

The Productive Plurality of Tamazgha: Boundaries, Intersections, Frictions

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Abstract:

The paper tracks the multi-scalar incarnations of Tamazgha, as both a visceral spacetime and a political chronotope. Building on field research with Amazigh militants and fellow-travelers in the pre-Saharan oases of southeastern Morocco, as well as with diasporic activists in France, I interrogate the tensions which arise as a category of perception and belonging travels across different landscapes of governmentality and ethno-linguistic diversity, coming to underwrite different kinds of cultural/political avowals and disavowals, inclusions and exclusions. I particularly focus on the constitutive ambivalence within “Tamazgha” between its genealogical and territorial dimensions—as simultaneously a deep inheritance, a present mode of dwelling, and a future aspiration. In the process I call attention to the gendered dimensions of Tamazgha, to the ways it gestures to both masculine virtues of honor, nobility, and self-determination, but also to feminine investments in domesticity, cultivation, and reproduction, as well as freedom of social mobility and from masculine domination. In thinking through the various projects which Tamazgha calls forth, I underline the productive diversity of Amazighitude as a lived experience.

Keywords: Tamazgha, scale, activism, gender, race.

Tamazgha, although a singular noun in the Amazigh language, is not a single category. It is both an emic and etic term, invoked by Amazigh speakers as an ideological claim of indigeneity, territoriality, and belonging, as well as deployed by scholars to differentiate a particularly Amazigh North Africa from other ethnopolitical configurations within the region. It connotes a transnational formation extending from the Siwa Oasis to the Canary Islands, from the Sahel to the Mediterranean basin, while also being inclusive of a far-flung global Amazigh diaspora. And it equally references a series of discrete localities differentially enabling Amazigh lifeworlds. It is a discursive chronotope but also a visceral spacetime, an aspirational future and a lived experience, a performative speech act and a referential account, an indexical sign and a tangible materiality, a political imaginary and a phenomenological reality. As an ethnonym, it includes and excludes, enlisting particular modes of identification while demarcating differences of gender, generation, and race. It makes the world it ostensibly describes.

In this synthetic contribution to the inaugural issue of *Tamazgha Studies Journal*, I track the multi-scalar incarnations of Tamazgha. Building on field research with Amazigh militants and fellow travelers in the pre-Saharan oases of southeastern Morocco, as well as with diasporic activists in France, I interrogate the tensions which arise as a category of perception and belonging travels across different landscapes of governmentality and ethno-linguistic diversity, coming to

underwrite different kinds of cultural/political avowals and disavowals, inclusions and exclusions. I particularly focus on the constitutive ambivalence within “Tamazgha” between its genealogical and territorial dimensions—as simultaneously a deep inheritance, a present mode of dwelling, and a futurity. In the process I will call attention to the gendered dimensions of Tamazgha, to the ways it gestures to both masculine virtues of honor, nobility, and self-determination, but also to feminine investments in domesticity, cultivation, and reproduction, as well as freedom of social mobility and from masculine domination. In thinking through the various projects which Tamazgha calls forth, I try to underline the productive diversity of Amazighitude in all its dimensions.

1. Tamazgha as Chronotope

In its broadest dimensions, Tamazgha functions discursively as a transnational chronotope, invoking a specifically Amazigh past, present, and future within a region where their majoritarian presence has been historically minoritized by a succession of imperial powers. It re-describes North Africa beyond the colonial geographic demarcation of the Sahara as a racialized boundary, one dividing the continent along a supposed temporal gradient of civilizational attainment from a Black south to a White Mediterranean (Boulbina 2010; Brouwer 2009; Stein 2014). It likewise rejects an Arab-centric worldview that would hierarchically link the Occidental periphery to an Oriental center, as the sunset (Maghreb) to the dawn of Islamic enlightenment in the Mashreq. It transcends a religious distinction between *dar al-islam* (the abode of Islam) and *dar al-harb* (the abode of conflict), substituting instead a *taddart* (or *tamurt*) *n imazighen*: an abode (or homeland) of what Brahim El Guabli (2022) has called Amazighitude, drawing on the postwar legacy of Negritude and embracing the multiplicity of faiths which sustain an Amazigh ontological presence.

