profesor M'hammad M. Benaboud*, edited by Mohamed Cherif (2010).

## II. Tetouan and Río Martín

Field note, March 20, 2017: On Wednesday when I headed over to Diza I nearly turned back upon arriving at the bridge, as it was so windy that swirls of trash were being lifted up and confronting the people making the crossing. Most every woman had her scarf pressed to her mouth attempting to ward off the stink of garbage and refuse wafting up from under the bridge.

On Friday Aisha and I hailed a cab to Tetouan as Marisol had invited us over to eat couscous at their apartment. We were in the last row of one of the new, big cabs and both noticed the man in the front passenger seat, who was speaking animatedly to the driver. I know families in Tetouan, he was speaking along the lines of, who despite all of their money never give any of it to anyone, never open their fists to share. So where does the money go? Only for building, building, building. Aisha at one point nudged me and giggled because it seemed like he was orating to himself, the driver barely bothering to respond. The driver at some point muttered about it being *sharqi* out and the older man, who was wearing a *djellaba* and *tarboush*, took off again, this time about the major floods of 1940 something and 1963 of wad Martil, how it used to have a port in those days. He also spoke for awhile about the distinction between Martín and Martil, how nowadays people said Martil but really it was originally Martín. Why is that? *Kan ism a'ili* (it was a family name). The driver listened patiently and when we approached the Tetouan medina gestured to it, saying in those days everyone just lived inside there, isn't that right? There was no such thing as Tetouan outside of those walls. Yes, the older man said, in those days there were just the seven doors and we guarded who came in and out. When we got out of the cab I took the plunge and introduced myself, saying I had an interest particularly in the history of Martil. The older man seemed pleased and gave me his number; the driver also wanted me to know he specialized in the history of the region and ran some kind of tour. He addressed me in Spanish, but when I said I preferred Arabic he switched back, seeming surprised and pleased. At this point the two got playfully competitive and the older man dug into his pockets to take out a little coin purse with ISTANBUL stamped on it, taking out his national ID. See this? I was born in Martil, I am Martili. He on the other hand? gesturing to the driver, who stared him down and made the sarcastic hai hai hai sound, exclaiming, oh so what, I'm not from here? We left them still going at it.

The name Martil is a post-independence adaptation, part of a general move to Arabize sites and locales in contradistinction to a Europeanized cartographic system associated with colonial control. Among those with family history in Martil, a clear way of distinguishing oneself as laying claim to a deeper relation with it is to refer to it not as Martil but Martín—"Martín, Martín, Río Martín!" was a refrain I encountered fairly often, implying a heated rejection of its contemporary form in favor of how it used to be named, after Martín Fernández, the Andalusian

uncle of famed warrior and leader Sayyida al-Hurra.<sup>58</sup> Before its abridgment following the 1962 flood, the river connecting Tetouan to the Mediterranean through the port of Martil was commonly referred to as Río Martín, and formed the beating heart of the homes and farmlands organized around it.

Pre-independence and in the period of the Spanish Protectorate from 1912 to 1956, these homes belonged mostly to Spanish military families, who built low-lying bungalows organized in neat rows parallel to the coast. In those days a tram connected Martil to Tetouan, and I lived during the bulk of my fieldwork in the beach home of a Marisol, a Spanish woman whose father had been a tram conductor in Martil during the colonial era;<sup>59</sup> she had married a Moroccan man from Asilah and stayed behind when her parents and siblings left following the establishment of Morocco as an independent nation-state, settling with him in Tetouan in the 1970s when Martil had no paved roads or electricity, and together building the small, low-lying *villa* in which I lived for fifteen months from 2016 to 2017.<sup>60</sup> Today, and as part of the general systematic infrastructural neglect marking the region under Hassan II, no trace of the old tram system exists, nor does Tetouan have access to the railway network connecting most of the rest of the country's major towns and cities.

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<sup>58</sup> Rodolfo Gil Benumeya Grimau writes about this historical figure on his blog, McIslamofobia (Musulmanes contra la Islamofobia or Muslims against Islamophobia) <https://mcislamofobia.org/sayyida-al-hurra>. In Tetouan, a prominent feminist organization led by Hakima Najji is eponymously named after Sayyida al-Hurra (Lalla Aicha bint Ali bin Rashid al-Alami), one of the most famous and celebrated female figures in Moroccan history. She became governor of Tetouan in the early 16th century after the death of her husband, Wattasid Sultan Ahmad bin Muhammad, and is perhaps most famous for her role in defending the Mediterranean coast and the sovereignty of Islamic territories through piracy.

<sup>59</sup> Born in 1940 in Córdoba, in southern Spain, Marisol had migrated with her family to Tetouan in 1949, just before she turned 9 years old. Her mother was from Córdoba and they moved from there, but they had spent the previous few years moving around Spain according to where her parents could find work, including a few years in Ronda, where her dad was from. Her father worked in transit and worked as a ticket-taker in the trolley that used to snake through Tetouan, connecting it to Martil and to Ceuta. She had been 15 or 16 when independence had arrived, and had a memory of Mohammed V entering Tetouan and amicably dealing with the Spanish soldiers in some kind of encampment set up; she said during that time, there had been a red carpet laid down in most of the city, from Bab Okhla all the way up to Plaza Primo, and everyone had been seated outside, offering sweets and tea to anyone who passed by, Spanish or Moroccan. In 1962 she got married to her husband; this same year marked, I think, when the trolley stopped functioning and the river flooded. Her parents had decided to move since they no longer had viable work in the country, and had gone to Switzerland for several years, which Marisol loved. It had not, however, been an abrupt or shocking change post-independence, as she experienced it; her parents, for instance, held Tetouan and Martil very dear, and came back repeatedly to visit her all the way up to their old age in the 1990s. Laws had eventually been introduced declaring that any store owners needed to co-manage with Moroccans, and so the Spaniards this had suited had continued working through at least the 1970s, whereas for some others that had been the prompt to return home, but it had all been very gradual.

<sup>60</sup> Villa in its local usage connoted not the size or grandeur of a given structure but a traditional compound, comprised of a freestanding structure and garden. People in my neighborhood who knew where I lived referred to me as residing in the villa, which struck me as odd given that it was not a particularly luxurious or large house. Formerly flanked by two identical structures, the house I lived in was the last of its kind, sold off as the other two were by my landlords' family friends to developers eager to repurpose beachside space into condos and mansions.



For longtime residents of Martil—some of them moving back and forth between a main residence in Tetouan and a second home or apartment in its beach suburb, others for whom it is home year-round—summer these days presents a problem. As the weather warms and the coast shakes off its foggy winter repose, the Mediterranean Sea beckons: flat and calm, its colors deepen and begin to glint and sparkle under the sun. During the time I am there, Ramadan falls during early to mid summer, forming a kind of buffer between an often blustery spring—*marzo loco*, Crazy March, locals call the weather during this period—and the playful summer warmth. Once Eid is firmly over, things begin to shift, and quickly. Seemingly overnight, there are more people. Vendors begin gathering in greater density along the corniche, their stalls growing ever more elaborate. By the time peak season hits, there are moonwalk bouncy castles and miniature cars for kids to careen about in, swerving chaotically between strollers. The crowds thicken and grow in density until it becomes difficult to navigate, whether the corniche or the traffic in and out of Martil. Taxi drivers, for the most part patient and accommodating through much of the year, become erratic and unreliable, leaving those of us standing along Miramar—the major street running parallel to the corniche which runs from where I live in the outer *chbar* neighborhood through to central Martil and past Abdelmalek Essaadi, the major university on the way back to Tetouan—stranded. Everyday life becomes something of a dance, and not always a fun one, dealing with the influx of visitors mostly from the country's interior, eager to soak up the rays and take part in the festive atmosphere.

The one exception to the drastic transformation wrought by summer is Diza, an informal settlement just south of central Martil. To get there, most people go on foot, bicycle or motorbike, crossing a bridge that reeks of stagnant trash and other human debris. Diza is not a tourist destination for Moroccans from out of town. Considered dangerous and unseemly by middle-class Tetouanis and Martilis, it functions to a certain degree as a world apart, proximate but isolated nonetheless. The residents there mostly hail from the *dakhliya* or interior of the country, and began constructing homes and shops there beginning in the 1990s. An informal settlement and as such by definition unaided by city or government services, its development during the period I lived in Martil was nonetheless striking; the dusty streets once unmistakably marking entry into the neighborhood suddenly smoothed out into paved asphalt in the spring of 2017, for instance (though it remained interrupted every few feet by large, gaping holes with exposed water rushing underneath that the motorists and bicyclists whipped around on their way to the bridge).<sup>61</sup> Less malleable is its widespread association with uncleanness and crime, and many of my interlocutors shudder or click their tongues merely upon hearing the name. Diza, for them, represents all that has gone wrong with Martil, an even greater source of distress than the overcrowding that deluges the beach suburb each summer.

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<sup>61</sup> I participated in a women's association, or *jama'iya*, located in Diza. From late summer 2016 through the spring of 2017, I would regularly attend classes and gatherings meant to equip female participants with networks of support and skills-building. Focused largely on handicrafts, sewing and paper arts, the volunteer leaders also offered classes in Qur'anic instruction and Arabic literacy. Nearly all its volunteers were Moroccan, but its founding leader was an ex-pat Spaniard and former hairdresser who had relocated to Martil after retiring. My participation involved me coming to the neighborhood during the daytime; I never witnessed any unusual behavior or otherwise threatening activity, but was frequently warned by locals to be on guard for it when I was there.

Most preposterous, from the perspective of the NAWAT civic association members working to restore Martil's port and river to their former historical glory, is the fact that the polluted, trash-rimmed body of stagnant water the bridge to Diza spans is itself a product of the port's closure and the subsequent transformation of the river into a dead pool: *wad mayit*, as my interlocutors deemed it, the dead river perpetually pooling just shy of the sea. The unmistakable smell emanating from its waters thus symbolizes and disperses in hyper-condensed fashion the violence of historical amnesia visited upon the region. Guilty by association, the residents of Diza contribute in the eyes of some of these members to this ignominy day in and day out as they traverse and inhabit the former riverbed.

### **III. Coast and Territory: Disavowal and Attachment along the Strait of Gibraltar**

Much has been made in recent decades concerning the potential of water, and particularly the ocean, to transform the fixity of space and territory. Perhaps most seminal in this regard is Paul Gilroy's 1993 *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. In it, Gilroy rejects a traditional focus on the terrestrial, bounded nation-state as the genitor and corollary of nationality, ethnicity and citizenship, instead shifting the center to the Atlantic Ocean and its role in diaspora and the slave trade. Coastlines inhabit the margins of the picture Gilroy paints, no less significant for their redistribution to the periphery of the oceanic depths. With this intervention, Gilroy opened the way for diaspora studies and racialization processes to move to the forefront, disrupting their typical position as footnotes to national geographic and political imaginaries.<sup>62</sup>

On par with Gilroy's impact on Atlantic studies and the social sciences is the mid-twentieth century French historian Fernand Braudel's work shaping the historiography of the Mediterranean Sea. His magisterial account of the history of the Mediterranean—written largely from memory as a prisoner of war in a World War II concentration camp—likewise de-centered nation-states, instead focusing on the Mediterranean as a coherent force and factor in historical processes and identity formation. Celebrated above all for its lyrical beauty and power, *La Méditerranée et le Monde Méditerranéen à l'Époque de Philippe II* (The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Era of Philip II) is credited with launching the second wave of the French Annales School of historiography. Famed for its emphasis on the *longue durée* in understanding social processes, the Annales school of historiography and Braudelian

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<sup>62</sup> The Tate Museum in the UK produced a four-part miniseries on the legacy of Gilroy's thinking, and in particular its connection to modern diasporic art and sculpture. Narrated by Ekow Shun, it can be found on YouTube:

historiography saw in the Mediterranean shoreline a uniting force, a through line of social formations and everyday life inextricably entwined with the sea at their center.<sup>63</sup>

Among contemporary social scientists working with the Mediterranean as a framework, migration and the South-North trajectory of asylum seekers and migrants—and their exclusion and reception in northern shores, for those who survive the crossing—is of central concern. The scholars making up the Black Mediterranean collective—notably, the great majority of them working in the northern Mediterranean hemisphere or Europe—reject the common framing of the “crisis” as inviting policy and humanitarian interventions, asserting instead that the roots of the perceived crisis are consistent with longer arcs of colonial exploitation and racial capitalism that need to be examined and comprehended prior to a possible response.

In *The Black Mediterranean: Bodies, Borders, and Citizenship* (2021), the members of this collective posit a “radical re-telling of Europeanness” which resides in one way of conceiving the Mediterranean as a unified whole, one bound by networks of slave exchange and colonial invasion they insist on bringing into present-day social analyses as shaping modern political and racial imaginaries and categories.<sup>64</sup> Citing Cedric Robinson’s 1983 *Black Marxism* as a theoretical touchstone, they assert that issues of xenophobia and anti-Black racism are robbed of their significant roots in colonialism, empire and slavery if considered through the primary lens of contemporary nation-state formations. In doing so, they effectively challenge the ready frameworks of tolerance and cosmopolitanism as the ultimate desired ends, gesturing instead to a more radical socio-geographic problem and possible revolutionary solutions.<sup>65</sup>

South-North distinctions take on a different valence when considered from the perspective of Moroccan and North African Mediterranean historiography. In the course of my research, I came across a significant body of work—written both by Moroccan historians and scholars, poets and artists born in Spanish enclaves within Morocco—dedicated to probing the role of maritime relations in the ongoing religious warfare that intermittently marked the centuries following 1492 and the final establishment of a consolidated Christian North newly defined by the southern shores of the Iberian Peninsula. Intriguingly to me, many of the works

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<sup>63</sup> Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell’s 2000 *The Corrupting Sea*—a massive tome that aims to write the pre-history of Fernand Braudel’s Mediterranean (so, pre-1500) and to do so from an explicitly ecologically attuned methodology—stresses the fragmenting role of microclimates as well as the connective tissue proffered by the sea itself. A shared emphasis on the Braudelian *longue durée* is here balanced by an emphatic underlining of the near-constant punctuation undergirding social and economic adaptation to unpredictable microclimate sea changes. The work is considered especially significant for medievalists seeking to absorb an ecological or geographical perspective into political and historical narrative.

<sup>64</sup> The Black Mediterranean Collective, eds., *The Black Mediterranean: Bodies, Borders, and Citizenship* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 15.

<sup>65</sup> In various chapters of the work, authors challenge the common framing of issues around refugees and asylum seekers as calling for a more compassionate or universalist framework to counter xenophobic or racist calls for exclusion. Instead, the argument they make in different settings and chapters is that calls for abolition of borders must be grounded precisely in a colonial history of anti-Blackness guiding modern European trajectories. See also Eleanor Paynter, “Review: *The Black Mediterranean*,” in *Antipode: A Radical Journal of Geography* (Nov 2021). [https://antipodeonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Book-review\\_Paynter-on-The-Black-Mediterranean-Collective.pdf](https://antipodeonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Book-review_Paynter-on-The-Black-Mediterranean-Collective.pdf)

took 1492 and 1609 (when the final Moriscos were expelled from Spain) as a beginning point, rather than a finite end, of the contested religious topography of the Mediterranean north-south divide.

In other words, rather than taking the consolidation of a northern Christendom and a southern Mediterranean comprising Western Islam as a given, many of the authors whose work I read and the historians I spoke with as interlocutors in Morocco viewed the history of the northern Moroccan Mediterranean coastline as a continuous reaffirmation and dynamic struggle over the limits of Christian conquest in the early modern and modern era. In this framing, the 1860 Battle of Tetouan and subsequent establishment of colonial Spanish rule in the north in the form of a protectorate was a much feared denouement of a centuries-long Spanish imperial ambition to push back the *frontera* or frontier of the Reconquista still further, into North Africa. Piracy and maritime skirmishes, a popular field in Moroccan historiography, become the low-grade warfare beating back the drums of the Christian aggressor to the north in the time between the late fifteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries.<sup>66</sup>

In her work on the Tijuana border, linguistic anthropologist Rihan Yeh hones in on the speech act of joking as meriting careful ethnographic dissection. In its publicness—a joke after all must be recognized as “landing” by more than one party, or at least contain the possibility of mutual recognition, even if murmured under one’s breath or otherwise kept close to the chest—Yeh argues that the joke as art form binds what might otherwise be taken as inherently separate parties (whether they be border crosser and border inspector, the US and Mexico, and so on). Drawing on Lacan, she is concerned with what she terms a paradox: a joke, Yeh argues, simultaneously attaches and disavows. The Mexican citizens navigating the southern border and cracking jokes—whether acerbic, poignant, murmured privately or spoken publicly and defiantly—are pinned, in the act of joking, to the power of the state and hegemonic power of the US surveillance apparatus. Even in disavowing or rejecting this disproportionate power, there is an underside of attachment, in other words; for a joke to “work” or “land,” she argues, this paradoxical quality is constantly at work.<sup>67</sup>

The significance of al-Andalus, both as a temporal signification and a shared geographical imaginary today made up of southern Spain, the northern regions of North Africa,

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<sup>66</sup> The Catholic Monarchs Isabella I and Ferdinand II were keen to expand the *Reconquista* military campaigns south across the Strait following the fall of Granada in 1492. Though successful in particular instances in modern day Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya, ultimately the expeditions and resources put into conquering and exploiting the New World took precedence over campaigns to the south. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot writes in “Anthropology and the Savage Slot: The Poetics and Politics of Otherness” of what was happening at this time (though, as the Moroccan historians I worked with knew well not to take for granted, might have come to pass in a very different form): “Abandoning one lake for another, Europe confirmed the sociopolitical fissure that was slowly pushing the Mediterranean toward northern and southern shores. In so doing, it created itself, but it also discovered America, its still unpolished alter ego, its Elsewhere, its Other.” Michel Rolph-Trouillot, “Anthropology and the Savage Slot: The Poetics and Politics of Otherness.” In *Trouillot Remixed: The Michel-Rolph Trouillot Reader*, edited by Yarimar Bonilla, Greg Beckett and Mayanthi L. Fernando (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 59.

<sup>67</sup> Rihan Yeh, “Visas, Jokes and Contraband: Citizenship and Sovereignty at the U.S.-Mexico Border.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 59, no. 1 (2017), 159.

and the Mediterranean stretch bridging the two, I would like to suggest, functions in a similar way among the people I worked with. Along this maritime border frontier—constituted partly by a past, no longer quite imaginable, regime of spatial sovereignty—al-Andalus both beckons as an inviting paradigm of cosmopolitan co-mixture and embeds a fundamental enmity or threat at its kernel. Thus the museum newly opened in a corner of the Centro de Artes in Tetouan in 2015 or 2016 situating the city's significance vis-a-vis a lost al-Andalus is all at once a mournful elegy, impassioned defense, and romantic projection into the future of the Mediterranean cosmopolitan life made possible by the *juntas* and *jama'iyas* (or civic associations) on both coastlines dedicated to the remembrance and revitalization of this history. While much has been made and contested of the possible romanticization, in a distorted sense, of monotheistic harmony as symbolized by an Andalusian aesthetic and style of governance, Tetouan by the very nature of its founding as a frontier fortress dedicated to holding back the imperial ambitions of a Christian North foregrounds an element of hostile warfare: at once elegiac and threatened, attached and attempting to resist.