Tamazgha, as a (broadly masculinist) cultural and political project, not only grounds Amazighitude in the North African present, but also asserts its past foundations and future anticipations. It is a claim to indigeneity and autochthony. Whatever the multiplicity of historical mobilities which brought Amazigh-speaking peoples to their current localities, invoking Tamazgha rejects the Khaldunian genealogy tracing the “Berber” people to the children of Canaan (through Ham’s descendent Mazigh), later embraced by *salafi* nationalist ideologues like Tawfiq al-Madani to justify their forcible (re-)assimilation into Arabo-Islamic civilization (McDougall 2003). Doing so likewise dismisses later Moroccan textbook assertions of Yemeni origins, seeing in it an ideological effort at cultural and historical erasure. In contrast, Tamazgha calls forth a *longue durée* of persistence and resistance in the face of repeated imperial conquests. It asserts a temporality of the before and embraces a set of pre-Islamic beliefs, rituals, and practices which sustain the Amazigh peoples’ deep relations with the more-than-human environments in which they live. It traces a continuity of the before into the here-and-now, not as a pagan survival but as an agentic making and re-making of selfhood.

Tamazgha is thus always already future-oriented. As a set of activist and artistic engagements, it connects the Amazigh people to global indigenous movements against settler colonialism (Silverstein 2010). In this sense, Tamazgha calls forth a decolonial project. If certain (mostly urban male) militants contrast incipient Amazigh secularism with what they declaim as Islamic fundamentalism and anti-Semitism, they do so not (only) to ally themselves with a neocolonial war on terror, but rather to emancipate themselves from the prison house of Arab nationalism and cast themselves into a global, cosmopolitan future (Silverstein 2011). Tamazgha is as much a destination as an origin, a hope which animates a diversity of creativities and

commitments from rural oases and mountain-top villages to urban centers and diasporic metropolises.

2. Tamazgha as Scalar Project

As an activist project of cultural-linguistic revitalization and political self-determination, Tamazgha operates at multiple scales. Like many decolonial movements, it builds on the sacrifices of generations of men and women acting locally, as well as the efforts of mostly male expatriate workers and intellectuals in the diaspora. Indeed, to a great extent the history of Tamazgha is a history of movement and encounter with men crisscrossing the region in search of learning, *baraka* (blessing), seasonal labor, and freedom from paternal authority; women marrying across geographic boundaries (Maher 1974; Rignall 2021, 51); and larger groups periodically fleeing drought and conflict. Periods of imperial disruption and colonial labor recruitment accelerated such mobility, bringing rising numbers of initially young men and subsequently young women from increasingly unsustainable rural areas to North African cities. From the 1920s through the 1970s, hundreds of thousands of North African men—primarily Amazigh speakers from Kabylia, the Sous, and later the Rif—migrated to Europe to work in the industrial and mining centers of Paris, Lyon, Roubaix, and Charleroi. Eventually accompanied by their families, this diasporic community came to include artists, writers, and political activists escaping settler violence in Algeria and the authoritarianism of post-independence regimes in Algeria and Morocco.

Together, these diasporic workers and intellectuals laid the groundwork for the activist project around Tamazgha. In 1967, a group of Paris-based Kabyle expatriates (including notably the poet/singer Taos Amrouche, writer Mouloud Mammeri, and labor militant Mohand-Arav Bessaoud) founded the Berber Academy for Cultural Exchange and Research (ABERC) (later renamed the Agraw Amazigh [Amazigh Academy] in 1969) to revitalize the Amazigh language and fight for Amazigh cultural rights in North Africa and the diaspora (Chaker 1990; Dirèche-Slimani 1997). The Agraw explicitly countered official North African policies to Arabize the state administration, media, and school system, instead working to standardize a written Tamazight across the different Amazigh regional dialects and adapt a Tifinagh script from fragmentary Tuareg epigraphy. Their efforts set the stage for the later work of the state-sponsored Algerian High Amazigh Commission (HCA, founded in 1995) and the Moroccan Royal Institute for Amazigh Culture (IRCAM, founded in 2001), themselves belated responses to decades of activist struggle. Perhaps the most iconic moment of the struggle was the April 20, 1980 uprising in Tizi-Ouzou in which students occupied the university after the cancellation of a lecture on “Ancient Berber Poetry” by Mammeri, suffering police violence and precipitating international outrage and workers’ strikes in support. The Tafsut Imazighen (Amazigh Spring) inspired a second generation of Amazigh activists in Algeria, Morocco, and amidst the diaspora to found hundreds of cultural associations loosely affiliated around one or another political tendency of the transnational Berber Cultural Movement (MCB) umbrella organization (Ait-Kaki 2004; Maddy-Weitzman 2011; Pouessel 2010). As Amazigh activists were being jailed in Algeria and Morocco, the diaspora remained a relatively safe space from which to launch an ever more comprehensive and radical vision of Tamazgha.

The legalization of immigrant cultural associations under newly-elected Socialist President François Mitterrand permitted the flourishing of Amazigh organizations in France in the early 1980s, including the Association de Culture Berbère (ACB) in Paris, Assiren in Lyon, and Afus deg Wfus (Hand in Hand) in Roubaix, alongside theatre groups (Kahina), musical artists

(Djurdjura), and radio stations (Radio Twiza), all under the aegis of what would become known as the Beur Movement. While the French media characterized “Beurs” as “second-generation immigrants” and traced the etymology of the term to a slang inversion of “Arab,” some Amazigh activists at the time suggested the ethnonym was an abbreviation of “Berbers of Europe,” thus extending Tamazgha, as a space of Amazigh belonging, across the Mediterranean (Aïchoune 1985). Although the French state ultimately co-opted many actors in the Beur Movement to support official policies of “integration” and republican secularism (*laïcité*), thus losing much of their legitimacy in the activist community, Amazigh organizations continued to flourish. During the 1990s “black decade” of Islamist insurrection and military counter-insurgency in Algeria, thousands of Kabyle students, artists, writers, and professionals sought refuge from the violence in France where they breathed new urgency into diasporic Amazigh activism and thickened the transnational ties which define Tamazgha.

Indeed, the World Amazigh Congress (CMA) was founded principally by activists in the diaspora—under the direction of the Paris association Tamazgha and its Kabyle linguist president Masin Ferkal—who were inspired by the encounters they had with fellow ethnic and indigenous rights militants at the 1994 Douarnenez (Brittany) film festival devoted to Amazigh culture (Aït-Kaki 2004, 269-286; Maddy-Weitzman 2011, 133-146; Silverstein 2018). Meeting for the first time in 1997 in the Canary Islands, the CMA welcomed delegates from across North Africa and the diaspora, including several from Tunisia and Libya, and many noted the profound emotions they felt in such unprecedented encounters (Pouessel 2010, 183). Subsequent congresses were held across the breadth of Tamazgha: Lyon, Brussels, Roubaix, Nador, Tizi-Ouzou, Meknes, Djerba, Agadir, and Tunis. However, the various ideological and organizational disagreements between and among national representatives quickly fragmented these coordination efforts, with a separate World Amazigh Assembly (AMA) established in 2011. To a certain extent, this division paralleled pre-existing splits between rival Kabyle political movements the Socialist Forces Front (FFS) and the Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD) that had already fragmented the MCB in Algeria and the diaspora (Silverstein 2003), as well as similar disputes which had also long divided the Moroccan Amazigh movement between royalist, culturalist, and politically radical factions.

Although institutional forms of a transnational Tamazgha have proven difficult to maintain, they have produced a political imaginary and social reality of indigenous solidarity well beyond the repeated failed efforts of North African states to establish an Arab Maghreb Union. The transnational circulation of Amazigh folk music, videos, and texts—whether produced in the diaspora or in burgeoning studio facilities in Agadir, Bejaïa, Nador, and Tizi-Ouzou—has had a significant effect in expanding listeners’ cognitive maps of Tamazgha. More recently, the Paris-based BRTV commercial satellite station has connected North Africa, Europe, and Quebec with news and entertainment programming in French and Tamazight. Similarly, diaspora-based websites like www.tamazgha.com, www.mondeberbere.com, and even www.kabyle.com have become clearing houses for North African political information and discussions in Tamazight, French, and English by activist and non-activists around the globe (Aït-Kaki 2004, 231-233; Almasude 1999; Merolla 2019). As internet service has increasingly spread across North African peripheries and young local activists create websites documenting local history and cultural life, even remotely rural Amazigh communities—otherwise relatively marginalized from the urban and diasporic centers of Amazigh activism (Crawford and Hoffman 2000)—become at least partial agents in the production of a transnational Tamazgha.