The fieldwork research I did with members of NAWAT is grounded in these larger contexts and arcs of signification. In their focus on Martil as in a sense a frontier's frontier, both part of Tetouani urban history and peripheral to it, the civic association members I worked with both referred to and built upon major streams of Tetouani historiography—the most prominent being the twelve volume work, *Tarikh Titwan*, written by the nationalist and historian Mohammed Daoud and published in 1979, and today by the members of Tetouan Asmir, headed by the historian and prolific author Dr. M'hammad Benaboud—and were self-consciously ancillary to it. Whereas Tetouan's precolonial and colonial history is inseparable from the seven doors or *bab* that contained the original *medina* or city, Martil is for the most part a blank canvas, its once working port having disappeared, the one material continuation the Borj or small fort at its heart.

Thus while Tetouani history, like its traditions of family genealogy associated with al-Andalus, is steeped in materialities, the Martili coastline is something decidedly different: a fragment, a memory, captured in old black-and-white photographs and drawings, the majority of them captured and chronicled not by North African Muslims but by an invading Catholic Spanish colonial presence. Whereas in Tetouani historiography and culture there is a sense, then, of a before and after of colonial history—however fraught and entangled with Andalusian exile and rebuilding—in Martil the archive itself is deeply co-authored, written in the changing tides and fleeting encounters of antagonistic, deeply attached forces.

In what follows, I detail the fieldwork research I did with two NAWAT members who I worked particularly closely with. The first is a historian whose work formerly consisted of both a book and frequent contributions to local northern newspapers, and now has shifted to primarily Facebook and the digital realm. The second is a journalist and prominent figure in Martil, frequently invited to emcee cultural and religious events in town, who publishes a regular channel on YouTube as well as Facebook. Just as significant, as Trouillot again draws our attention to, are the silences surrounding the proposed project, the non-stakeholders and nonparticipants. These are largely the poor working class—whether residing in Diza or elsewhere—, those struggling to survive and maintain their dignity despite the lack of opportunities and support they encounter in doing so. (As one Rifian taxi driver wearily replied

to me when I asked him what he thought about the port's potential reopening, none of this had anything to do with him.) I return to conversations I had with some who fall into this wider category of nonconstituent vis-a-vis the port project concerning everyday life in Martil in the final section of the chapter.

#### **IV. The Historian: Writing Martil**

Born in Tetouan—nine or ten generations of his family had been buried in the city, he once told me, and his Andalusian surname enjoyed prominence within the region—Charaf and his family had always summered in Martil. He had very strong, fond memories of growing up along the river, swimming in it and strolling along it as a young man (he used the term *romántico* at some point in reminiscing over it). Leaving to pursue university studies in the 70s, he had returned in 1979 to find Martil changed in a number of ways which profoundly disturbed him, and which he narrates as his life's work to combat. In earlier times, he said, people in Martil had really known each other, there was an intimacy that characterized the relationships of the families that lived there. Now he found that the young people could not be bothered with anything but leisure and profit; they would while away most of the year in cafes, watching football and such, waiting for the summer to begin when they could start earning a living.

People no longer really knew each other or cared about what it had been like there. In addition, he found upon returning from his studies that a lot of the families who had made their living from the port and related trades had been forced to leave the area permanently, emigrating to big cities in search of work.<sup>68</sup>

Like his fellow Martili, Adil of Chapter One, Charaf thus saw contemporary Martil in the context of a lost, much loved and mourned natural and social world. He and others had flourished there, not long ago, but the conditions he encountered in his youth no longer held. Like Adil, as we will see, he held the corruption of local officials and citizens much at fault. Charaf, however, held hope, at least for the reestablishment of the clean and healthy spaces for public life in Martil he thought crucial.

He had long been a prominent advocate for restoration of Río Martil. Though he was a member of NAWAT he situated his efforts as far preceding theirs. The greatest thing he had done, he told me in November 2016, was to collect those signatures, that was really the thing that had the greatest impact when it had been presented to King Muhammad VI. Here Charaf referred to a signature campaign he had undertaken in the mid-nineties, collecting some 750 or more signatures from families in and around Tetouan in favor of preserving and promoting Martil and the port's historic significance. He had just known, he said, that some day things would change with the river and in Martil more generally.

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<sup>68</sup> Jacqueline Nassy Brown writes extensively about the role of generation, gender and other factors that differently inform Liverpoolians' experience of their port city as a global cosmopolitan hub (or not) in a way that directly speaks to Charaf's reminiscing about the changes undergone by the area. See Jacqueline Nassy Brown, "Diaspora and Desire: Gendering 'Black America' in Black Liverpool," in *Globalization and Race: Transformations in the Cultural Production of Blackness*, ed. Kamari Maxine Clarke and Deborah A. Thomas (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021). See also Jacqueline Nassy Brown, *Dropping Anchor, Setting Sail: Geographies of Race in Black Liverpool* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

We would speak in Spanish, only switching over to Arabic to clarify or emphasize a word. In one of our earlier meetings over coffee in September 2016, we had met at Café Río in Martil, one of the most popular cafes along the corniche. Unlike many of the cafes in Tetouan—which are commonly dominated by men, solitary or sitting in groups, puffing cigarettes and pouring over newspapers—Café Río was a gathering space frequented by men and women, groups of young students from the nearby university using it to study and hang out and older Martilis and Tetouanis enjoying each other's company.

Narrating to me how he had become increasingly invested in sharing histories of the Martil port with a local audience, Charaf told me that the deeper he had dug into matters of the port and particularly its river, the more he had come to realize that there was more at stake than simply a matter of nostalgic preservation. There was corruption going on concerning the way land was being taken over for profit; families who had owned land for generations would come to find that they had been dispossessed of it without their knowledge, and it became clear to him that people in office were using their power to parcel out land to relatives and friends. There was a *qadi* at that time who was unusually upright who had supported him and others' attempts to figure out what was going on, but their efforts to investigate had been met with resistance and increasing hostility. In 1984 his Mercedes had even been vandalized several times, he believed as a form of retribution.

If anything, he told me, this period of escalated conflict resulted in his trying to get his investigations more into the public's eye. He had tried to publish the documents he was finding in a local paper, whose editor was also the head of the whole wider regional association of Tetouan in some capacity and who did not feel comfortable publishing what he was writing. The newspaper closed soon after, anyway. So he went to *al-Shamal* (The North) and to other national newspapers who did publish them. It was either here or at a later round of publications in 1994 that he believes King Hassan II took note of what he was writing about and sent someone to try to reconstruct the pier in Martil, though according to him they were doing it incorrectly and in the end abandoned the project. At the time one could nonetheless see the outlines of the structure they had begun.

In a visit to his apartment in November 2016 he pulled down a binder full of clippings from over the years that he had written for various periodicals on Martil and the river. When I had first come in that day he said that as a young boy his teachers had pulled him aside and taught him how to make maps, and he had been doing it ever since, which I thought of as I looked over all the immaculate drawings and maps he had preserved, many planning the river's future.

It was somewhere around this time, he said, where he began to realize that maps and documents were not enough to get the general public's attention in a significant way and that was when he turned to history. People like stories, *al-qsas*, he said, which is not to be confused here with lack of veracity. What he did from then on was to put together his findings from the archives into narratives, which he glossed as a straightforward presentation of the facts.

I was struck by how unselfconscious he appeared about the role of instrumentality in history writing—wielding historical writing in the service of the present—which seemed to contrast somewhat with at least some elements of the self-presentation of academic historians in Tetouan I had met, who insisted on the non-instrumentalization of the past as a core tenet of

proper academic history writing. He was not, as far as I could gather, trained formally in history or affiliated with the local university faculty.

Over the decades he has published many short historical narratives detailing past events distinguishing the port of Martil's history in local newspapers. A shift to Facebook in recent decades had broadened his sense of audience, encompassing in addition to Moroccans some Spaniards interested in the topic as well. He published his first historical book in 1994, and noted that this was the single most important element or tool of persuasion when he and a group from NAWAT went to visit parliament in Rabat in 2014. The government functionaries they met with then had been most interested in the book.<sup>69</sup>

At one of our earliest meetings, in September 2016, as we walked from a café to his family's summer vacation apartment in Martil, he carried with him a thick binder full of laminated documents that he said he had brought down to Martil from his main house in Tetouan in order to upload them on Facebook as part of a latest round of publications; Facebook, he said, was proving a most productive platform from which to share his work, it had really helped him tremendously to easily and widely distribute it in comparison to the normal printing process. He showed me in the binder how he kept all the drafts of the articles he sent off to the press, which he would handwrite in absolutely meticulous Arabic script that almost looked typed, and attach a photo or often one of his drawings recreating an architectural feature or maps detailing potential touristic plans that he also draws before he'd sent it off to the press. This was the same binder where he kept logs about the signatures he had collected in pre-NAWAT days, along with a letter which he would provide people with to read when he was out and about and collecting signatures. He had copied and sent these signatures off to the responsible government parties, stopping around 750 even though there were more than 1000 because it had gotten to be too much. He had also drawn up a separate list of the preeminent families and figures in support of his initiative, which he had also sent off along with the letter and evidence of signatures.

As we walked to the apartment I tried to ask him about the state of current developments in Martil. He regarded the summers as they stand now as odious and said his family was just beginning to be able to relax now that people were leaving. They never went to the beach in peak-season, he said. I asked him whether given this remarkable and fast rise in popularity as a summer beach resort he still thought the plans he envisioned for Martil were realistic. He said that the main thing was that reinstating the port would provide steady and year-round work to people and not feed into this concentrated summer rush that they now get and the economic dependence that follows from it. He had said earlier that the response from King Mohammed VI actually went beyond anything he had initially hoped for.

## **V. Charaf: Safeguarding al-Andalus and the Maghrib**

Charaf identified thoroughly with Andalusia. Both he and his wife traced their family genealogies back to southern Spain. (His wife was also a Tetouani whose roots went back to Granadan Andalusians.) In a country whose official languages are Arabic and French, he favored Spanish, not unlike many northerner Moroccans I encountered. As he told me in one of our last

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<sup>69</sup> One example is a newspaper article in *La Chronique* published June 14, 2014, in which Charaf's contribution to the historical chronicling of Martil is highlighted.



meetings in 2017, many people in the Moroccan north had felt abandoned when the Spanish had left in 1956. The French had in effect stayed in many ways, if not in terms of formal sovereignty in terms of economic projects, language, etc. He had been amongst the very last to be educated fully in Spanish; if he had come any later, he continued, it would have all been over for him, as Spanish would have counted for nothing and it would have all had to have been in French. That was why, he guessed, he had always worked so hard, he had always been running, running, feeling the danger behind him (of potentially being dispossessed, it seemed), but luckily that had all turned out for the best, *alhamdulillah*.

His father, he told me, had made a living in good part by traveling between Spain and Morocco buying and selling goods. When traveling in Spain he would sell some Moroccan artisanal goods, but most of his business depended on things he brought back to Morocco from Spain. He was evidently traveling back and forth quite a bit right around the time of independence, as he had many photos from Spain from about 1955. (He also showed me photos he said were from Moulay Abd al-Salam where they had set up a tent and the whole family would come to stay during certain periods as he negotiated the sale of his goods.)

If fear of marginalization had motivated his historical and civic work, so too however had his positive attachment to various dimensions of northern Moroccan/Andalusian traditions. As he told me at one of our earliest meetings: from the outset, it was nostalgia, his memories of his childhood, and desire to preserve some of that for future youth, that fueled his decades-long work (and which only accidentally seems to have led him down the path of history writing in its service).<sup>70</sup>

For one thing, Charaf, like Adil of Chapter One, voiced a loss related to housing height (and housing construction aesthetics more generally). His firstborn son was raised in Martil, where they had lived year-round from something like '79 to '98, and he evidently treasured pictures of both the son and the old courtyard of their house, which looked full of light, and which he associated with al-Andalus.

This was back when all the buildings there had been low, with none of the high rises you see now, he told me. His aunt or other relative had had a beautiful Andalusian style house out behind what is currently Hotel Omeya, which was decorated and everything in the Andalusian style, and which they had recently torn down. Over lunch with his family later that day he talked for awhile about how houses today were not built the way they used to be, in the traditional style. I asked him what about them was specifically different and he said noise, first and foremost. When he was young he used to make a huge racket (*sada'*) and nobody from outside could tell the difference.

Borders clearly separating private and public life were a feature I came to know that Charaf thought regrettably lacking in more recent years, particularly in the communities that had grown up around the Martil river bed. Charaf's carefully kept photo albums extended further back in time, leading to further discussion of being Andalusian in Morocco. Leading me into his

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<sup>70</sup> More immediately Charaf said that his start on the project began in the 1980s in close connection with a stimulating and close friendship with an American man who was working on a book about the Tetouani Andalusian families and Morisco history in the Maghrib. He and Charaf had become good friends and collaborators; he had enrolled Charaf in English courses at the American center and had been the primary motivator for him to pursue his studies on Martil, as Charaf told me.

study after entering his elegantly appointed apartment one afternoon in November 2016, Charaf pulled down a family photo album from his study's shelves, each and every one of its photos impeccably captioned with his very neat Arabic. I was fascinated by the photos of his mother:

here she was in the family home, here she was accompanying his father on a trip to Sevilla, Granada, and Córdoba. Here they were standing in the Alhambra, in the patio of the lions, in the tower of the Giralda. Here was his mother when his father made her pose with the Semana Santa costume on, see how her eyes are closed and she looks tense? You could tell she wasn't comfortable, he said, but it's still a very good photo. Oh, here's the same photo but less good quality, it's blurrier. And here she was in Ceuta, wearing a *haik*, leaning over his older brother. This was pre-independence so there was no border, it was all just Spaniards. Here was his older brother straddling some cannons out by the *chbar*, apparently there used to be cannons there from the time of the 1860 war. The Andalusians, he explained to me, they had faced persecution around the time of the 1860 war by indigenous people who mistook them for Europeans.

As we flipped through the photo album, I asked who a particular woman was and he said his uncle or relative had married her on purpose, as part of an effort to start mixing with people of different skin shades to have kids who were more *mestizo* (mixed) looking in order to avoid some of that suspicion—she was beautiful when she was young, he said pointing to a photo, even though she was dark. People had been killed, Andalusians had been killed, it was on record, he said.

Charaf's religious views were perhaps consistent with a particular reading of Andalusian history as elevating cosmopolitan tolerance and fundamental harmony among the monotheistic faiths. It was necessary that Muslims grow and be willing to change according to common sense from the example of the Prophet, he stressed. Prophet Mohammed had suggested women be modest and cover the parts of their body that were provocative to men, but that had nothing to do with covering your face with the *niqab*. In fact, the *niqab* itself is dangerous because it is necessary that people in the community see you and be able to identify who you are—an argument I had heard before, among Andalusian-oriented Rabatis who stressed to me the distinction between a Western Islam Morocco had inherited and a *sharqi* or Eastern Islamic tradition.<sup>71</sup>

If attachment to Andalusian habits and views informed Charaf's efforts, it was always within a general support for working with other peoples and traditions making up Morocco. He was an ardent monarchist and centrist.

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<sup>71</sup> Charaf seemed concerned that as an American and non-Muslim I might misconstrue Islam's core principles. Some people, he said by way of example, see Islamic prayer as a form of slavery to God, but that was a misunderstanding. In fact, prayer was a very sensible way to exercise your body's circulation regularly. He also said that from his perspective the main reason Muslims still practiced Eid was because it was good for their children to get the experience firsthand of seeing an animal die and understand the process of cutting it up, as it 'manned' them up; it wouldn't do for a young man to get a cut and cry about it, this way he was familiar with blood.

In 2017 at one of our last meetings, Charaf started talking about such issues in the context of his commitment to stability in these unstable times. He had taken on a more formal tone, perhaps in response to the documents I had brought along formalizing the interview setting, and spoke slowly. He was committed to stability, he said, and to the future for his children, who he didn't want to see grow up in the kind of chaos currently being witnessed in Egypt or Syria.<sup>72</sup>

There were some who talked about the north potentially breaking off on its own—the Sahara there, the north here, and he was completely against all of that. It came down to a misguided sense of Berber distinction from the rest. Morocco, he said, had started in the Sahara, how could it be that it wasn't a part of it? There were even those, he said, who thought that this part of Morocco might eventually all go back to Spain, given its longstanding commitment to holding on to Ceuta and Melilla. That was all nonsense. It was true, he said, that Spanish colonization had been a very different experience from French; unlike the French, the Spanish had really lived amongst the people. But any idea of breaking from Morocco was nonsense.

One had to understand: there were differences, but such was the case with any family. So yes, Andalusians were different from Berbers, but he had Berber friends who respected him and respected their differences. Sometimes they would joke with him about it but it was always respectful. It was just like in any family, like take his own: he had two brothers, one of whom he didn't get along well with at all, who was only interested in money and business and cared nothing for learning or sentiment. And another who was a musician, who was nice and who his friends accepted, but if he were to be sitting with him and a group of his more academic friends, he would be out of place, there was no way around it. So yes, there were differences as there were within the state, but that didn't mean they weren't all Moroccan.<sup>73</sup>

Charaf took few pains to conceal the revulsion the current state of Diza elicited in him, symbolic as it was for him of all that a northern sensibility stood most against: dirtiness, lack of refinement, a glaring publicness in what ought instead to be kept hidden away from public view. Like various other Tetouanis I encountered, Charaf's distaste for the conditions residents of Diza dealt with seemed to enable a willingness to approach their possible impending displacement with limited concern.

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<sup>72</sup> I was frankly confused why he was talking about this; was it in response to recent reminiscing about his and his American friend's mutual valuing of Andalusian traditions and monarchic rule?

<sup>73</sup> Notwithstanding this general position, and not unlike some other Tetouanis I got to know, Charaf had a way of describing non-northern migrants as unwelcome invaders in his city (*Ifriquyeen*, or African, a Tetouani friend once described the rest of the country as, distinguishing between the north and the rest of the country). Charaf's sympathy did not extend either to those acting in open resistance to the monarchy or—more directly relevant in Martil—to non-northerners. For example: I met up with Charaf at Bab Okhla one beautiful November morning shortly after Mouhcine Fikri's death in 2016, and we headed downhill to his apartment building nearby. As we walked he asked me whether I had been following what was going on in al-Hoceyma, something he had brought up the last time I had run into him. These people, he said, shaking his head in disapproval, at the slightest thing they raise their banners and go out on the streets. The people in the region who were calling for independence, he said, were being influenced by Algerians and other outside powers (thus echoing a common assertion by monarchist supporters that the scale of visible protests in the country was in fact reflective of foreign interference rather than indigenous discontent).

Later in the interview we spoke of Dizans' fate. The *ayuntamiento* or city council, he said, had bought up much of the land there and was looking to enrich itself off its eventual sale. It was sad, really, what had happened there, as honest but naïve people had been enticed into buying land cheaply which they didn't have a right to buy, as they were in effect buying the river. Now with the new developments, the government was going to have to settle with them, but they wouldn't be able to get all their money back because it was partially their fault, after all, that they had invested in this land that they never should have. It was all the fault of the people over there, he gestured contemptuously eastward, the people who come from the villages east of here. They are Andalusian too, he said. But they just sit and despise work, they want everything to be done for them.

Have you heard the story of the king who granted peasants a hoe to till with and when he found they had done nothing, told them they could eat the spines that had grown rather than food? It was like that, they just expected to be provided for. Not like the Rifians, who were hard workers, or people from the rest of the country who had come looking for work. A lot of those had been innocent victims of various schemes off of the people from those villages in the east who were always looking to get rich easily.

Dizans are configured in this approach as either lacking diligence or regrettably victimized by poor decision-making. In either case, progress for the area as a whole takes precedence. As Charaf continued:

That was a big part of the problem with the informal housing settlements in Diza and other neighborhoods. But now with the new plans they would just have to move. There was money from Qatar and Kuwait, *al-khelij* (the Gulf), and they were going to construct things with their well-funded projects that would benefit the whole area a lot.

As I will return to later in the chapter, Charaf focused on Diza and informal housing developments as a locus of the historical wrong committed in Martil that he had so long campaigned to see righted. The relocation of its current residents and restoration of the river's former route was for him a nonnegotiable part of the campaign to restore the river and port to their former status as a Mediterranean hub and gateway to the famed Andalusian city of Tetouan.

## **VI. The Journalist: Advocating for Martil's Past and Future**

Unlike Charaf, whose home base was in Tetouan, Mustapha and his family lived year-round in the suburb, their cozy multi-floor apartment humming with activity and warmth on the occasions I visited. The head of NAWAT and a visible community leader (frequently hosting charity and other events as emcee, for instance), Mustapha worked as a journalist in the community, seemingly passionate about highlighting the stories of its residents, which he published on his Facebook page and YouTube channel. His family was originally from the Rif, as was his wife's, but Mustapha identified primarily as a Martili.

Meeting over juice in a cafe overlooking the ocean one day, Mustapha explained to me that there was yet very little in the way of scientific knowledge on historical Martil, though this was slightly changing. If you want to know about its history, he said, there are only two historical sources, that done by Ibn Azuz al-Hakim (*Tarikh al-Atlas Martin*) and the work of Ustath (or professor, an honorific used to connote learnedness) Charaf. And that's it. All the rest is a form of nostalgia, of personal history, as he contended, and almost all of it dates only from the twentieth century, whereas the history of Martil and its historical importance is much older and far exceeds this sphere.<sup>74</sup> As he always did when addressing me, he spoke in *fusha*, registering the conversation from the beginning as formal.

Mustapha's Martil had no strong connection to al-Andalus, despite its proximity to Tetouan. It was a town of recent immigrant Moroccans struggling to survive economically, with little urge or ability to think of the regional past. It differed from Tetouan in that family derivation was not of prominent concern:

whereas if you got into the question of genealogy in Tetouan it was very important to people, with people's father's father's fathers being able to trace their roots there, with Martil, on the other hand, it was quite rare for people to be able to say their grandparents were from there, with most people it only went back as far as their father, say. Because what was Martil? It had been only *ramil*, mostly uninhabited sand. *Martil kanat mintaqa faragha* (Martil was an empty space). There had been only farmers and fishermen, in other words mostly poverty. The Spanish during colonial times had set up homes for themselves and engaged in certain customs defined by the concept of *bien estar*, like the traditional mixed sex strolls along the water or *marche à pied*. And the Moroccans who had been around during that time, they remembered what that had been like and attempted to continue it once the Spanish had left. Moroccans, in contrast, had not had a relation with the water or the coast in the same way.

In response to a question about who the first Moroccans to settle there were, he said it had been mostly people from the area stretching from Oudlou to al-Hoceyma, members of the Ghamara tribe. He looked up a map that showed printed the names of the different tribes and their geographical locations on a map of the country and showed it to me. The first wave of migrants to settle in the region, he said, were from the Rif, the mountainous coastal region to the east. There had been a great wave of them who arrived during the *'am l-jou* or year of hunger that occurred in the 1940s and that Mohamed Choukri wrote about. They had been the first generation, arriving in the midst of colonial occupation.

The Spanish occupation, it was important to understand, had been different from the French, *kan t'amal insani*, a personal interaction that had characterized the relation between

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<sup>74</sup> I asked him about YouTube as a domain where historical photos of Martil circulate and he was circumspect about it, noting that most of them were "only" from the twentieth century and mostly repeats and facsimiles of one another *bila masdar* (unsourced). They were mostly *suar khasa*, people's personal photos and keepsakes, *faqat majmo' min al-ahasis* (just a collection of feelings), indicating thereby that they weren't properly historical.

colonized and colonizer. And why was that? Moroccans had participated in the civil war in Spain, after all. But most of them had migrated from other parts and were new to the region, so nostalgia was not common the way it was in Tetouan (*al-nostalgia kanat dayfa*).

I asked him about how his family had come to the area and he said if I wanted to take his father as a *namothj* or example (he himself didn't seem that interested, more in the spirit of if this was the way I wanted to go about learning about it), his father had come from the Ghzawa region near Chefchaouen, further inland and not near the coast, again showing me the map with the different tribes written on it. He wasn't highly educated but he had studied the Qur'an. You have to understand in that time when the colonizers left, there were very few who had done any studying, so they really needed people to work as functionaries and such. So his father had been employed in an office in the wake of independence.

But it was a hardscrabble life here; nostalgia was scarce because it had been more about finding bread and work. But yes, now some of the people who remembered with nostalgia were Tetouanis who had summered here or else early families who had settled in Martil after the Spanish left. Completely apart from this, in his schema, were people who had come from *al-dakhil* (the country's interior) and who had settled in places like Diza in the '90s.

Mustapha's devotion to the Martil River restoration project was forward-looking. He wanted the Martil River restored, and endorsed the urban development plan associated with the restoration. The plan would be beneficial to the area as a whole, He supported it without ever voicing a reservation to me.

Field note, December 6, 2016: On the Thursday before I left Martil, Mustapha took me on a tour of Wad Martil along with his daughter and friend the quiet mason. He drew a map for me, probably the third of which he's done, showing the river winding through Tetouan in the section already under construction and flipping it over to show the part in Martil they were concerned with, the familiar cut where the *dra'mayit* (the dead branch) begins. We drove out to the ruins of Tamouda which I guess is where the Tetouan project officially begins. Along the way, Mustapha at times narrated, pointing out the widening of the river canal that was happening everywhere.

He was giving me the tour both as a favor to me and in his capacity as Facebook journalist, and as we started hopping in and out of the car he had his daughter photographing us and was attempting to position us at our best angles for the camera. Later he would post the pictures, explaining that the importance of Wad Martil was such that it was gaining worldwide attention, including from American academics such as myself. Someone commented that they hoped something in the river would be named after him to thank him for all of his efforts, and another said that if they could only return it to how it was under *ist'eamar* (colonialism), they would be so happy.

As for the people living in the informal river bank settlements, Mustapha did not seem greatly concerned. As our trip neared its end we saw the new plan about the older world:

The section in Tetouan has been under active construction for a while and we saw bulldozers, etc., along the route. At one point when we were closer to Martil we stopped along a bridge where there were a bunch of goats and a man herding them down to the narrow river banks. I asked Mustapha what would happen to people like that under the new development and he shrugged and said they would need to move elsewhere, this was being developed for tourism so there would be hotels in one section, a museum in another, there wouldn't be space for agriculture or pasturing once it was complete. He said there is a *jama'iya* formed of people who want to ask the government for more money in return for moving off the land along the river banks—he seemed skeptical whether they weren't just trying to profit as much as possible, but also didn't seem particularly worried about it, saying it was their right to advocate for themselves.

Once we reached Martil we pulled over along the stretch near the university heading into town. They pointed out a gated compound which had a sign on it saying it was a Christian burial ground, I guess left over from the colonial era. They asked if I'd like to stop for a picture but I said it was all right. We went around behind it where there was a junk yard with auto parts strewn about and several apartment buildings, some half-finished. This was where the *dra'mayit* (dead branch) began, a kind of marsh that used to be connected to the Río Martín but was cut off in 1962. I don't understand how the water flow works if there's nothing feeding it, but they shrugged and said it had just always had water, that the earth in that area was of a kind that held water or something like that. I asked them about where the current river is and they said it was a bit too far away for us to go then, on the other side of Diza. I wondered as we left again about what differentiated an area like this, which was not very pretty, from Diza in their minds, why the opprobrium surrounding the latter.

As mentioned above, Mustapha's brief Facebook Live on this particular excursion was one of several he filmed while we were in the same company, a regular part of his journalistic praxis and advocacy around the port reopening and Martil's future. In the following section, I focus specifically on a lengthy interview he conducted while I was present with a local farmer, a Spanish colonist who had stayed behind when the rest of his fellow countrymen departed in the late 1950s. Streamed on Facebook Live and then published on YouTube with some 25,000 views to date, it figures as by far among his most watched publications on his channel. Paintings form a significant point of reference in the interview, a way for Mustapha and the farmer, Miguel, to speak about the beach suburb's past and possible future. I turn now to these paintings in the context of the interview, as well as the role of drawings in the production of Charaf's historical retellings and appeals to fellow northerners in articulating the significance of Martil's closed port.

## VII. *Nostalgia de un río, Tarikh medina: Nostalgia for a river, history of a city* (YouTube interview title)

The interview runs long at an hour and a half; by the end it is dark outside, and Miguel, who has kept his broad brimmed hat on throughout, leaves quickly once it concludes. Punctuated by jokes about the pressing hospitality of the host—we sit in Mustapha's salon and tea and sweets are periodically offered to the guest by his wife and daughter off camera, prompting Miguel to occasionally interrupt the conversation to protest that he's had too much as it is (“Hay que engordar!” [One needs to get fat!] repeats Mustapha, at times wiping away tears of laughter at what develops into a running joke)—the conversation is broadcast live on the journalist's Facebook platform, later to be posted to YouTube and becoming among his most watched posts. I am also off camera until the final few minutes, when Mustapha invites me to join him, introducing me as an American doctoral student studying the history of the region. “Sadiqa Rosa,” (“Friend Rosa”) he informs his viewers, speaks Arabic. “Sadiq Miguel” (“Friend Miguel”), as he has been referring to him throughout the night, does as well: “He speaks Arabic,” he says, addressing the camera in Arabic, “but—always—” he shrugs, “well, he speaks Spanish, perhaps a translation is in order.”

Language is foregrounded from the beginning of the interview. Though Miguel has lived in Martil since his birth in 1931 and speaks Darija, he is immediately alarmed at the interview's commencement when Mustapha starts things off in his customary *fusha* or Modern Standard Arabic. After a brief introduction in which he tells the camera that his guest is one of the sons of Martil (*ahad abna' Martil*) and a Moroccan-Spaniard-Martili (*hua isbani maghribi Martili*), he greets Miguel with the customary *'asalam waliykum*. Looking notably uncomfortable, Miguel mutters back, “*no vamos a hablar Español?*” (Are we not speaking in Spanish?). Always the composed professional, Mustapha responds reassuringly in Spanish “*vamos a hablar en árabe y en castellano, un poquito de dos*” (we will speak in Arabic and in Castellano, a bit of both), then pivots back to *fusha* to continue his narrative, finally landing on Darija as the language he will address Miguel in when they are not speaking Spanish. This tri-lingual dynamic continues throughout, not posing a particular problem after the moment of awkwardness at the interview's beginning.

Martil's exceptional status—“empty” or *faragha* as Mustapha described it to me at another moment, not claimed by Moroccans in the pre-independence era, or at least not in a traditional sense of settled territory—forms, I argue, the condition of possibility of this interview. Its goal, as Mustapha makes clear with the title and from his introductory remarks, is to re-envision or narrate the space of Martil as it once was, through the eyes and memory of a Spanish colonial farmer, with the clear aim of having this recitation shape the future restoration of the port and river. Miguel's status as former colonizer turned Spaniard staying on in Morocco after the country's independence is largely accepted by the audience, though I do read in the Facebook comments later, in a post later deleted, someone who objects to having a Christian colonizer figure as authoritative in the region's history when there were Muslims that could have been consulted. More common, though, is the expression of sadness—lamentation, even—for what is viewed as the ruining of a colonial picturesque in Martil's contemporary form.

A dairy farmer, Miguel is deeply connected to the agricultural past of Martil and questions about it—fueled in large part by the Facebook audience watching the interview live



and posing questions—form the bulk of the interview. The main theme is the plenty that abounded, between the potatoes—200 tons! They would ship them from Martil to Algeria—and the grapes, the coffee (brought in as *contrabando* or illegally at that time), the plentiful fish and, and...<sup>75</sup> *al-Nas kan ta'ish mzyan eh, Pedro?* (The people lived well then, didn't they, Pedro?). *Alhamdullilah*, thanks to God, he responds wearily, visibly tired at this late point in the interview. When the subject of politics comes up Miguel demurs entirely, saying *ma shi shogli* (it's none of my business). Tidbits nonetheless appear here and there: General Franco had eaten in Tetouan at his father's restaurant, he mentions at one point. As for any wars fought to the north in Spain, he says only *la guerra no vale para mí* (war doesn't count, or didn't apply, to me [the expression is somewhat ambiguous]).

One notable feature of the interview is how unequivocally Miguel feels rooted in Martil—or Martín, as he predictably asserts—and not Spain. Pressed about whether he feels any nostalgia or curiosity for the land of his ancestors (*judud*) in northern Spain, he says he has none. In the only moment in the interview in which Mustapha questions his attachment to the coastal area of Morocco as a natural right, he asks him: *Miguel, 'alash ma msheetish f halk? 'Alash bqeeeti f Martil w haja ba'd al-istiqlal?* (Miguel, why did you not go on your way? Why did you stay in Martil and such after independence?) Miguel's response: I have my house here (*Ana 'andi casa dyali hunaya*)—placing his hand on his heart—my mom, father and uncle were all from here, where would I go? (*'Alain maji?*). It was your country, then? (*Blad dyalk, ithn?*) Mustapha asks in a light, non-confrontational tone. *Blad dyali* (my country), Miguel affirms, followed by: *W itha bgheeti jorri 'aliya, jorri 'aliya!*" (And if you want to expel me, expel me!) As a researcher of the ongoing role of medieval al-Andalus in contemporary Morocco and Spain, I was particularly struck by Miguel's choice of language here, spoken though it was in a mix of seriousness and jest.

Mustapha's response was just as interesting: *Ntina jorri 'aliya! Ntina jorri 'aliya!* He said, laughing, you were born in 1931 here, me in 1969, you throw me out, how can I expel you! Miguel repeated what he had said—*w itha bgheeti jorri 'aliya, jorri 'aliya* (if you want to throw me out, throw me out)—to which Mustapha responds, still laughing heartily, with *hshuma*—shame, implying that was enough talk of expulsion. Again, in my reading it is Martil's status as a coastal farmland inhabited primarily by Spanish military and accompanying farmer colonizers in the mid-twentieth that allows for the slippage around whose land it really is, and just as importantly a possible levity around the topic, unweighted by specters of colonized people dispossessed or thrown out of their ancestral homes in this case. When asked subsequently about why the Spaniards chose to leave, his answer is simple: *Khafoo, khafoo w mshao bhalhoo* (they were afraid, they were afraid and went on their way). He had been among the few who had stayed.

In order to capture the former plenitude, now hard to conceive, Mustapha refers to paintings, placed behind him and Miguel. Boats in those days had entered Wad Martil or Río Martil from the sea. 50 tons of fish in the midst of Wad Martil, imagine! Mustapha exclaims

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<sup>75</sup> Miguel notes that he went to Algeria at some point in the context of the potato trade. Mustapha asks him playfully about the French colonizers there: "*Los franceses eran malos, no?*" "*Eran malos? Son malos!*" (The French were bad people, though, no?" "They were bad? They are bad!) Miguel responds, and they both laugh heartily.

excitedly at one point. And adds: *hadi faqat 50 sanawāt, ma kanhadrooshi ‘ala chi qdeem* (and we’re not talking about centuries ago, this is as recent as 50 years ago). The people, Mustapha asks, they worked in fishing, right? *al-Khot w lfellah, al-khot w lfellah*, Miguel responds, fishing and farming, fishing and farming. At any given time, there’d be 50 to 60 people working to unload the boats, *mura hadi* (behind this), gesturing as he spoke to the painting picturing boats, small structures and the Borj or fortress behind them. Mustapha explains that the canvases comprise a collection of paintings by NAWAT member Professor Abdul Wahid Ashboun (?) depicting old Martil and other northern locations along the coastline.

As they are talking, Mustapha realizes that in fact while Miguel is describing life as it was in the forties, the painting depicts a scene from the 1960s, post-independence. Interrupting Miguel’s explanation that the Hajj sat in the local seat of governance near the Borj, Mustapha interjects: *Creo que este foto...viene de los 60s y más, cuando la bandera marroquí, este viene después, ja’at min ba’d* (I believe this photo [here referring fleetingly to the painting as a photo], comes from the 1960s and later, along with the Moroccan flag [pointing], this comes later, later than we were discussing). They keep bringing more paintings out and discussing them—significantly, the paintings depict Moroccans and show Arabic on the buses, clearly meant to show life in the post-independence era, but the two keep referring to them in light of their invocation of pre-independence Martín.

At an earlier moment in the interview, Mustapha questions Miguel about the Spanish neighbors he remembers pre-independence. The names come thick and fast: *lespanol kainin bzaff...Kain José Ruiz, kain Manuel Sánchez, Jurado...Manuel Sánchez, Paco Sánchez... Salvador Jurado, Pedro San Juan* (there are many Spaniards, there’s José Ruiz, there’s Manuel Sánchez, Jurado...Manuel Sánchez, Paco Sánchez...Salvador Jurado, Pedro San Juan). Some twenty minutes later Mustapha asks, perhaps prompted by the virtual audience following along on Facebook, which Moroccans he remembers. He had worked alongside Moroccan farmers, had he not? Miguel is quiet; there were a lot, but right now he cannot remember their names. There was Paulino, he says, still vague. Mustapha queries politely whether that would have been a Moroccan. There was Paulino, he repeats, and trails off. They move on to other questions.

In my parsing of the interview, there is one particular moment that stands out as one in which Miguel and Mustapha’s patent differences in subject position recede and their shared identification as petitioners for a new Martil instead comes to the fore. At nearly the hour mark, Mustapha asks him: *lwad d Martil...piensas que se puede arreglar?* (The Martil river, do you think it can be fixed?). Martilis, they join in lamentation, these days they cannot even go to the beach, so overcrowded it is. It is ultimately up to his majesty the king (*el majíster el rey*), Miguel concludes. *Ojalá. Yo me quisiera morir con el río abierto y la plaza. Martín kama Martín.* (God willing. I would like to die with the river open and the plaza [restored]. Martín as Martín.)<sup>76</sup> Audience members, interviewer, interviewee—in this moment, in my reading, their shared lament overrides all else, convincingly uniting them as petitioners in a shared cause. To return to the past as it was, in a contemporary period in which Moroccans control and inhabit the beach suburb. Whatever happens in the future, it is this drive to restore the past, in all its complexities

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<sup>76</sup> The Plaza here mentioned refers to the square outside the major mosque of central Martil. Unlike the absent port, it is not entirely clear what changes Miguel is alluding to in this case.

and unequal sovereignties, that drove my interest in the port's closure and possible reopening and the civic activists promoting their cause.

The lamenting refrain of this hybrid collective is deeply layered and varied, composed as it is of one strand in particular dating back to the catastrophic loss of Western Islam in the northwestern Mediterranean, exiled from the map of modern Europe. Among other strands I read: the despoiling and loss of nature in the move to transition to a post-independence industrial in Morocco's north; the loss of the tremendous power of Mediterranean connectivity that Horden and Purcell write about in *The Corrupting Sea*; and the erosion of an Andalusian outpost in North Africa, seen by some to be under contamination and attack from a creeping African continent stubbornly moving north, reclaiming its cultural terrain.

Charaf's tireless work of historical production certainly contains all four of these strands, and to it I now turn in a final section related to the activities of NAWAT and the abandoned port.