The struggle for Tamazgha has anticipated and modeled decolonial movements and the fight against authoritarianism in North Africa. Although some imperial policies privileged

“Berber” populations as part of a racialized and Islamophobic divide-and-rule strategy (Burke 2014; Lorcin 1995), Amazigh men and women in fact played a central role in anti-colonial resistance, from the 1871 Kabyle insurrection against French settler colonialism; through the 1920s rebellion led by Abdelkrim al-Khattabi against Spanish occupation in the Rif; to the organized campaigns against the final French “pacification” efforts in the Tafilalt oasis valleys and High Atlas mountains in the early 1930s (Peyron 2021). These moments of armed resistance fostered alliances across rival tribal confederations, Sufi brotherhoods, and racialized castes which had long battled for supremacy on the margins of pre-colonial North Africa.

Amazigh leaders likewise united diverse populations in decolonization movements, even as the nationalist organizations eventually adopted *salafi* and Arabist ideologies which sidelined explicit invocations as Amazigh identity as divisive and colonialist. In the wake of independence, the fight for Tamazgha continued against the increasingly authoritarian rule of the Algerian FLN and Moroccan Istiqlal ruling parties, often taking the form of Marxian-inflected struggles for material security and political rights in Kabylia and the Moroccan Rif. Amazigh activists took center stage in the October 1988 riots in Algiers; the 2011 uprisings in Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia; and the more recent Hirak protests in Algeria and the Rif, forcing democratic reforms and constitutional changes, among which was the official recognition and state support for the Amazigh language and culture (Maddy-Weitzman 2022). The struggle against the sclerotic structure, systematic corruption, and ideological intransigence of the Algerian *Pouvoir*, the Moroccan *Makhzan*, and (at a smaller scale) the new regimes in Libya and Tunisia (Hoffman 2014, 2018; Pouessel 2012) remains ongoing, with many activists believing that the reforms have been superficial and the promises unfulfilled. But there is no doubt that Tamazgha has an unprecedented—if certainly uneven—public presence across the region. Indeed, the very Moroccan state security agencies that once prosecuted and jailed Amazigh activists now have their headquarters inscribed with Tifinagh characters.

Tamazgha thus shifts from a discourse of resistance to a rhetorical figure of power. It becomes absorbed within Algerian and Moroccan state ideology which now overtly avows Amazighitude as the patrimony of all Algerians and Moroccans, as a constituent part of their identity and that which differentiates North Africa as a cosmopolitan civilization unto itself. It underwrites contemporary governmentality in those countries, serving as a means through which the Algerian and Moroccan regimes manage diverse populations and renew their sovereign claims to legitimate representation. The Amazigh language and culture become objects of state administration and financial investment, instruments of audit, accounting, and accumulation. Subject to specified standardization procedures, textbook inscriptions, classroom instruction hours, and media shares, Tamazgha’s internal diversity and vital dynamism risks being sacrificed. The state and its elite beneficiaries come to own and profit from the Tamazgha industry, the rightful, living property of countless generations for whom a particular way of speaking, believing, and acting was simply what it meant to be Amazigh, by whatever name they chose to call themselves. The Tifinagh characters on Moroccan government buildings simultaneously advertise to a global public the tolerant multicultural character of the monarchy while declaring to their Amazigh populations that they are now included—and their language and culture integrated—into the state and its expectations of citizen loyalty and obeisance. It is a parsimonious performative speech act that effectively eliminates the former *bled es-siba* (the land of dissidence) as a space of relative cultural autonomy.

But Tamazgha lives on, both because of the inevitable inefficiencies of state governance, but also because of the courageous acts of those who refuse objectification and assimilation. Rural

Amazigh men and increasingly women literally put their bodies on the line protesting state expropriation and industrial spoliation of their lands and (tangible and intangible) resources (Salime 2016, 2022), and local journalists risk arrest and exile for reporting on such acts of resistance (Azergui 2012). While many activists have accepted administrative posts in hope of making a difference—or, in the case of Morocco, state compensation as partial reparation for state harm during the “years of lead” (Slyomovics 2005)—others have refused such cooptation and payoffs, deeply suspicious of the state’s intentions (Silverstein and Crawford 2004). And still others, like Ferhat Mehenni, have continued the fight from abroad, demanding Kabyle autonomy and inspiring others to similarly claim some degree of cultural and economic self-determination for their marginalized Amazigh regions. Local artists and expatriate scholars write novels, make music, paint images, pen poetry, and found journals that project a future Tamazgha emancipated from the shackles of governmental demarcation (Aitel 2014, Becker 2006, Goodman 2005, Merolla 2014). The Tamazgha they depict is neither singular nor homogeneous, but a plurality of individual memories and collective dreams, a diversity of cultural and political imaginations which may not always line up, but which share a sense of cautious hope.