### **VIII. Witnessing the Past: Pedro Alarcón's *El Diario de un Testigo (Diary of a Witness)* and the Port of Martil**

In *Aita Tettauen* (The War of Tetouan), published in 1905, the literary realist author Benito Pérez Galdós narrates the domestic life of the Halconero family in Madrid. The family's son, Vicentito, is ill, and in order to encourage his vitality and wellness the family moves from apartment to apartment in Madrid, hoping to offer him thereby the most vivid of access to the military scenes happening outside, as Spaniards prepare to invade Morocco in the 1860 War of Tetouan. When he is too ill to go out on the balcony, according to Susan Martin-Márquez who analyzes the novel, his father "offers him a tantalizing substitute for the Spanish military spectacle: a stereoscope with battle scenes from the French colonial campaigns in Algeria."<sup>77</sup>

In so doing, the innovative Canarian author Galdós offers, Martin-Márquez ventures, a rich metaphor of Spanish decline and its imbrication with military ventures to the south in North Africa. In depicting the ailing body of Vicentito, enlivened only by the spectacle of far-away battle, Martin-Márquez writes that Galdós by way of his narrator "encourages us to read the prematurely aged and incapacitated Vicentito as symbolic of a Spain that is ill prepared for, but nonetheless enthralled with, the prospect of war."<sup>78</sup> The specter of decline—and its possible entanglement with the expulsion of Iberian Jews and Muslims at the dawn of the early modern era—haunts the writing and visual production of those Spaniards chronicling the War of Tetouan, as they grapple with the question of whether the military expeditions in Africa represent a possible turnaround in their national fortunes or the continuation of a longer arc of deterioration that alienated them from the rest of Europe, marking them as indelibly southern.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Martin-Márquez, 125 (*Aita* 19).

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Henry Kamen writes extensively of this Spanish preoccupation with the problem of decline in the late nineteenth and turn of the twentieth century in particular in *The Disinherited: Exile and the Making of Spanish Culture 1492-1975* (2007). For more on an Orientalist discursive tradition that separates southern Europe from, in this view, a purer Europe to the north, see Roberto Dainotto's "The Discreet Charm of the Arabist Theory: Juan Andrés, Historicism, and the De-Centering of Montesquieu's Europe" (2006). In regard to the complex relationship between nationalism and regionalism in regard to a southern European connection to Islamic history, see Karla Mallette's 2010 *European Modernity and the Arab Mediterranean*.

More than a simple caricature—familiar from any study of modern nationalism—of the individual ailing or otherwise marred body as representing the national body politic, Galdós’ depiction of the Halconero family’s experience of the war through both direct sightline and stereoscope underscores what Martin-Marquez discusses as the centrality of visual production to the colonial ventures in Africa. Occurring as it did in the same years as the American Civil War, the War of Tetouan and Spanish campaigns within northern Morocco coincided with the advent of photography and its ability to chronicle events in a new and significant way. Despite this, Martin-Márquez writes, painting and other kinds of engravings remained central to the war effort as the war’s chroniclers expressed dissatisfaction with the new medium, relying on the emotive power of paintings and drawings to more “accurately” relay what they felt and saw unfolding during their stays in Morocco.<sup>80</sup>

One such chronicler who stressed the continued usefulness of paintings and drawings in the new era of photography—and this in spite of his claim to have been the first to bring a camera to Morocco—was the Africanist and Neo-Catholic Pedro Alarcón. Famed for his *Diario de un testigo de la Guerra de Africa* (Diary of a Witness to the African War, 1859-60), Alarcón offers an intimate and more often than not overtly propagandistic account of the war as he witnesses it in and around Tetouan.<sup>81</sup> Confident from the start that the campaign is being waged in the name of a more tolerant Christian Spain—one perhaps repentant of the harshness of its Inquisition and expulsion of most Jews and Muslims—Alarcón’s faith in the imperial mission falters as he interacts more with Muslim Moroccans, most of whom show little eagerness to convert to Catholicism, unlike one of his early literary protagonists.<sup>82</sup> Ultimately turning away from Africanism (here referring to imperial ambitions extending southward across the ocean), Alarcón muses that perhaps the revitalization of his homeland must occur from within, and not be directed toward overseas conquest.<sup>83</sup> Decline in the shadow of the Alhambra remains the existential condition that Alarcón and his fellow chroniclers and interpreters of the war wrestle with.

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<sup>80</sup> Though Martin-Márquez notes that Alarcón himself refers to the newly available technology of photography as offering a veraciousness that he aspires to channel in his writings, he is ultimately deeply ambivalent over its usefulness. “A photograph,” she writes, “was limited to presenting a single point of view, and thus failed to improve upon drawing or writing which was in fact better at stimulating readers to conjure up in their imaginations the fullness of reality. This complaint is evident from his description of the soldiers, hailing from all regions of Spain, who camp out on the streets of Ceuta at the beginning of the war: ‘Neither the pencil, nor the pen, nor photography itself would suffice to reproduce the multiple perspectives of this picture; invent it in your mind with the aid of my indication’ (*Diario* 41), Martin-Márquez, 114.

<sup>81</sup> An Andalusian, Alarcón had long been excited to explore the territory across the Mediterranean—though Martin-Márquez points out that upon arrival, he rejects it as non-familiar and foreign, thus distinguishing himself from those Africanists who insist on its fundamental familiarity with Iberian lands. His *Diario* is narrated from his perspective as both journalist and volunteer soldier in the war.

<sup>82</sup> In his 1859 “*Una conversación en la Alhambra*” (A conversation in the Alhambra), Alarcón’s narrator recounts encountering on his trip to Granada a descendant of the Zegríes, a famed Andalusí family, who is educated by a kindly Christian benefactor during his childhood in the Rif in Morocco. Learning about the history of his people in al-Andalus, the newly Christian narrator flees north to live among his Spanish brethren. Martin-Márquez, 101-104.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, 117.

Keenly aware of the power of narrative in his mission to restore Martil's port—the people, they need *qsās* or stories in order to care about history, he told me—Charaf's published newspaper accounts of the history of Martil were always accompanied by visuals, a mix of drawings and photography. Among the drawings he reproduced to accompany his texts were those included as illustrations in Pedro Alarcón's nineteenth-century *Diario de un testigo* (*Diary of a Witness*).

In one striking example published on October 13, 2014, Charaf includes a prominent drawing, sourced from Alarcón, depicting the Martil river winding its way through the valley toward the city of Tetouan. His caption reads: "From the age of the Idrisids to the beginning of the 20th century the setting of the river valley and Tetouan did not see the major changes we have on hand today. Source: P.A. Alarcón page 275, translated by Dr. Mohamed al-Marabet."<sup>84</sup>

The palimpsestic effect is notable: in one sentence, embedded as it is with the striking nineteenth-century drawing overhead, Charaf draws a sharp distinction between the current state of Martil and some twelve hundred years of preceding history. His evidence in making this argument is a drawing produced in the context of Tetouan's 1860 invasion by Spain, a view from afar that encompasses the river preceding the city. In reproducing the visual representation of Tetouan—originally intended for audiences in Madrid and other Spanish cities following the events of the nineteenth-century war from afar, now offered to an audience of Arabic-reading Moroccans—Charaf stresses the recent nature of the corruption the landscape has undergone in light of the port's closure and the river's diversion from the sea.

The short article begins, following the drawing and its caption, by stating that it is precisely because of Martil's significance as a political and trading hub that the people of neighboring Ceuta—a Spanish enclave since the sixteenth century—perceived it as threatening, and petitioned for its destruction upon more than one occasion. He relates how with the decline of the Idrisids and the rise of the Fatimids, there was a moment in the fourth century Hijra/tenth century AD that the Fatimids briefly took an interest in conquering Ceuta, though their attention was ultimately diverted eastward to the city of Cairo rather than northward to the Andalusian provinces. The Umayyads, in turn, reclaimed their sovereignty in the region and valued the port as a Mediterranean trade hub. Today, he continues abruptly, flashing forward many centuries to the present, a different kind of destruction than the one periodically threatened by Ceuta's proximity has visited the area: the destruction visited by informal settlements and avaricious real estate brokers.

The rhetorical flourish and collapsing of radically different time periods is characteristic, as throughout his many articles concerning Martil's port Charaf frequently recounts dramatic battles and fateful moments in history that have occurred in Martil's river valley, only to suddenly switch back to what he views as the ignominy of the present. In another article published October 27, 2014 he cites an excerpt from Mohammed Daoud's *Tarikh Titwan* concerning seventeenth-century military tensions between the Moroccan sultan Sidi Mohammed ben Abdallah and the English king. What comes to light in Daoud's pages, he writes, is that Martil was never in fact vacant land as some claim, but rather populated not only by the still standing Borj tower but also a site manufacturing ships and an area that would have housed various military officials running search and defense of the region. "Where," he concludes, "did all this go? It was not, ultimately, the wars and invasions which the site witnessed from nearby Ceuta that extinguished these sites, but something more dangerous and still more terrible...And

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<sup>84</sup> My translation.

that is the attempt by some today to bury this portion of inheritance and the Martil river altogether!!”<sup>85</sup>

This pattern repeats throughout Charaf’s writings, in which he recounts the valor of ancestral Muslim North Africans defending their terrain from a threatening Christendom looming to the north, only to contrast this with the present-day squalor his fellow Moroccans have allowed to enfold the environs of Martil. By turns exhortative, encouraging, or scolding in terms of tone, the effect is uniform: these past lives of the port, Charaf believes, should not only secure its place as a historical site worth preserving and cherishing, but also inspire his contemporaries to greater heroism in confronting and righting the wrongs of the past. The port and river of Martil may have suffered scandalous neglect under their watch and that of their recent forebears’, but there was still time to correct course and restore its former illustrious status.

### **IX. And What of History? Surviving in Martil’s Informal Economy**

The informal settlement of Diza—located on the former riverbed of the deadened Wad Martil—in a sense crystallizes for many Martilis and Tetouanis the unwelcome changes visited on the Mediterranean coastal landscape in the wake of Spanish colonizers’ departure. As I mentioned in an above footnote, I spent several months regularly attending a woman’s cooperative association or *jama’iya* in Diza. Run jointly by a Spanish ex-pat and a number of Moroccan women, some who lived in Martil and others in Diza, its mission was to serve and uplift women who lived nearby, particularly the impoverished residents of Diza.

Though I went through the formal protocol needed to do ethnographic research with the women I spent time with, I choose not to write very much, if at all, about my experience in the *jama’iya*. This is for various reasons but above all, it felt like a question of ethics in ethnographic research. The women and children I spent regular time with there accepted my presence without much comment and we passed many pleasant afternoons together but ultimately, they were there for their own reasons, not to be surveyed by an American researcher. Despite the significance of Diza in the anticipated reopening of Martil’s port, I do not think that going into the lives and struggles of Dizan residents is necessary for the purposes of this research.

Instead, I conclude this chapter with brief vignettes that I hope will speak, however briefly, to the everyday struggles and challenges of Moroccans trying to make a living in its informal economy—those who took little interest in the goings on around the port’s purported reopening, concerned as they were with the problem of survival. First is a story told to me by my Venezuelan roommate, a woman who had converted to Islam and came to Morocco seeking to escape the violence in her country. Formerly employed at a grade school, my roommate had recently heard about the misfortune suffered by the school’s main cleaner, a woman she admired very much, and had gone to visit their family home to offer support and condolences.

The woman, she recounted upon returning home, had just given birth to a child, and either a few days after or before her husband had been paralyzed in a car accident. Working in Ceuta, the Spanish enclave some twenty minutes away by car, he regularly commuted back and forth. My roommate had gone to visit them and he had told her that he felt like taking a weapon and killing all of the politicians in the area. He blamed them for the accident in multiple ways: first, because the emphasis on appearance over safety or substance resulted in the road he was traveling along at night lacking basic safety infrastructure. In the hurry to put up new road, things

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<sup>85</sup> My translation.

like lights had been left out. And second, had he been taken to a hospital with the quality of care available in Ceuta (again, part of Spain and therefore the European Union), he might have been saved from a life of paralysis. But given the quality of care at the Moroccan hospitals in the area, he had been doomed from the start. He wished he had died instead, she recounted him telling her. She had no idea now what the woman would do to support herself and her family.

The second anecdote I share here is that of a fight I witnessed break out along Martil's *corniche* at the peak of summer, and a conversation I subsequently had with a man—himself working at a bouncy castle set up for kids to enjoy—who had likewise watched it unfold. My friend and host sister had taken the bus over from Tetouan along with her five-year-old daughter to enjoy a summer night out in Martil's *corniche*. After spending time at the beach and with it growing dark, we had stopped at a bouncy castle for her daughter to play—10 dirhams (roughly 1 USD) a turn. We sat down on a wooden bench with other women watching their children. On the beach we had seen young men trying to sell nuts, hot fried donuts. On the *corniche* behind us there were mostly sellers of candies and a cotton candy stand, but also women offering *henna*. I turned around, hearing shouting, and saw an older woman bearing down on a seated woman offering *henna*. I noticed right away the unusual intensity of her face, her eyes strained to the bursting point, not a trace of a smile or anything but fury on her face. As she continued to yell, straining over the woman, the seated woman's maybe 4-year-old daughter began to sob, standing behind her. People started to stare and gather.

Things escalated, another woman or two others joining the first, and in my memory chairs were being swung through the air. The woman who was seated rose to defend herself, there was pulling and swinging and the little girl meanwhile was beside herself in fear. I was on a lower level and reached out and grabbed the little girl to try to remove her from the scene, losing my balance and falling over with her. I picked myself up and her and moved away, but she clearly didn't want to be with me. A woman came and took her with her, firmly holding her as she wailed, keeping her away from it all but the girl could still see her mother in the midst of the fight. The crowd that had gathered around at this point was thick, not spectators but participants in trying to assess and restrain what was going on. I was part of an outer circle that were more just spectators to the situation, half-involved.<sup>86</sup>

Even with the intervention of men trying to hold them back, the assault continued for a few more minutes, the three women twisting around the crowd to get at the woman, who was sobbing and shrieking. What most struck me, actually, was how long the whole scene extended, at least for half an hour it felt like. People at various points were saying to call the police, you must call the police. I don't know if they were called, but they never came. After the assaulters

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<sup>86</sup> While in Morocco I have seen over the years a number of fights threaten to break out among men, but it has struck me that they often follow a certain script and depend heavily on the role of outsider men to restrain them while maintaining the air of threat and menace. This one was different, I don't know if it was planned among the women who were attacking as far as the scale of how far it went, but there was no such implicit invitation to restrain or be restrained. Some of the other dynamics of the crowd did still apply, though—it actually reminded me in certain ways of a scene I had witnessed earlier that year in May where a young man fainted outside a Martili restaurant stand where I was seated, in that the crowd of people who were closest to the person involved seemed to feel a sense of obligation to help sort the scene out in the absence of any official presence, and that this involved a protracted duration of time, a role for public entreaty and argument.

had finally gone away (I didn't see how or where, as my gaze was divided between the little girl, my friend and her daughter—who was still the whole time playing on the moonwalk), the sobbing woman stood clutching her phone, calling various people (the police? Family? Her husband?) but I had the impression she never got through to anyone. There was a group of people gathered around her, their gazes fixed on her as she wailed and spoke, I assumed recounting her assault but I was too far away to hear. At one point a few of them seemed to get into an argument themselves, perhaps about what would be best to do, though I'm not sure.

I was standing in front of the moonwalk, and started talking to the man who had collected the 10 dh from us. In a stroke of genius, someone had sent the sobbing little girl to play in the moonwalk, and she was now engaged in sliding down the rubber slide with all the other little kids who had remained oblivious to what was unfolding in front of them. Eventually when I looked around I realized the victim had completely disappeared, and the guy running the moonwalk explained casually that she had left her daughter with him while she went to the *commissaria* to register a report. (Did she know him before? I don't know.) What happened back there, do you know? I asked him as we were standing in front of the playing kids. *Ha hiya al-horgha f ldawla dyalna* (here you have *al-horgha*—typically translated as burning related to illegal migration—in our state), he responded, or something in this vein, immediately positioning me as an outsider—a witness? An unwanted or wanted spectator?—as well as extrapolating to a much larger stage, the sphere of the state. I nodded in response, but was confused, and he and another man who I guessed was also working the moonwalk continued talking.

My friend's daughter was still playing and not ready to go. As she and I waited for her, I turned around to look for the man we'd been talking to, and he gestured to come sit beside him. *Anti mjooja?* (Are you married?) he asked, laughing, and let it go as soon as I said yes. Why, I asked him, had he used the term *horgha*, wasn't that for when you migrated? He laughed: no, no, not here in that sense. It's the attempt to dominate the other, to wipe out the weaker one. But in this case, weren't they both weak? Well yes, do you think if one of them had wealth it would threaten them that somebody was sitting too close to them? He occasionally tried to speak French to me though I said I didn't speak it, and referred to *le racism*. The woman who had been attacked was from Marrakesh or thereabouts, he explained (I asked him how he knew this and he said she had said it, I am assuming when she was making her public declaration of wrong to the crowd gathered around her, again not clear to me whether they had any personal acquaintance), and she knew how to do *henna* well. The women who had threatened her were northerners, angry that she was taking all their business. I'm not sure as I didn't ask, but I don't think he was *shamali* or northern himself. Though regional tensions simmered below the surface of many conversations and scenes I witnessed while in Morocco, this was the only time in my memory they boiled into overt conflict—fueled, not surprisingly, by a thin profit margin available to the many working in its informal economy.

The third story I will share here is that of a woman I befriended in my local neighborhood market, who I regularly bought produce from and with whom I would sometimes sit at the market to help both of us pass the time. Aziza was maybe in her seventies, though I never asked her her age, and was proud of selling eggs and produce that were considered *bldi*, meaning from the country and connoting freshness and non-industrial quality. Soon after the above scene I went to the Chbar *soq* or my local market and didn't find Aziza in her usual place. I asked the older



woman always stationed next to her, with whiskers in her chin and the red and white *jbali* blanket wrapped around her waist, where she had gone, and she and the man sitting with her pointed me back out to the road and around the corner.

I found her there, pressed uncomfortably close to the trash dumpsters and road workers, her produce not as fresh as usual. Her face looked calm and steady as it always does, as she explained to me that she had gotten kicked out because she doesn't pay for a space, a monthly fee in exchange for a fixed spot in the market. As we were talking a parking attendant with one of the reflective vests came up to talk to me in French—there was obviously something off with him, and she explained to me quietly that he had been drinking. He asked me for money, rare in my experience for parking attendants in the neighborhood, and then most worryingly of all for me, seemed to stick around repeating Aziza's name, like it was funny to him. I came away worried for her, and when I got home, the tomatoes she had given me that I saw her worrying over were indeed different than what she'd given me before, no smell and many of them already burst. I noted this because everything at Aziza's stand had always struck me for its beauty and freshness, small quantities of the freshest things.

Field note from July 26, 2017: Yesterday I finally saw Aziza at the market again after a spell of about five days' absence. She was wearing a hat/visor and shaded by an umbrella, but explained to me that the problem was not so much the heat as the smell coming from the six or so dumpsters right next to her, that was really what had made her sick. She had tried putting plants up and all that, but nothing had helped. I finally came out and asked her about how much they were charging for her to have her own stand in the soq, and she said they wanted 200,000 franc—2000 dh! (Or 200 USD) A month! I find this stunning for a woman who sells little baskets of a few fresh fruits, vegetables, and *jbn* from the *jbali*. But what are other people doing? I asked her. Surely they can't also be paying that much. She explained that some of the people who had stands similar to hers were related in some way to the hanoot owners, who would therefore allow them to sit in front of them. But for her, she didn't have a family connection, and so they had thrown her out. Her rent for her dar or house (after some converting to dirham which is what I more readily understand) is 350 dh (35 USD) a month. There was just no way, no way at all, she could pay that kind of money for the stand. A small fee, okay sure, but that, no. She said she is looking around now, after having grown too ill to work from her current position—next to the dumpsters, along Miramar, in a spot that makes it hard for her food to any longer seem appealing since it seems frankly dirty—and it was possible she'd find somewhere else and move. I said I'd check in with her when I get back from my trip.

Field note, August 3, 2017: I visited Aziza and she let me know this (Tuesday) was the first day she had been back, as she just couldn't handle the heat the other days. The lead she had been looking into that might have allowed her to move back into the market hadn't materialized, and for now she was out of ideas. I sat

down on a wooden pallet next to her and a couple of people passing by jokingly asked her if I was her daughter, as we looked alike. The first time she said yes, she is like my daughter now. The second time someone pointed it out (ktshbah) she said matter-of-factly that in fact all four of hers had died. I thought I had misunderstood, and felt my mouth dropping open. But no, as it turns out she had had four girls and three boys die, I believe all of them in varying stages of infancy (one had made it to a year, others a few months...). I asked her why and she shrugged, she wasn't sure.

I kept sitting with her and (it felt, feebly) tried to ask her about other places she might go. What about Diza? I asked. They have a nice big market there. She rejected it though, saying the problem of the trash smell was just as bad over there. And the main market? She said people there didn't have to pay the high rental fees that they did in the Chbar, but there was no way they would concede her a space. Well, what about going up to Tetouan? She said no, it was too far as she lived in Martil to do that everyday. Anyway, she added, I used to live there. She had moved to Martil in 2000 (she and her three grown children live in the Hiraq neighborhood), but had lived before that in Tetouan. She had worked most of her life in *khiata* or as a seamstress, working in the Fesi style, she clarified, and had known a lot of women as a result. It would be embarrassing for her now for them to see her like this, reduced to trying to sell fruits and vegetables to get by, she said. Here it's fine, I don't know the people around here, but there I would feel it.

As we talked a young woman walked by with a tight, short dress on. *Al-maghariba ma khthshamooshi* (Moroccans do not feel shame, do not exhibit modesty), she said, gesturing at the woman. And you, look at you, you're dressed properly (I had on jeans and a t-shirt), but *al-maghariba*, not so. Something I've noticed while I'm talking to her, no matter what she is saying her voice never raises too high, she never seems to allow plaintiveness or excess emotion in, just states things as such (probably not a neutral fact, actually, as it might enter into why I feel so comfortable around her). I also noticed she referred to the sun as *al-qayla*, I believe a northern word I don't hear all that often. I asked her yesterday when I saw her again how long she planned to sit there and she said she leaves after *aysha* ' or sunset; the people inside the market still get movement past then, but for her where she is now it's not worth it as it's very little no matter what the time.

My point in concluding with these anecdotes meant to index the difficulty of everyday life among Morocco's urban poor navigating the country's informal economy is not to play into an overly reductive framing of cultural production and the significance of history in public life versus dollars and cents. As NAWAT activists pointed out to me, the port's reopening does pertain to how locals make a living, with the prospect of regularizing income around the year

rather than relying on the summer surge to get Martilis through the bulk of the year. And nostalgia for the pre-independence era pervaded daily discourse to a notable extent in the coastal suburb, structuring, for instance, conversation over the food bought at the market and the sightline available to everyday people from their homes.

It was, nonetheless, a notable feature of doing ethnographic research on the subject of the prospective port reopening and the significance of Andalusian history in the region that for the most part my research interests sat at some remove from the texture of everyday life among people I interacted with on a regular basis. As a Rifian working in Tetouan's public library once asked me testily, what was with the preoccupation with al-Andalus amongst (it was implied), Western researchers? Why come to Morocco in search of a construct irrelevant to the vast majority?

In the third and final chapter of this dissertation, I turn to an account of my friendship with a Rifian interlocutor I call Hamid, who I originally got to know as my Darija tutor through mutual friends. As I will explore, the history of al-Andalus emerged as significant in our dialogue, playing ever more prominent a role as the political events centered in al-Hoceyma revved up after the death of Mouhcine Fikri. Intertwined with what it meant to be Arab and Muslim—both descriptors Hamid rejected, identifying as he did as a Rifian convert to Christianity—al-Andalus and the history of its exile to North Africa formed for Hamid a moment of major dispossession for the continent's indigenous Berber inhabitants. Synonymous for him both with an unhelpful and elitist emphasis on genealogy and preserving the past as well as the marginalization of indigenous Imazighen identity, al-Andalus became the grounds of our debates and discussions about Islam, the role of the past, and Christianity and colonialism in the modern era. It is to this argument, and the political uprising in the Rif and other parts of the country as I experienced them from late 2016 and throughout 2017, that I now turn.

## Chapter Three

### The Convert or, Death Walking

April 12, 2017: Yesterday in my lesson we went through some Nabyla Maan lyrics. He was immediately transfixed and impressed by her, and had never heard her music before. Is she Muslim? he demanded right away, expressing amazement at certain word choices that he said immediately struck his ear as non-Muslim (like the word for hymn, taranama, which he said was explicitly different from what would be used in an Islamic context). No, surely she is Jewish, he repeated over and over again as the song unfolded and we kept listening to its words. Where is she from? Where did you hear about her? Was it someone from Tetouan who introduced it to you? We looked it up and saw that she was from Fes—ah, exactly, that makes sense. This is Andalusian music; we don't have this in the Rif, but I like it.

*The evening sun is setting and my eyes filled with tears from the separation  
Its rays line the horizon and when it fades, the lover's yearning only increases  
Even the birds on their leaves trilled its demise*

As we continued through the lesson, which involved understanding the *fusha* (classical Arabic) and which was difficult because the lyrics were often indirect—philosophical, he said—I noticed him lowering his voice and seeming a bit nervous as we repeated the lyrics. Why on earth was he nervous? I asked. We were sitting on my porch and I had earlier casually gestured to a young man who was scaling the broken wall next door, which I am accustomed to seeing as some people seem to squat there. He laughed too but continued to seem nervous, explaining that some of the lyrics, which had to do with pouring libations and yearning for your love, might be overheard by one of the neighbors or the guy who had jumped the wall next door and they might get upset or suspicious about our conduct, why we were talking about this stuff.

*Oh evening sun, rest, don't disappear, in the name of God the Merciful  
You stirred what is inside me so that you increased the longing in my heart  
Have mercy on me, for in the presence of the beautiful one my desire is strengthened*

This was amazing to me as we have at this point had many, many political conversations on the porch in which I have repeatedly been nervous that he wasn't taking care enough of the kinds of things he was talking about and at what volume, and yet here we were studying fusha poetry/lyrics and this was the moment he was nervous about lowering his voice. He laughed when I said this to him and said I was right it was probably silly, but on the other hand since I had suggested we move inside one day a week or two ago in light of the political conversation

we were having and the policeman who lives next door he had thought about it and decided I was right, that he wasn't careful enough about what he said, where.

*In the golden valley the face of the beautiful one is a chandelier  
And the mannered servant serves in utensils  
Arrange the pillows and come, let us increase our enjoyment this evening  
We all have a glass in our hand and together enjoy the warm moment  
And my heart wants the beautiful one, it tells my hands*

He specifically also clarified that anyone likely to get upset at hearing us in this context would be uneducated and ignorant; those who were educated would recognize the genre as Andalusian poetry and wouldn't be upset about it or scandalized. The whole thing left me thinking about the history of conversations I have had...about how al-Andalus in some ways serves as a way to think about issues of conservatism, piety, and pleasure in contemporary Morocco, as well as the past presence of Jews there. Also, his utter sense of exclusion and removal from it as someone from the Rif, but also delight in hearing the words and melody, and way of connecting it to his own conversion through the words.

*I, and all that I own, is for you, masters. And you, who are you for?  
I am a slave you purchased cheaply, worthless<sup>87</sup>*

He lived a fairly hardscrabble (if typical) existence as an Arabic tutor working with foreigners around Tetouan and its beachside suburb, Martil; I paid him the equivalent of \$5 an hour for our lessons, though with time I would sometimes pass him more money than was owed, other times not pay him at all, which became more common in the summer as the revolutionary events in his hometown of al-Hoceyma grew increasingly intense and we mostly abandoned the pretense of formal lessons, urgently catching up on the latest developments instead as he traveled back and forth between the two cities, a trip that took about four or five hours and which I never undertook.<sup>88</sup> I will call him Hamid here, though I never dared name him at all in my field notes, not even with a pseudonym. Somehow his conversion to Christianity and despising of Islam and all things Arab lent a more dangerous cast to our many conversations, despite the fact that his involvement in the *hirak* (movement) was roughly equivalent to that of other (mostly secular) friends from al-Hoceyma, all of whom identified as Rifian first and foremost. As referenced in

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<sup>87</sup> The above is a translation of Nabyla Maan's song "*Chams al-Achia*."

<sup>88</sup> al-Hoceyma is an old port city on the Mediterranean; it is east of Tetouan and Ceuta, where I was located, but west of Nador and Melilla, the other major Spanish colony in the north of the country. Part of the Rif region, al-Hoceyma has been locked in intermittently intense conflict with the centralizing state since at least the twentieth-century, and suffered intensely under both King Mohammed V and particularly Hassan II, a record of suffering and state control and neglect that extends to the present day. As political events escalated during my fieldwork, I made the decision not to go to the epicenter of the conflict out of a concern for possible surveillance or attracting suspicion. I offer here, then, a record of a revolutionary time as perceived from the nearby town of Martil, which draws a large number of Rifians many of whom move in continuous routes between the towns, as needed.

the above fieldnotes, I was often nervous during our conversations despite the fact that he was probably the friend I felt closest to in the field; the reason for this nervousness varied, from whether we might be framed by an outside party as colluding to Christianize the country (as Hamid was indeed covertly involved with in his meeting with other foreigners, and which I had specified to him early on I did not want to be party to), or he was breaking social convention by speaking too loudly of state repression and the work he was doing as part of *hirak*. There were even times I wondered whether he could be one of the undercover spies I had been told were omnipresent, setting me up as a foreign disruptive agent in the country. As the events of the summer unfolded and I found myself passing him money (albeit a small amount) intended to buy phone cards for activists he was about to visit—the ones who had managed to stay out of jail—this suspicion endured as a discomfiting flicker, occasionally flaring.

This chapter revisits the events that unfolded between October 2016 and the summer of 2017 in Morocco, events which at certain points seemed to set the whole country ablaze, at other points ebbing into just another in a series of failed attempts at democratic self-assertion. I explore them here as I first encountered them, through my friendship with Hamid and the complex web of factors—his conversion to Christianity, critical stance toward history as usually taught in schools, profound identification with the Rif, and desperation to escape Morocco once and for all—that structured our conversations. From its inception in the dramatic death of Mouhcine Fikri, which I will return to below, this distinctive revolutionary time as I experienced it was undergirded, both in the public and private realm, by the “flashing up,” in Walter Benjamin’s sense, of things exposed: images out of place, histories resurfaced, bodies uncovered. Accompanying this figure of exposure was the omnipresent possibility of seduction but also that of death, neither strangers to the other. Just as the Andalusian love poem I read in hushed tones with Hamid strays from heavenly to earthly love, descending at its conclusion to an ambiguous (bitter? seduced?) state of abject enslavement, I seek to demonstrate the liminality of each of these figures—exposure, death, seduction—as they figured in the flowering of revolutionary hope and its eventual (seeming) demise.

October 30, 2016: Hamid and I were both in a good mood and laughing a lot. I teased him about not having any more coffee because of the last time when he had gotten so wired and he countered that the only reason I would be concerned about the water cut-offs was because I wouldn’t have enough water to make myself more coffee. [I joked that he was ghareeb, or different from most other Moroccans I had met, and said that if I were to relate his opinions to other Moroccans I knew, they would be shocked.]...He wasn’t so atypical though, he continued. There was a lot in Morocco that was hidden, with people simply refraining from expressing publicly how they felt since it was more trouble than it was worth. Like if there weren’t public rules about eating openly in Ramadan, he said, lots of people would do it. Sure, there weren’t many who had chosen to convert to Christianity as he had, but what was pretty common was people who were more or less atheistic in addition to those who embraced a secular politics whether or not they were Muslim.

What you need to do, he told me, is go to a respected university, and you'll find lots of people talking about these things, about Amazigh identity and resisting Arab colonialism of language and culture, about secularism. Not the "university" here, he said, waving his hand behind us [to indicate the local university, Abdelmalek Essaâdi], that's just for people to dress up and talk vacuously. There are plenty of people who, though they are Muslim, do not want to be governed in the name of religion. Look at the elections, \_\_\_ had come in second, after all. Not third or fourth, but second. That was why he was against the sovereignty of the state in the Sahara, which he said Algeria and Egypt had recently been plotting together against Morocco. Not because they wanted their independence, that was fine by him. But because they were proclaiming it in the name of Arabism and Islamism. No, this was not Arab land, it was Amazigh land and always had been, stretching all across the north of the continent. And there was still really strong feeling about that; that was why, in the context of the Arab spring and the February 20<sup>th</sup> protests, one of the first responses was the new respect for Amazigh identity inserted into the constitution, because they had seen how strong that sentiment still was.<sup>89</sup> Do you know why, he asked, King Mohammed VI turned back on his recent trip to al-Hoceyma? Because some people had hung a banner taunting him, and he insisted on turning around.

We had only a few minutes left when he got a call. His face changed as he spoke to the person in Tamazigh and I knew something was going on. He tapped me on the shoulder, "*Kain thawra f lhoceyma*" (there is a revolution/insurrection in al-Hoceyma), and kept speaking in an urgent voice to her. When he hung up he said it had been his sister, who had called to tell him what had happened the day before. A man had had his fish confiscated by the police, and when he told them that if they threw his fish away in the garbage dispenser he would throw himself in as well, as they were all he owned, a crowd of people around had heard the police reply that it would be better if he did, and he had [and was crushed to death by the compacter's force]. His sister and many people from al-Hoceyma had been out all night in protest. I asked him what he was going to do given his upcoming trip [to meet other Christians working in North Africa] and he said if he was needed back in al-Hoceyma, he would go, that that was always the case. Later he sent me a few articles and I saw posts circulating amongst Maghrebi contacts related to the incident, all expressing outrage and one specifically

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<sup>89</sup> The February 20<sup>th</sup> movement refers to the Moroccan democratic protest movement that arose in tandem with other North African and Middle Eastern movements in 2011. Protesters who were thus galvanized came to be referenced as part of the *hirak*, or movement, and many again joined in as 2017 unfolded with events now centered in al-Hoceyma and the Rif, though solidarity marches were held in Rabat and other cities throughout the country. The February 20<sup>th</sup> movement and the pressure it put on the Moroccan monarchy to make itself more transparent and accountable in terms of governance directly resulted in major changes to the constitution, which have since become a central reference point as potentially significant democratic milestones.

saying “no” to monopolies, another referring to the man Mouhcine Fikri as a martyr.

Everywhere that Mouhcine Fikri’s death went, it led with an image. There he was, a pale and disembodied face staring up from the pile of trash that would become his premature grave; people in Morocco, said Layla a few days later at the women’s *jama’iya* (association) I regularly attended, are treated like *zabal* (trash), they can just be thrown away. *Haram*, she said, pointing upwards to the sky, it’s against the will of God. What really pained her, she said, was that he had a family to support, and the sense that it might have been any Moroccan who that had happened to (Layla knew well the privations of poverty, having been left by her husband to fend for herself and her children some years ago. She worked for free as a staff member at the *jama’iya*, as hardly anyone was paid, preferring the sociality to staying home alone). The image had been stamped with the insulting words the policeman was said to have uttered before he was crushed to death, attached as a hashtag. The image, to use a common enough trope, haunted, springing to mind whenever his name was invoked—a death out of place, a private image exposed for the world to see.

Hamid was obsessed with the problem of exposure, even ready to die or be imprisoned in the service of revealing a truth about Morocco I strongly suspected the world was not particularly interested in hearing. If he could only get out, he would frequently say, make it across the water to Europe or anywhere else in the world, then he could do the work of exposing all the corruption and suffering that foreigners traveling through the country might get very little sense of (all they see are people beating drums, as if they had no cares in the world). He had received death threats after a friend had followed his lead in converting to Christianity, and the possibility of being caught and imprisoned for his illegal actions as an evangelist was omnipresent. If prison were his fate, he would say, so be it—at least that way he might stand a better chance of being granted asylum for religious persecution, one of the several avenues for escape he held constantly in front of him, the others mostly involving either tremendous fortune—being hired by a foreign company through one of his Christian associates in Morocco, winning a visa lottery—or smuggling, getting his body across the strait to Europe, whether hidden in a truck, renting a jet ski and hauling over to the other side, or the most common way, on a little motorboat along with a dozen or so other desperate folk, attempting to neither capsize nor be captured by the naval powers that patrolled the waters for just such a reason. Always, his gaze rested on the water, his lifeline and his prison wall.

Land and water, he had asserted during one of our earliest conversations, these formed the cornerstone of identity for anyone from the Rif. We were discussing Tetouan and what bound it the rest of the north, and also what set it apart. Hamid pointed to the abundance of *zaouiyas* (religious centers, often Sufi in orientation) in the city as responsible for its general apolitical stance; it was no accident that they were heavily funded by the powers that be, as they encouraged people to turn their backs on the affairs of this world and focus on religious devotion. The *zaouiyas*, he explained, were generally founded by people who had come from *al-sharq* (the east) and had *baraka*, or charismatic blessing. There was one such in Chaouen, he said, that people treated as as important a pilgrimage site as Mecca itself. The people who came from the east were different from those in the Rif region, he said, pointing upward: they were thinking



about the sky whereas the people in the Rif's eyes were trained on the earth and the water (symbolized in the tri-color Amazigh flag that would appear in defiant ubiquity a few months later in the context of the protests, the third color being the people). Not only did they need to sustain themselves, but they were also preoccupied by the constant threat of pirates who would come and demand a ransom or worse, if they were not prepared to defend themselves; hence the need to keep one's eyes toward the horizon, and not get lost looking up.

The ease with which he jumped back in time, claiming past events as constitutive of the present self-as-collective, was characteristic—a tendency that generally proceeded without comment or defense, just a matter of fact. In the same conversation my roommate, who had introduced us and also took Arabic lessons with him, had run to get a picture of one of his friends, who she had met on a recent trip to al-Hoceyma and who she exclaimed looked serious beyond reason, never smiling. Hamid laughed a lot at this, but then continued: it wasn't for nothing, though, that he looked this way—that part of the north had experienced a lot, and his friend was haunted by it in a way, always thinking it over. In 1958 under Hassan II's orders the city had been invaded, kids killed, women raped. That was why if you met someone from al-Hoceyma or Nador you would see that they take a big interest in history, and know a lot about it; these events had never been forgotten. What is more, they had a precedent to follow, with Abd al-Karim al-Khattabi and his founding of a separate sovereign zone. It was a kind of colonialism, after all: when the French and Spanish had been sent in to invade the town, it had been in collusion with the *makhzen* (Moroccan monarchy or state). Hence his friend's brooding expression, unable to detach from an only partially buried history of bloodshed perpetuated by the still ruling regime.

Hamid himself had come to Tetouan to study history at the university there (at Abdelmalek Esaadi in Martil, the same university he referenced dismissively above).<sup>90</sup> In those days he had been primarily visible as an activist for the Tamazigh language and identity, back before his conversion and increasing involvement with the American missionaries operating covertly in the country. History became the ground where he and I both connected and clashed, absorbed by it as we both were. The first time I mentioned my interest in al-Andalus, the shift in his countenance was marked. That's what you are doing here? he had asked. That is where all of our problems as Moroccans begin, with the expulsion from Spain (and the subsequent migration to North Africa of those invested in an ideology of Arab or Andalusian separateness, of never really belonging to Africa proper).

There were two major obstacles, as he saw it, that prevented change and progress of the kind he was looking for, and he tied these explicitly to history and faith. First was the presumption of enmity, what he saw as a tendency to mark outside lands as innately hostile to the faith, which he objected to as a byproduct of ignorance and lack of questioning. Second was the weight of history and in particular of the Andalusia related myth. Ibn Rushd, Ibn Khaldun, these

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<sup>90</sup> He noted that he had above all else wanted to study philosophy, but did not have the grades and so turned to history.

were figures who summoned the foregone greatness of a people.<sup>91</sup> In his way of seeing it, the memory and pride of their former greatness was precisely itself an impediment to the possibility of growth and change, with the resentment that proceeded from this loss presenting a block to possible change. When he looked, he simply did not see a legacy of innovation or contribution to humanity at large in the cultures organized around the *din* (Islamic faith) other than the *din* itself (al-Andalus being the overused, exhausted counterexample in this situation).

March 15, 2017: I at one point said that I didn't think he could talk reasonably about Arabs and history because of his hatred for them. He got very serious in response to this, repeatedly saying *smah liya, smah liya* (excuse me! excuse me!) as a rhetorical opening—not, as he usually uses it, to offer an apology for any accidental offense but rather to contest my right to reject his hatred. How would you feel, he asked, if someone were to come into your home, take it over, reject your right to speak and order you to remain silent, and then invite other people into the home in a seemingly magnanimous gesture? The people of the Rif and of North Africa, he said, are multiply colonized—by the Arabs, by the Europeans, but at least in the case of the Europeans they left their language and customs at least partly intact. Not so with the Arabs—look at Libya, where speaking Tamazigh in the street could land you in jail, or here in Morocco where if you entered an official building and tried to speak Tamazigh with someone they would correct you and insist you speak Darija, even with all the latest changes to the constitution. We had our own language, our own history, and it was completely taken over and taken apart by the Arabs when they arrived. Who are the Arabs, anyway? People here who identify as Arab, they either have their mind in Saudi Arabia if they have a beard [are pious], or they have their mind in Europe if they identify as secular. They claim they are Arab, but if you sat someone from Morocco down with someone from Saudi, you would see they have almost nothing in common—our kinds of food, *harira* (soup), and all that, totally different. Our Darija, totally different. We are African, we belong to Africa, but for someone who identifies as Arab that is impossible to embrace.

The question of hatred seemed a poignant one, as it runs counter to his professed Christian principles of loving everyone no matter what, and it wove into the *smah liya smah liya* refrain as he spoke. At times he would state that he loved everyone, other times he would demand to know why he should not hate people who had done this to his land. He started talking about the state of things in Morocco, the hospitals, the schools, the employment. And then you see King Muhammad VI investing however many millions of Morocco's money in other

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<sup>91</sup> Though he here mentions Ibn Khaldun as part of the problematic inheritance we were discussing, Hamid also clarified that Ibn Khaldun would properly be considered as part of a Berber or North African tradition, and not Arab. When I countered that he wrote in Arabic, he offered the example of Augustine writing in Latin, both of them however still being Berber. “Berbers, we have always been *mustaemirin* (colonized), only for very short periods have we ever been free.”

African nations, and for what? For what? How can he do that when things here are as they are? It's all about power (he wants to eventually become the emperor of Africa), if it were really about good works he would invest somewhere that really needed it, like Somalia. He told me about a woman in Casablanca who had refused to leave her house when it had been condemned because the state hadn't provided her with anywhere else to go, that she had worked her whole life (he imagined) to have this bit of shelter from the elements and now it was to be destroyed, so she had chosen to be destroyed with it. And you know what the youth, those *hmar* (donkeys), were out protesting about that same week? Saad Lamjarred, who beats or rapes women or what have you, they were out there protesting his arrest in Paris when this was going on with this woman, when she was murdered for not leaving her home. Or take the guy in Casa who is on hunger strike, sentenced to twelve years for expressing his opinions about the regime—twelve years for his opinion! But no, the youth of today are angry about Saad Lamjarred, and distrustful of people in al-Hoceyma, saying that they only want to cause trouble or devolve their country to the state of Syria or Iraq, where there are terrorists, where there are serious problems! (We had earlier talked about his support for the US intervention in Afghanistan; it is his position that the nature of the Arabs/Saudis is to want to dominate the world, as they have done throughout history when given a chance, and at one point he stood up, exclaiming *smah liya smah liya* but if I am standing here, in prayer, he said folding his arms across his chest, and you are a woman and you come by and lightly graze my arm, it is for me to go and wash myself because you have degraded me the same way a dog would, that is how they are, that is the way they think about women, all they care about is *bnat* (girls) and eating, that's it.) We in Morocco, we have two seas (cutting his hands both ways)! We even have gold in Rashidia, we have land good for farming, etc. etc. And you want to compare us to those countries [Syria and Iraq], when we have those kinds of resources?

*Al-khof*, fear, it is our greatest problem here, *al-khof* and *al-takabur* (self-aggrandizement, posturing). People here, they are so afraid, and yet they try to act as though they are bold and fearless. It is like taking an old, old woman, and trying to get her to dance. She is old, you know that, she is in no shape to dance, but you insist that she needs to. That is what the youth are like when they try to mask their fear with *al-takabur*. And yet no, it is we in al-Hoceyma who are crazy, who are trying to start trouble—we are at a different level, is what it really is, we understand so much more about how the country works, the rest have to reach our level of understanding about this. And when they do, they do... We have problems with cancer, because of what the Spanish and the French did with the cooperation of the [pre-independence Moroccan] government with their gas

bombing campaigns, we have cancer, but it is like it is not a problem.<sup>92</sup> So if they come to us with cancer? If someone from those parts were to come to me and say *ana marid*, 'aouni, 'endi lcancer (I am sick, help me, I have cancer)? *Mawt!* (Die!) Die, I hope you die, and on top of that I hope you suffer, are tortured as you die.

The figure of the old woman, awkwardly covered in bright makeup or dressed in inappropriately young clothing, was one that appeared with some frequency in our conversations as the summer months deepened. It was just like, he said on another occasion, people in America claiming they were still fundamentally Italian when their family had been in the US for generations already, this was the level of inanity at which the Andalusian myth of origins operated. It would be like if you had a *bint* (unmarried woman) with some makeup on, okay, and then you had a very, very old woman, and you insisted that she also get dressed up and put makeup on, even though she's maybe 70 or 80 years old or what have you, to act as though she were still a young woman. And then you have me, a man—clearly a man!—but you insist that I am a woman. That (the third one), is what our history is, that's what we have in governance and that's what we have as our history, *kdab* (lies). And the second one is sort of the ordinary, dressed up not quite true history that exists and circulates in other spaces, neither one of them is really the truth. And then you also have *sha'bi* (popular) history that is something else entirely, that exists in people's minds and memories.

In time as Hamid continued to invoke the figure of this old woman as official history, I came to picture her concretely as a kind of grotesque marionette, limbs being jerked around here and there, face smeared with bright paints, desperately striving to seduce an audience I could never picture, only darkness. Her shape shifted slightly with each telling: she is like the youth of today, she is only ordinary history, a lie but not as big of a lie as the official history today taught in schools (the bearded man claiming to be a woman), her desperate dance attempting to conceal the history of illness and generational trauma in the region.

Around this point we realized it was already 7:00 (we had started talking at 4:45) and that he had been speaking nearly without interruption for the last 45 minutes probably. His face was red and he was staring at me while he was speaking without the trace of a smile, so different from our normal interactions. I got up and brought him my computer, opened this document and showed him, trying to explain that part of my work is to take notes on what I see and talk to people about during the day, and that I sometimes took notes on our conversations but took steps to keep it anonymous as I was worried for him, and knew it was sensitive the things he was talking about. He asked whether I was going to publish my stuff in America and I said perhaps one day. He said I was welcome to use his full name if I like, he didn't care, he wanted to go to prison. I

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<sup>92</sup> Hamid is referring here to the use of mustard gas on Moroccan troops led by 'Abd al-Karim al-Khattabi in the 1920s. The gas was deployed after the Spaniards' outstanding defeat in the Battle of Annual; the veracity of its historical usage continues to be a hotly contested topic in Morocco today, with some arguing that this is yet another myth associated with al-Khattabi's iconic status and not a historically verified happening.

want, I want to go there he repeated over and over. At least that way people would see, it would be out in the open that something was not right. It was only with problems, he said, that anything was going to change, citing European history. If things are smooth, nothing will change, everything will stay the same. It is only with problems that things start to move. Otherwise, tourists come for a week and they take pictures and think everything is great, when it's not. Or take a typical well-off Moroccan man, who claims that all is well in this country. You ask him these three questions, and you'll see: first, if someone important to you gets sick, where do you take them? And he'll say, to a hospital in Europe. Second, where do you send your kids to go to school? And he'll say, Cervantes or some other private institution, often foreign. Third, how do you make your money? And he'll say, from abroad, of course, what, do you expect me to make it here? And there you have it. Hospitals, schools, jobs. But no, everything is fine here. You, he said to me, you are wai'i (aware), I know you see and understand. And I know you have your own agenda (I think he was referring here to our disagreements about Islam and history, etc.), your own things you are thinking, that is fine. But you have to see, you can't be here and not see the way things are.

Life in this sense required a near-constant calculus, a calibration of danger levels and the risk of exposure. Certain topics—suggestive love poetry, dogs, anything to do with Islam—touched on matters of common sensibility and were not worth risking upset for, thus requiring some degree of modulation or self-censoring in public or only semi-private conversations. Hamid was willing to go to prison for the sake of his conversion to Christianity, but as mentioned above there was a more pragmatic calculus underlying this possibility, figuring as it did as one of many possible routes to Europe (through asylum, in this case, though if it seemed likely to succeed he would surely have already tried it). Despite the importance he attached to social ties established through faith, this area of his life remained somewhat atomized, still adhering to an individualist imperative. History and al-Hoceyma, on the other hand, inhabited a special zone, that worth risking an exposure that may or may not ultimately pay off in terms of short-term strategy, one grounded in a keenly felt commonality—what I referred to above as a self-as-collective—that seemed to effectively de-center the individual subject: even someone such as Hamid, who had gone to such great lengths to secure the conditions of his differentiation.

Perhaps the most effective mobilizer and reflection of the parameters shaping this self-as-collective was the metaphor that appeared time and again, that of death walking. In this reading risking exposure as an activist, while it might subject the body to the degradations of imprisonment or torture, was in fact not so great a risk as these consequences could not really touch a body of people already subject to a slow dying in everyday life. The first time I heard mention of Nasser Zefzafi, the charismatic young leader who emerged from al-Hoceyma during this time, was in this context. There was a man, Hamid told me, who was speaking up in the wake of Mouhcine Fikri's death who fully realized the ramifications of what he was doing, declaring himself to be a dead man walking. In so doing, Zefzafi both named his own singularity as a prominent, disobedient subject in the eyes of the *makhzen* and at the same time situated

himself within his locale by the use of this not-quite-metaphor, as one among many walking dead. It would become a phrase I heard over and over as events progressed, both from friends and the activists whose stories they would recount: Let them take me to prison, what difference is there really between prison and the (economic, political, military) conditions facing the inhabitants of al-Hoceyma? As more and more activists actually were jailed, the expression of this walking death came to serve an ever more important function, from what I could tell, binding those inside and outside the jails in not just a common cause but a shared existential state.

March 14-15, 2017: I stopped for a bite at the cheap place in the middle of the market. The head guy immediately recognized me and started talking to me, as the shop was totally empty when I first entered. He said something about whether I had been in Ceuta and when I explained that I was from the US he sat down across from me, which rather surprised me. He wanted to know what my research was about and I said it had to do with *tarikh* and *thaqafa* (history and culture), that was about as precise as I got. He said that the basic thing for me to know was that there were three *tabaqat* (classes, levels) in the country—the bourgeoisie (he used that term), *al-fuqara'* (the poor), and *al-mahlukin*, or the people who walk around but might as well be dead (I didn't understand why he kept saying *mayt* (dead) and wanted to know if he was referring to actually dead people or figuratively dead, from what I could understand he meant it figuratively though his way of putting it insisted on the lack of difference between the two. I asked him where he was from and almost laughed when he said al-Hoceyma—or near it, he clarified—as it immediately made sense why he was speaking that way. He had lived as a migrant in Europe for awhile during the 90s, partly in Spain and partly in Holland. He had liked Holland, thought they had things figured out as far as providing people with decent work. I asked him if he spoke Tamazigh being from al-Hoceyma and he said no, he was Arab—al-Hoceyma, he told me, is divided into *qasmin* (sections), Tamazigh and Arab, and seemed to be saying it was a division reflected spatially as well. Just like the country is divided into regions, you can't generalize across them. And classes, which if you're at the bottom, is all misery, the ones at the top just take and leave very little for the rest. And finally, by colonialisms and national policies—the people of the *dakhl* (interior) had at least been provided with decent educations by the French, whereas in the north the Spanish hadn't done anything of the sort...He smoked as he talked, eventually asking if I smoked/wanted a cigarette. At this point he started talking about the history of royal power in the north, seeming to want me to understand that the *nitham* (regime or system) there was zero. With King Muhammad V, there had been outright killing. When Hassan II had come along, he had been *thakiy*, gone about it intelligently. The north would be relegated to a region of hashish or else *tahrib*—do you understand *tahrib*? Yeah, *contrabando*, like what's going on in Ceuta—with little available in the way of proper employment. Then with King

Muhammad VI...I can't remember exactly what he said at first about Muhammad VI, but was aware of feeling a bit nervous while he was talking and aware of the young man behind us who sat silently eating a bowl of *baysara* (pea soup), wondering what he might be thinking about our conversation and how commonly he talked about politics this way in the space. There was also a younger man passing back and forth to lug stuff upstairs as we were speaking. With Muhammad VI there was a push toward tourism, wasn't there? I asked. Yes, tourism, but for who! For whose benefit? Without *islah* (reform), he said, it was all for nothing, they could put up buildings but without a proper base (understood here to be *islah*), the buildings would just fall down.

The next day: I brought up the interaction I had with the guy at the restaurant the night before, wanting to know what Hamid thought about it as it still hasn't been sitting right with me. He guessed that he had claimed to be from al-Hoceyma before I told him, and thought he was probably lying, especially when I told him the part about being Arab and not speaking Tamazigh. Don't trust people who claim they are from al-Hoceyma and want to know what you think about things right now, he told me. With everything that is going on right now there, all the unrest, there are people who will say that just to see what people's responses are (i.e. informants). He said that there are people now who are claiming that people from al-Hoceyma are in cahoots with people from America, Israel, and Holland as a way of undermining their validity.

As a floating signifier, then, death walking was unpredictable, its usage not to be taken for granted as an indicator of commonality. It was the language of protest, and thus liable to be used by either side in the struggle to control the narrative of history as it bore on the legitimacy of the state and its readiness for reform. I never went back to the cheap market restaurant after that, though to this day I have no idea if the man running it was working undercover or just trying to have a conversation and educate me. Whether his words ran the risk of exposure—of overhearing, condemnation—or were in a different register entirely, ordinary critique or meant as bait, I do not know.

May 28, 2017: I first saw Hamid on Thursday. He had been home, and was excited and optimistic about events unfolding there in a way I had never seen him evince before. The people there had woken up, he said, in a way he had never known them to be before. They were *wa'ai*, conscious, aware, and were leading the way toward potentially a new era for the country. For the rest of the country was taking note, and for the first time considering the possibility that all they had heard about al-Hoceyma wasn't really true, that it wasn't that they were agitators with no purpose or just out for themselves, that they really were fighting for some of the same basic goods people all over the country were thirsting for. Proper hospitals, job opportunity, the end of corrupt systems and removal of corrupt leaders from office. So people from all over the country were

joining them, and protesting in their own cities in turn. And increasingly, there were people from all over the world there as well, especially from Europe (I couldn't tell whether he was referring here to Moroccans now living in Europe or non-Moroccans). The whole world was watching al-Hoceyma, and the events unfolding there, and he felt that they were moving with something unstoppable on their side. Laughing, he cited an anecdote about a fisherman (I think it was) who was approached by a government minister who wanted to know more about what his needs were. Needs? He responded. Well, we need everything, proper gloves, equipment, motors...but anyway, *m'a salama* (goodbye), and abruptly ended the conversation. The minister was startled and asked wait, what do you mean bye? And the fisherman responded, well before that was all we would ever hear from you when we tried to have a conversation about this, that you were busy and didn't have time, so now he in turn didn't have time. That was the way it was going, he said, the ministers and everyone in the government were being forced to listen and the people had all the momentum and right on their side.

Who knows? he continued. Maybe in some twenty years, the country would actually be on the right path, there would even be a reason to stay and invest here. Perhaps I'll even stay, get a patch of farmland and harvest beans or some crop, there was plenty of land. Maybe people would see that there was opportunity in Morocco and that they wouldn't just have to leave, that the wrongs of power would be righted enough for people to make their lives there, to stay and not to leave, for Europe not to be the only answer. Maybe people now in Europe would even come back. Not to get too carried away, it's not that the people in al-Hoceyma now were envisioning a state without the monarch, that was perhaps too difficult and they didn't have any desire to go the way of states like Iraq and Syria and the destruction they had witnessed, but a state where the people who oversee things were not just totally corrupt and pocketing the people's money for themselves, a more democratic order. The monarch, for example, had allotted money for a state-of-the-art cancer hospital in al-Hoceyma, given the city's huge problems with it as a legacy of being attacked with chemical weapons. They were supposed to have the finest equipment, the best treatments, and there was going to be money put into it. But what had happened to that money? A wazir (minister) had just taken it all, distributed or kept all of the money, declared the hospital wouldn't open after all, and now there would finally be a reckoning for this great wrong. Things that had gone unheeded or unnoticed would be brought out into the open and reckoned with. Already, he said with a sweeping motion of his hand, so many people previously in power were being ejected, thrown out, dismissed, told to get on their way. As I listened I thought about how different he sounded, how this was the first time I had ever heard him express hope and optimism for the future of the country. The people of his hometown, he kept saying, were awake, and they wanted radical transformation—on the government level but also on the social.



Today is Sunday, and things have taken an abrupt turn, On Friday night on the eve of Ramadan, an incident occurred in a mosque in al-Hoceyma where Nasser Zefzafi, the most prominent leader of the movement, disputed an imam's sermon characterizing the movement in negative terms. When Hamid and I saw each other on Saturday morning, he said that from what he was hearing the place was flooded with state apparatus—helicopters, police cars everywhere, and that peoples' homes were being invaded. He said an entire tribe had been picked up and incarcerated. I heard from Tariq later that day who is there and said that the mood was “a mixture of sadness, hatred, anger” (we text message in English) and that there were demonstrations to follow. Zefzafi meanwhile was in hiding, but the authorities were intending to arrest him. He had broadcast something insisting that counter to reports saying he had been jailed, he was still free and would continue on.

I dreamed last night, Hamid told me, that I was walking along the corniche and all of a sudden a rocket (*surukh*) came and dove into the water, sucking all of it into it. And I started running, because I knew that all of the water would come back out and all over everything. That is why I was late coming here today.

The imam had been lecturing about the danger of disorder or *fitnah*, and the young leader's indignant response about the real meaning of disorder for the impoverished and the oppressed ricocheted through the digital sphere. There was a moment of suspension after Zefzafi's outburst, of everything being thrown up in the air; the energy that circulated during this time was electric, and its timing with the beginning of Ramadan resulted in a peculiar slowing of time, of the certain coordinates that had seemed to be fixed in place up to that moment suddenly disrupted, off kilter. Then came the clampdown, Zefzafi's dramatic arrest: aired on the national news channels, a bag stuffed over his head, his hands stretched out in handcuffs, shuttling him via helicopter away from al-Hoceyma to a prison in Casablanca. In the interval, sex—intimacy out of place, exposed—and foreignness emerged through visual memes as key mediators of the conflict, both for those who opposed Zefzafi and the *hirak* protestors and those in support.

*Hum jazayiriuwn!* (They are Algerians!) I remember hearing my neighbor exclaiming to his friends in the central plaza in front of where I lived, its tables mostly cleared away and stored during the daylight in observance of the fast. He was a retired policeman, and my roommate thought he might be a central contact for surveillance in the neighborhood. For some, like my neighbor, the disruption at the mosque and other protests had been instigated by foreign operatives hostile to the monarchy—Algeria and Turkey appearing as the most salient—and willing to do anything to discredit the king.<sup>93</sup> One video that went viral in the late summer and was widely decried depicted a Moroccan family living in Europe who cut up their Moroccan

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<sup>93</sup> I did come across active reporting in Arabic by Turkish news agencies closely following the developments; when I asked a friend why this would be, he explained that there was an interest in the possible ascendance to real power of Benkirane and the Islamists in the country relative to Muhammad VI, who has historically held both a ceremonial and actual claim on power and governance in the country.

passports in protest; it was rapidly countered that they were actually Algerians posing as Moroccans.

More common, though, was the sentiment that the protestors, however legitimate some of their demands might be, threatened to ignite a relatively stable country and send it into the kind of chaos witnessed by other Arabic speaking countries (Syria and Iraq being the omnipresent examples, nearer North African countries conspicuous in their absence as ready citations). *Fitna* and its disputed foreignness formed the beating heart demarcating the divide: were Moroccans already living in the midst of ruin, or taking for granted its relative absence? Those answering positively to the former who also identified specifically with the Rifian cause festooned images and text with the slogan *'ash al-Rif w la 'ash men khanoo* (long live the Rif and death to those who betray it), while the former signed nearly every impassioned statement with the triumvirate—normally emblazoned on official buildings and (usually fancy) cars—*allah watan malak* (God—nation—king).<sup>94</sup>

There was a period in the month or so after Zefzafi's arrest that sex and gender seemed to form a lightning rod of sorts to the intense affects stirred up by what had happened. There was accusation and counter-accusation of violating modesty standards, with Rifi memes mocking a garishly made up woman who appeared in the Mawazine concerts with the national star stretched tight across her large, mostly exposed breasts. (The Moroccan state is like an old woman who you've adorned with bright makeup and keep calling her a *bint!* She can dance all she wants to but the lie is evident nonetheless.) In Zefzafi's objection in the mosque, he declares that the *makhzen* trying to control the messaging of the mosques is in line with people coming from the Gulf and violating the women of the Rif. Tariq, a diffident bespectacled young man from al-Hoceyma who would only speak English with me and went out of his way to disavow knowledge of Arabic, said one night that he was with Zefzafi until he heard the part he was saying about modesty and women—then he was like, no Daesh, no thank you.<sup>95</sup>

Zefzafi's digital past, meanwhile, was tracked obsessively by the movement's detractors: there he was on a boat next to a woman in a bikini, an image presumably meant to point both to his lack of respect for women's true modesty and to belie the idea that he was a man of the people (this despite the fact that boating is a pastime even the not well off in al-Hoceyma enjoy, borrowing whoever has a boat on hand). This was counterposed with the juxtaposed image of a woman being referred to as *'amira el-rifi* (princess of the Rif), wearing *hijab* and hoisting the

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<sup>94</sup> Less common among pro-monarchists was the substitution for "Morocco" with the Rif, *'ash al-Maghrib w la 'ash men khanoo* (long live Morocco and death to those who betray it).

<sup>95</sup> Passionately committed to progressive social causes and also antagonistic to elements that would dominate the Rif (whether Arab, Moroccan or otherwise), Tariq was at the same time deeply conflicted by what he recognized as King Muhammad VI's investment in liberal social norms he felt were likely the best guarantee of his liberties against more Islamist-oriented reform movements in the country. He and I disagreed on the connotations of Zefzafi's comments regarding women in his interruption of the imam; in my reading, his emphasis was less on a desired modesty and more referencing a history of external violation (sexual and otherwise) of the region's women by outside forces. In the latest iteration, according to my understanding via Hamid, the monarchy had sponsored the long-term visits of royals coming from the Gulf and residing along the Mediterranean who recruited local women for their entertainment and pleasure.

Rifian flag, next to an image of her without *hijab*, smoking and clutching an Amsterdam beer in her hand. On either side, then, the exposed female body became an index of the dangerous and the disingenuous; at times beguiling in the case of the Rifian woman, however, it was always an image of beauty gone wrong, of a flagrant wretchedness in respect to the Moroccan state—Hamid’s old woman, depicted in various iterations and circulated endlessly.

June 4, 2017: Hamid is still here though he plans to travel back to al-Hoceyma soon. Our conversation today was scatter shot, wired, following the stops and starts of our internet connection as we swapped stories back and forth on Facebook (he wanted my help understanding a recent declaration by a leader in Melilla about the Rif). Despite its lack of cohesion, an interesting thematic around gender and family emerged. Just yesterday, he said, police had insulted a group of lone women out in the streets of al-Hoceyma, and it was circulating. Women amongst of the people of the Rif were highly esteemed, and insults like this were not soon forgotten. What would their children who might have been with them at the time think? They might seem to forget, but they wouldn’t. Just like it was never forgotten how they had come in the 80s, shooting bullets, or how in the 50s small children and babies had been torn apart limb from limb. Generations carried the memory with them, they wouldn’t ever put it aside even if they appeared to. He used to think, he said, before all this happened, that he might marry someone from Casa, Rabat, somewhere in the *dakhliya* (interior), but now he knew that he wouldn’t. He would try to marry (one day) someone from the Rif, or else from outside: Tunisia, Algeria, what have you, but not from the rest of the country, not from the *dakhliya*. He had recently heard an anecdote in which a bigwig who was originally from al-Hoceyma but now resided in Rabat and worked for the government was in a hotel bar in Europe with a bunch of other Moroccans, and he kept drinking and drinking until he got totally drunk. What was needed, he said while in this inebriated state, to settle al-Hoceyma and the Rif once and for all was to bring in Arabs, people from states like Qatar or Saudi, to marry the women of the Rif and to give them Arab names like Antara; that was the only way all of this would be smoothed over. But no, they weren’t going to let something like that happen. Instead, he thought, they needed to be like the Jews for the time being; to keep close, to marry within a small circle, to be protective of their own. No matter what, no matter what the outcome of all of this, *rbahna, deja rbahna* (we’ve won, we’ve already won) he kept saying over and over, we have already gained, and we will remember.

Family, he said, family can have conflict, it can fight (*dabz*), sure, but family cannot kick you and tell you to stay down and shut up, over and over. We go to the administration, *drabna* (they hit us), we go to the schools, *drabna*, we go to the mosque, *drabna*. I’m sorry but then we’re not going to go home and drink our tea and eat our bread and say *alhamdulillah* (thanks be to God) we are all family. No, if you see that and it does not move you, you are not my family. We

want peace and we do not want fighting, but we are not family.

Mutual exposure, then, formed both the condition for intimacy—gendered, familial—and its greatest risk. In the parameters Hamid drew up here, the would-be family of the nation was dismantled precisely in the act of clearly seeing the other (in her pain, shame, degradation) and nonetheless turning away. This visual exposure was literal, that which circulated in online fora, the stubborn digital undergrowth that eluded state capture in formal news channels. And its inverse, the intimacy of family bonds, was constituted in the refusal to forget, the burying deep of slights or indignities committed to another that only appeared forgotten on the surface of things, continuing a subterranean, unseen life nonetheless. In his claim that with his choice of who to marry he would draw close, help shelter and nurture this unseen, common memory-life, Hamid also articulated a theory of its possible future disintegration: its rendering as once and for all lifeless through exposure to the outside.

June 13, 2017: I have never seen Hamid so excited or happy as on Sunday night. I compared him to a twittering bird, and the likeness was really striking, his usual flush on his face boyish rather than angry or merely excitable. He had spontaneously left for al-Hoceyma sometime mid-week after fretting for some time over the sale of some goods left in his care that he had wanted to raise funds from. As we sat down at a table outside, I asked him whether he had seen the photos from that day in Rabat, where there had been massive protests in solidarity with the Rif. He nodded excitedly: we in al-Hoceyma have changed the whole country.

*Qalibna kul chi* (we have changed, overturned, everything). What he most wanted to talk about was the *wa'ai* (consciousness, awareness) of the people in al-Hoceyma, how he experienced it as totally transformed, perhaps permanently. You go into any café or restaurant, and all the stations that were tuned to football matches or what have you in the past, they are all turned now to BBC, CNN, just news, news, news. People are consuming the news, they want to know how the *hirak* is being covered from the outside and they also want to understand how it relates to other movements in the world. I mentioned what Tariq had said about not being able to go to a family's house for a meal without talking about Zefzafi et al, and he said yes it was true, that was what people were interested in discussing, each family member offering a piece of knowledge as they reconstructed the day's events together.

The changed *wa'ai* was especially important, in his retelling, to the tactical survival of the protests. For example on his first night, he had been sitting at a café talking politics with a group of men when they had all stood up and matter-of-factly parted ways, saying “now we work,” (*nkhdm*). The police had taken to banning entry in known gathering spots or neighborhoods, to the point where you had to show your *carte nationale* (national identification card) to enter, and

even then they were requiring people to walk one-by-one. So people were simply splitting up, all making their way individually to known gathering points and beginning the protests that way. There was a level of collective intelligence and awareness about subversion tactics that he couldn't get over; there would be posts, for example, about protests happening at a given spot and the police would show up there ready to tamp it down, but everyone meanwhile would have gathered elsewhere having understood it was just a decoy. One night he was walking with his close friend, he recounted, when they saw eight policemen entering the square without their usual batons. Why, he had asked himself, would they not be carrying those? So he and his friend had started shouting to everyone nearby that it was a trick, they were being set up by the security forces, the idea being that if the police were deployed unarmed, the crowd would seize on the opportunity to scuffle with them. So everyone collectively sent the word around and nobody even got near them, to the point that eventually the police just gave up and left as well.

That is our own strength, that and our voice. As long as we don't hit back the state is *da'af* (weak), they have no idea what to do. We have even started talking to the policemen who hit us; after 12 when the curfew rolls around and it's time for everyone to go home, we part ways cordially, he said, and they say sorry for hitting you but you know, it's our job. And we say we get it, you have families to feed. Apparently one of the chiefs of police had ordered his troops to drink despite it being Ramadan, saying that they were defending the *watan* (nation) and that came first or was permissible, which had caused some discord. In his rendering, obviously very particular, people weren't really particular these days anyway about fasting, though; after the incident in the mosque, he claimed, many had left the *din* (Islam) altogether in disgust over the overt mixing of state in the sacred. The woman Fatima who he has been very closely involved in helping, who he describes as the last of the *munadileen* (activists/resistors) of whom he is a part that is still not jailed and who is now staying with his sister, she has completely changed too, he said. She used to go around in an *abaya* or *niqab* (I wasn't sure which he meant), now she is dressed totally '*adi* (normally), she has become just a *shakhs* (person), from her involvement in the movement.

People had intentionally started adopting a carefree attitude toward *lhabs* (prison), he claimed. There was a young man who was injured in the head by police and had the wound bandaged, then returned to the front lines of protests, shouting that death was preferable to living victimized. Women had taken to ululating happily when people were arrested, which happened every night, as though their trip to the *habs* was akin to them getting married, and he had seen youth from the police cars waving cheerfully to people. He explained that they had been regularly arresting whoever steps up to the mic to speak on a given night, but even still people have continued stepping up and replacing them. They

also have been employing similar tactics with the protests, surging toward the police lines without engaging them violently, as if to proclaim their lack of fear. Then it becomes like a dance or a game, where the police break up one gathering and everyone goes around and meets again on the other side, only to repeat. The jails are getting 'amr (full), he said smiling, they will fill all the jail cells with al-Hoceyma.

He had explained to me before with Fatima that he had been desperately worried about her as long as she was out on her own, for if the police were to capture her like that there was no telling what would happen and if she was killed no one would know. But now that her whereabouts were known, it was no longer that big of a deal if she were to be jailed, because they would be able to track her movements, there would be some accountability. Hamid's construal of her revolutionary self-actualization through her casting off of now needless body covering is familiar enough in terms of revolutionary narratives of the 1960s in particular, though here inflected with his own personal views on Islam and the Arab world as not really endogamous to North Africa. Fatima, who I never met and only intermittently glimpsed through Hamid's accounting of her movements over this period, had despite his way of narrating it arisen to prominence amongst the *munadileen* (resistance, activists) as a woman who chose to wear the veil; what her subsequent choices might have been remained unclear, though as I return to below the veil itself would at points become key to her ability to shield herself from arrest as the summer ground on.

June 22, 2017: I met with Hamid yesterday for the first time in at least a week. He had made a brief trip back to al-Hoceyma. He said that his friend and colleague Fatima had been taken in for questioning and pressured to sign a statement admitting her guilt in conspiring with foreigners against the public good and promising that she would stop her involvement in the activities. They had been unnerved, he said, by her *barid* (cold, icy) quality—even in the face of threats of physical violence, and of rape, she had remained unmoved, he said, saying that she was already *mayit* (dead) when she first took to the streets so it made no difference to her what happened to her now. But she was not going to sign those papers, and she was going to be back out in the protests. He said that at this point someone had gone to hit her and been restrained, as the fellow police warned that in light of her *barid*-ness she would likely take to the streets to demonstrate her bruises to others. So they had eventually just let her go, with the warning they would kill her if they found her again.

I have been struck, over and over, by the absolute centrality and inextricability of the body and the corporeal in events in the Rif. There is the role of the body in the demand for the hospital—we have cancer in our bones and organs due to the role of Europe and the rest of the country in our oppression, so give us what is just. There is the trauma inflicted through the uprisings and responding violence in the 50s and 80s, which is continually referred to as transmitted and passed down among generations, never forgotten even if submerged for some

periods. There is the reference, over and over again, to being *mayit*, death walking, thus nullifying the possible threats or usual techniques of the state in quieting things down—let the state fill our bodies in the *habs* (prison), then they will really have a problem. Yesterday he was telling me about various plans that are being discussed for Eid and after Eid. There is an idea, he said, to hoist black flags from every household, in response to the state repression and the pain inflicted on the bodies of the *mu'taqleen* currently imprisoned. There is also the idea, he said, to occupy public space for the 48 hours of the Eid, to sleep outside and refuse to return to the private sphere as is usual for Eid celebrations.

I asked him about general spirits on this last visit, especially in light of the fact that he seemed angrier and less buoyant than the ecstatic mood he returned in on the last trip. He said that it is true that older generations are starting to get tired out by it all, *a'yao* (they have tired). But not so with the younger generations. They'll say, he said, it's like we've entered a *bahr* (sea), and there's nothing for it but to keep swimming to the other side. Always, it is the bodies of the *mu'taqleen* that are at stake and need to be considered; if we abandon them now, they will rot in jail, it is only by pressing forward or swimming across that we can save them. He has expressed before that they are a kind of generative force in the *hirak*, as they are understood to have sacrificed themselves for the greater good, which in turn requires sacrifice amongst those still on the “outside.”

I mentioned the rumor I had heard that King Muhammad VI might visit al-Hoceyma after Ramadan. He said that he hadn't heard it, but that if he were to visit he would appear *da'af* (weak). The people in al-Hoceyma, he said, are generally indifferent to the charismatic presence of the king. He visited a year or two ago and they had to bus people in from the surrounding *jbal* (mountains) to be ready to give him a traditional greeting. Everyone else knew he was around but just went about their business. The threat of this non-response renders a distinct problem for the monarch, a challenge to authority in the non-responsiveness to personal charisma, the body.

Revolutionary coldness—and not fire—was, then, a currency of the time, its expression inextricable from the politics of death and of the self-as-collective. In the account he narrated of Fatima's arrest, her inherently vulnerable or exposed position as amongst the arrested, subject to state power and potentially extralegal violence, was nullified by the quality of being *barid*, cold, a quality born not from personal suffering alone but from being a self formed in the context of a dying collective, a death that only fellows in the collective might witness and recognize as such. The *barid* body cannot be exposed against its will, no matter what might be done to it.

It was this same quality of coldness that endangered the symbolism at play in a would-be visit from the sovereign: neither anger nor love but sheer indifference, in Hamid's account, an indifference to the king's body and presence that could not be countenanced in the logic of statecraft and royal charisma as it operates in most of the country. King Mohammed VI, in his

dealings with al-Hoceyma and the Rif, is irrevocably caught in the genealogy he descends from: not only his father, Hassan II—today widely acknowledged throughout the country and in different social circles to have toed the line of tyranny throughout his reign and been responsible for many violations of the rights of his subjects—but also his grandfather Mohammed V, a figure nearly universally beloved and esteemed in the mythos surrounding national independence, is implicated in the wrongdoing committed against the Rif.

And the problem extends beyond this still: if, as the Rifians claim, the *makhzen* colluded with the French and the Spanish in quelling anticolonial resistance in the first half of the twentieth century, whence does legitimate authority to preside over the nation's postcolonial present proceed? In the current order, it is possible—and indeed, common—to speak of the ills of corruption and failures of governance plaguing the country, possible also to speak openly about wrongs committed under the king's father, Hassan II, but not this, never this, something that touches on the root of everything: Morocco's emergence from colonial rule, its relationship with Europe (past and present), past futures and political orders that were dreamed of that did not live to see the light of the twenty-first century. It is thus indeed a wide and unknowable *bahr* or sea the activists from *hirak* who continue to point insistently back to this history have entered and are attempting to swim across, the safe grounding promised by the other shore perhaps eluding them forever.

July 4, 2017: Hamid came over yesterday afternoon and matter-of-factly caught us up on the events of last week and the unraveling of basic techniques of nonviolence following Eid. It had been like a *harb* (war) in al-Hoceyma, he said, like something you see from the *aflam* (films). The hospitals had been full of children affected by the release of teargas in the streets, his sister's children had had to go to one because they were having problems breathing. She had told him that she had seen everyone there, all kinds of people whose homes the teargas had entered. The police had taken to waiting outside of the hospitals, cuffing people as they either entered or left, allowing them to get treated but then whisking them off to the *comisaria* (police station) once they were released. He had been caught up in one of the waves of people trying to escape police batons, but had strategically ducked into cafes along the way and hadn't been brought in. He returned to Martil around Friday, with very little left of the joyous optimism of our previous conversations.

His brother had drawn a knife on a policeman who had taunted him, and the whole family was caught up now in trying to figure out what to do about it, to keep him safe after he had been released from jail. His brother, he said, is both a little *hmq* (crazy) and also *shih*, strong bodied. A policeman had said *mal din mak?* (directed toward his mother) to him as an insult, and his brother had lost control and drawn a knife, actually stabbing him near his heart (I take it he didn't die). He had been brought into prison and tortured, his eyes were all swollen from beating and dao' or electricity had been used too, he said. His sister's husband, though, was well connected and had money, and had gone and



negotiated his release. Now it was all *ruina* (chaos) with the family, trying to figure out what to do.

The woman he has been closely involved in trying to help had had to flee from her family home. The police had visited her house, where she was inside, and her brother had opened the door and lied to them that she wasn't there, that she had gone away to rest and he didn't know where. They had accepted his statement—that they were welcome to come inside and see for themselves, but he'd rather they didn't because of his elderly and fragile father—but a second pair had returned and asked again later that day, and that night there was a car parked in back of the house presumably surveilling. So she had left in a *niqab* (face veiling), gone to his sister's house and was now back in her flight pattern.

He and my roommate left to go purchase some barbed wire she wants to put along our wall to stop people being able to easily hop over it and into our yard. I stayed at the house and met up with him later that night for a walk down the corniche. I noted to him how I had been struck by how matter-of-factly he had told us everything that had happened with his brother, and he said that he was aware of us having our own problems and didn't want to bring us down too much. But yes, things were really dire, he had lost the hope he had been feeling a few weeks ago when we used to talk—remember, how I was saying that I didn't want to leave to Europe anymore, that all that was now irrelevant, that it was okay if things weren't great for me as long as they were all right for the *awlad* (children) of my children? I don't think that's true anymore, not after how I've seen the police response this last week. It's hard to be here (we were surrounded by a huge flow of people sitting in the cafes and walking along the corniche), to feel like it's not really your country. We've tried, we've tried the *chintun* (walking as though seemingly without any purpose in mind but all the time with the strategy of meeting up at an implicitly agreed upon spot, as a way of getting around the blockades), the *tantan* (the use of drums and noise to signal dissent), offering of the *ward* (rose) to the police and *stafit* (security forces), now there was the swimming protest, and they followed us into the waves! So how can you keep going in that case, knowing they'll follow you even into the water? People are being tortured, do you know about the *tiyara* (airplane)? It's a Moroccan strategy, where your feet and hands are handcuffed to a chair so that your belly arches forward, and then you're beaten, maybe to the point of losing consciousness, maybe death. And you know, people are still coming to the Maghrib, tourists will be handed the shiny brochures touting the regional diversity and all the plans for develop underway and the embracing of *hqooq l-insan* (human rights), and they'll think everything is great—or maybe they won't, I don't know, it's an issue of personal taste maybe and would vary by the person, but anyway the point is that they won't see any of this, none of it will matter or show up.

There had been a staging along the shores of the Mediterranean, one in which activists in full dress began entering the water in response to the presence of police forces, fully arrayed with the black accoutrements of the state. In a moment that defies all expectation, protestors push into the water and the police, so heavily laden with gear, wade in after them in a show of force rendered absurd in light of the slow, heavy movements, the apparatus of state no match for the force of the waves. While touched with the absurd, the video that circulated of this scene underscored the impossible parameters of the *bahr* or sea that they had embarked upon crossing: dressed in almost as cumbersome clothes as those giving chase, the protestors circle in a slow motion eluding of the police forces. The site of so much death and neglect, particularly in the last decade, the Mediterranean shoreline here suddenly hugs those in the video in a claustrophobic embrace: you are not going anywhere.

July 15, 2017: Mid-week, I walked into the nearby dry goods store we go to and found three of the guys [all Rifians] huddled over a single phone, watching something. Aware that they didn't notice me, I leaned in and said loudly *ash kain?* (what's up?) as a joke. The one who is new there looked startled, while the other two started laughing when they saw it was me. One of them directed the other to show me what they had been looking at, a video of Zefzafi, his face pale and serious, half-dressed, baring his arms to the camera, which slowly does a careful scan of his whole body. I was confused about what I was looking at: I couldn't see any evidence of bruising, which was what I assumed I was being directed to look for, other than a gash on his hip. I asked in confusion about what it was meant to mean, and he explained it was meant as evidence that he hadn't been tortured. Maybe for some *munathim hqooqia* (human rights organizations) or similar thing.

Yesterday Hamid and I went over to sit in the plaza in front of my house. He had just been in al-Hoceyma, and had said he had had a difficult time. He had been outside of the city with Fatima [the activist mentioned above, now on the run], another close friend, and two other people involved in the movement who he didn't know. The two of them had been urging Fatima to come out and participate in the 7/20 protest, with the idea that her presence as one of the few non-jailed activists might be significant, but he was dead set against the idea. She had fled from law enforcement (*haribat*), he explained, that meant automatic jail time no matter what. *T'asabt* (I got angry or nervous) he said a couple of times, at the clash of opinions and how high he felt the stakes were. He had also disclosed to them that he was planning to leave the country at the end of the summer, and they had responded that he would basically be betraying the movement by doing so, that they needed their people to stay on and continue the struggle. We sat with the discomfort of it, him sighing and wrestling with it aloud. They were right, he said, in a basic sense they were right. But...there were ways he might be able to help from afar, that he couldn't now. It was all

very well for people in Europe, Moroccan descended or not, to be interested in what was going on, but very few of them had much firsthand knowledge. Perhaps he could contribute to changing that. But, they were right, it would be an abandonment of sorts, a leaving behind. The people there now, *t'athab*, *t'athab* (they are tortured), he repeated uneasily. But he insisted he was ready to go, he still wanted to go, now more than ever. Only now, he had it more in mind what his obligation would be in doing so.

I asked him about the video circulating of Zefzafi. He said he saw this as a more or less transparent ploy, to rile people up in advance of 7/20 [the day a major protest was planned] so that the majority of people willing to risk arrest would be arrested by that time, so that it would really only be outsiders, people who had traveled to the city, to demonstrate. And they, if they had European passports or papers, they could come and go, nothing would likely happen to them. But if the majority of activists from al-Hoceyma were scooped up, it would change the impact of the weekend. We talked again about the significance of the date itself, how it roughly corresponded with the Battle of Annual.<sup>96</sup> I mentioned the article I had seen where government ministers were condemning the Zefzafi video and he dismissed it, saying that everyone right now is trying to distance themselves from direct personal responsibility, it's like they're hitting someone and turning around and bemoaning that that person is being hit. Though it was filmed by police, it was probably given the go-ahead by higher ups to be released with the idea that it might provoke angry outbursts amongst people for having exposed Zefzafi that way, for showing his body like that, with the hopes that more people could be scooped up prior to next week. Everyone back in al-Hoceyma now, they hate the Maghrib, it's like *al-ista'amar*, the feeling of being occupied. *Ma kaynsh lthiqa* (there is no trust), any possibility for that is gone. That's a major problem for us all, going forward, he said.

Hamid anticipated the arrival of 7/20 avidly, the day a major protest had been called for. It was to involve Moroccans coming over from Europe, part of the often-forced diaspora if they were descended from political dissidents or from the Rif region, as well as left-leaning European Union officials sympathetic to the cause. Ultimately the date came and went, and while protests did happen they were ignored by national news channels and for the most part had a limited impact on the national level. Things had begun to sift back into a more mundane rhythm, al-Hoceyma showing up more infrequently in the national news channels, featured still as the

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<sup>96</sup> A central reference and point of pride for contemporary Rifian activists, the Battle of Annual refers to the tremendous and shocking defeat of the Spanish at the hands of Rifian forces led by 'Abd al-Karim al-Khattabi. The date of 7/20 was meant to roughly correspond to this historic victory. The date Nasser Zefzafi intervened at the mosque, Hamid told me, also roughly corresponded to the day that 'Abd al-Karim al-Khattabi had been arrested, to be exiled forever from the country. Activists were consistently highly conscious of the potential resonance and power of historical dates in harnessing people's courage and willingness to risk participation in the movement.

voiceless recipient of royal attention and resources when it did appear. I spent the day of the protest in Tetouan at my host family's mother's old, modest rambling house. From there and in the city as I made my way home the protests seemed to make hardly a ripple, a far cry from the tremendous impact hoped for by Hamid, surrounded as the day was with the historic resonance of past Rifian triumphs in the Battle of Annual. That day the relevance of this past felt blunted, much like the ambiguity of Zefzafi's exposed, pale torso, the inscrutability of the expression on his grave face. Where the previous viral video of him had resounded and roared, this coda merely dinged and murmured, alerting through the exposure of skin but not encoding a message that carried: was it a form of humiliation or a legalistic proof of relative well-being, how should one read the message? How to respond to the serious face that gazed back at the camera, now wordless?

Meanwhile Martil was filling up, as it did each summer, with mostly middle-class families from the *dakhliya* or interior, who took their children to the beach during the day and whose bodies crowded the *corniche* at night along with the miniature electric cars, popcorn vendors and inflated moonwalks that crammed every inch of the boardwalk at this time of year. There were fewer people than the previous summer, and spending felt more cautious, my friends who worked stands told me, but it nonetheless felt like the country was resuming its normal rhythms as the summer deepened. It was this normalcy, this seeming indifference of the crowds to anything outside the domain of summer leisure and diversion, that drove Hamid mad, made him loathe Martil and need to get out.

October 2, 2017: I met with him for the first time since I've been back. He had been in al-Hoceyma but also in Nador, he said, along with a Christian meet-up in Mohammedia. I asked him where he was staying now and he said with a friend in Tetouan, he had finally given up the troublesome apartment in Martil. I asked him what he planning to do for housing going forward and he said to be honest, he was hoping to make his escape as soon as this week, all depending on weather conditions. He recognized it might or might not happen, but for now he was suspended in the hope that it would. They wanted 600 euros; he has 400 that he's held on to, and wasn't sure yet where the last 200 would come from but was sure he could get it, maybe sell something or who knows. He had refused to give them anything though until they were actually on the beach, boat in sight, ready to go. The boat would be a little over 7 meters, he said, and was supposed to fit twenty people. The journey would take about 17 hours to the Spanish coast, all going well. He had heard about people being met by police right away in the town they were shooting for, Almería, but was too hopeful to let that deter him. The launch point would be on the coast somewhere between al-Hoceyma and Nador.

To stay anymore would be intolerable; he was sick of Moroccans, even his own family had him on edge, he felt he couldn't talk to them anymore, let alone the bulk of people. The activists in al-Hoceyma, he said, had been fighting for things that made them *insan* (human), health, rights, etc. And the people who

had met the movement with disgust or indifference, it was now clear that they didn't want them to rise to that level, to the level of insan, preferred they stayed down where they were. I asked him, as I have before, about why he didn't think about south instead of north, if it were the politics he couldn't bear. He wrestled with the question a bit but said no, ultimately it had to be Europe, where there were freer conditions but also a chance at a decent life for someone starting out with nothing. If he had money, he said, he could see setting up something in another country within the continent and doing fine, but without it he couldn't see it, it would be harder even maybe than within Morocco. He knew it would be hard when he first arrived there, but every time he gets daunted by the prospect of the hardship he will surely face he reminds himself that it could not be worse than the daily struggle to get by here.

I think above all he can't bear to face another summer here—the heat gets to him because of his physiology, but what really is too much to take is the façade of things, the way people go around like things are great no matter what is really happening. We walked over to the beach after our meal and he pointed approvingly to some older people in bathing suits, likely Spanish or European. Living free no matter what, was his comment. While we were standing on the beach, he asked me what other countries I had been to. It didn't feel good but I told him all of them. He said he dreamt of visiting Japan, Mexico, but he realized those dreams would likely die with him. It felt weird, being on the beach facing the water he was so hoping to risk crossing soon. *Mat lmot fina* (death itself died within us) he stated as we walked back toward the center of town together, the breeziness of the beach town we were walking through contrasting his sum-up of the current mood amongst the Rifians he knew. We said goodbye on the understanding it could be the last time seeing each other, but likely not—only if his luck were to turn. I have become used to this state of suspension with him.

It was autumn, and death had ceased walking. Rather, it was still, inert. *Mat lmot fina*: death itself died within us. Time to face the boats, themselves vessels of likely death, but at least it would resume its movement in this way, not stay in this agonizing, frozen place. Months later, after watching the waves incessantly day in and out, waiting for them to clear, Hamid would be caught in open water, exposed, along with a boatful of fellow travelers, and returned to Moroccan shores. When we spoke afterward he said it had actually been a good moment, for just before they were captured by the royal navy they had had dolphins come up to the boat and swim alongside them, breaking up the otherwise endless expanse of the *bahr*, moving with them in tandem.

# Conclusion

The 12 kilometers that separate the northern Moroccan city of Tetouan from the Mediterranean Sea were in a way never meant to be easily traversed. Well acquainted with the danger posed by the maritime waters, the city's founders are said to have chosen its location for its resemblance to a Granada forcibly left behind: nestled by a mountain chain, the coast neither too far nor too close. The centuries that followed its fifteenth-century founding as an exilic Andalusian city within North Africa bore witness to a near-constant threat of invasion from the north as triumphant Spanish monarchs, newly consolidating power within the Iberian Peninsula, sought to bring the fragile territory of the Andalusian exiles back within their political and military reach. In 1860 Spain would finally breach Tetouan's defenses, sacking and occupying the city in a move that lay the groundwork for its eventual formal establishment as the capital of the Spanish protectorate from 1912 to 1956.

Though they constructed barracks around the old walled city of Tetouan and built a large church and other stately mansions nearby, most of the Spanish occupying forces would settle in the area known as Martín to the city's northeast, where the river of the same name extending from the interior met the coastal waters. Named after a relative of famed Andalusian princess Sayyida al-Hurra, Río Martín wended its way through a pastoral landscape connecting the city of Tetouan to a small port adjacent to the historic watchtower from which the city's defense to the Mediterranean world had historically been mounted. It was around this tower, set back just a bit from the port, that Spanish military families built a set of low-lying, stuccoed bungalows grouped close together and hugging the shoreline. To complement the flow of goods and people along the river, they constructed a metro train connecting the settlement to the occupied capital city.

Now known as Martil, the small cluster of bungalows left behind by the Spanish remains apparent as the seaside suburb's structural core, if bookended by larger hotels and condominiums. Other traces of colonial occupation—amongst them the port and the metro connecting Martil to Tetouan—have vanished completely. Gone too are the abundant swathes of forest and agricultural fields formerly surrounding the city center, replaced by a scattered landscape of government-sponsored apartment buildings and two-story deluxe homes, some of them unfinished. In place of the metro, private taxis work their way in a constant flow between coast and metropolis, their services particularly precious in the overcrowded summer months.

The beach suburb of Martil thus compounds and refracts a history of urbanity inextricable from the boundary-work involved in the creation of "Europe," what Michel-Rolph Trouillot refers to as "the sociopolitical fissure that was slowly pushing the Mediterranean toward northern and southern shores" in the wake of the expulsion of Iberian Muslims and Jews

from the late fifteenth to early seventeenth centuries.<sup>97</sup> It was by turns a defensive outpost against the aggressions of crusading Spanish monarchs, rural hinterland of the Andalusian elite displaced by the Expulsion to North African shores, and metropolitan suburb of occupying Spanish colonial officers in the early to mid-twentieth-century. Since the 1960s it has also been a conspicuous casualty of the monarchy's post-independence history of distrust and suspicion of the "north" (*al-shamal*), a dynamic that has shifted notably under King Mohammed VI.

Deep fissures underlying the distinctiveness of the northern region in contemporary Morocco erupted and ultimately upended the course of more routinized political protest in the span of late 2016 to mid-2017. To Tetouan's east, protest leaders in the town of al-Hoceyma at one and the same time joined the broader *al-hirak* coalition in calling for democratic reforms and insisted on a national historical reckoning with the state's origins, a call perceived to be at odds with the authoritative lineage of the modern monarchy. Contestations over territory and sovereignty specific to the Rif region pose a unique vulnerability to Morocco's founding narrative. In harkening back to the collaboration of dynastic figures with European powers in the 1920s and the joint military suppression of their nascent republic, the politics of Rifian regional history attest to a collusion with colonial forces that runs counter to mainstream accounts of twentieth-century national liberation. At the same time, Rifian politics are themselves embedded in an intimate and longstanding relationship to the Spanish north.

This dissertation pays particularly close attention to the violent death of fish vendor Mouhcine Fikri in late 2016 and the subsequent scene of confrontation staged by al-Hoceyma protest leader Nasser al-Zefzafi in late spring 2017, wherein he challenged a state sponsored sermon warning against the dangers of *fitnah* or social disorder. These marked pivotal moments in my fieldwork, not only for their eventual political outcomes but also in occasioning visceral reaction across a spectrum of the public. In his rejection of a shared, livable social order as projected by the imam he dares interrupt, Zefzafi throws into question the coordinates of social interpretation as such. Asking *ma ma'ana al-fitnah?* or what is the meaning of *fitnah*, he asserts the current social order is fundamentally disordered.

Just how to gauge this question—the calibration of a social order's functioning and diagnostic of impending trouble despite seeming regime stability—forms, I argue, a driving question in the fourteenth-century philosopher and jurist Ibn Khaldun's *al-Muqaddimah*. Throughout the work, the endangered kingdom of Granada or what remains of al-Andalus functions as a key exemplar; he postulates, following an Aristotelian theory of potentiality, that just as the Granada of his time bears the full fruit of civilizational efforts, it contains within it the seeds of its own undoing. Such would form the grounds of possibility for a new city to the south, across the waters.

Echoes of this pressing philosophical problem reverberated through the course of my fieldwork. In a sociopolitical context in which Morocco enjoys relative stability and order in

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<sup>97</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "Anthropology and the Savage Slot: The Poetics and Politics of Otherness," in *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present*, ed. Richard Fox (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1991).

comparison to other countries in the Muslim world—weathering, unlike its other North African neighbors, the tumult of the "Arab Spring" without major regime change and its publics ever mindful of the chaos ravaging Syria and Iraq to the east—articulations of dissent are weighed against a calculus of social breakdown. Nonetheless, intimations of a present pregnant with ruination featured heavily in ongoing conversations with some of the interlocutors who fill the above pages. For Adil, walls of concrete blocking his sightline of the Mediterranean Sea embody the corruption and theft of collective resources plaguing the country. In the space of his crowded workshop, he labored on small-scale models of wooden vessels that he insisted belonged to a different era, *waqt al-bahr* or the time of the sea. Unable to access the sea of his memories, he turned to a realm of simulacra in its stead, an act I read as a refutation of present conditions of possibility. Within the set of coordinates proffered by replica and simulations, his trenchant if cryptic question—Can you say there is a crisis when the bread is flowing?—carves a space for critique in the midst of seeming normalcy. For Hamid, on the other hand, the contradictions and seeming hypocrisy of the prevailing order precluded envisioning a life within its territorial borders, and migration whether legal or otherwise became a necessary lifeline.

For those invested in restoring Martil's absent port, complex questions of nostalgia for the Spanish colonial coexist alongside discourses of national reform and progress. Fragments of al-Andalus and a history of maritime warfare with a Christian presence to the north mingle with a changing terrain of economic infrastructure projects and investment. Meanwhile, its absence and proposed restoration evoke a contentious mid-twentieth-century history of Rifan resistance and suppression whose shadow extends all the way to the beach suburbs outside Tetouan. In the deadened tendrils of Wad Martil, the reach of this history redounds.



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