Such diversity within Tamazgha, however, is not without friction. As an inhabited spacetime and a lived ideal, it can take incongruent forms depending on one’s subject position and scalar orientation. Splits within the CMA derive less from segmentary patterns within Amazigh social structure identified by colonial ethnologists like Robert Montagne (1973 [1947]) or Ernest Gellner (1969) than from the different pragmatic choices necessitated by the specificities of the social and political fields in Algeria, Morocco, Libya, and Tunisia. It is not just the Moroccan state, for example, which is wary of the “Kabyalization” of the Amazigh movement (Le Saout 2008)—the spread of radical protest scripts and autonomy claims from Kabylia and the Kabyle diaspora—but Moroccan activists themselves seeking particular gains from the *makhzan*. Moreover, those who engage in national activism might find themselves the object of suspicion at home, their militancy bringing disproportionate policing and surveillance to their neighborhoods and villages. A transnational discourse of Amazigh secularism runs up against familial expectations of modesty and public performances of piety. Conversely, local actions to protect collective lands, irrigation systems, and hunting-gathering rights—while consonant with indigenous decolonial claims—operate in tension with broader Amazigh articulations of cosmopolitanism and environmentalism. All of which presents Amazigh activists with what I have elsewhere called a non-trivial “scalar dilemma” (Silverstein 2013).

3. Intersectional Identities

Amazigh scalar dilemmas likewise have racial and gender dimensions. Like all spacetimes, Tamazgha is necessarily bounded, and however porous those boundaries may be, they entail some degree of exclusion as well as inclusion. Defined geographically, Tamazgha potentially excludes those who do not live in a spatially demarcated “North Africa.” Defined genealogically, it is inclusive of the diaspora, but only to the extent that individuals can trace their descent through socially recognized lines. Defined culturally or linguistically, Tamazgha opens itself to all Tamazight speakers and to those who actively identify or engage with its defined practices and institutions, but it erodes when the language and way of life become endangered by emigration and settler colonial hegemony. As ethnographers have documented, marginalized Amazigh communities have long felt the pull of Arabo-Islamic cosmopolitanism even before state Arabization policies and the spread of state education to rural areas (Hoffman 2008a; Rignall

2021). Marriage alliances, Sharifian genealogical claims, and competence in Arabic were long strategies for individual and collective social mobility, especially for those excluded from locally powerful elite Amazigh fractions and confederations. To this day, proficiency in standard Arabic opens life chances for those rural Amazigh men and women seeking employment in urban North Africa or, increasingly, the Gulf where one's Amazigh background remains largely illegible or even demeaned. Strictly cultural or linguistic definitions of Tamazgha risk recapitulating colonial reifications of "Berbers" and "Arabs" and erasing de facto multilingualism and multiculturalism (Hoffman 2008b), much as purely genealogical delineations risk effacing the common experience of mixed Arab-Amazigh ancestry.

In the southeastern Moroccan oasis valleys where I have had the privilege of doing research over the past two decades, mostly male Amazigh activists consciously respond to these threats and challenges through concerted efforts of conservation and revitalization: recording and transcribing the oral poetry of aging bards; preserving material artifacts from pottery to agricultural tools to architectural forms; and entextualizing family histories and genealogies. The resulting objectified tradition is necessarily selective, drawing lines between the indigenous, the imported, and the imposed; between the authentic and the inauthentic; between that which is endowed with historical cultural value and that which can be allowed to wither away. These acts of cultural and linguistic selection tend to privilege those forms, objects, and histories associated with the pastoral lineages of the Ait Atta and Ait Yafelman tribal confederacies who had conquered the valleys and established dominance in the previous centuries and from whom the majority of local Amazigh activists descend.

Indeed, the very term "Amazigh" had previously been reserved for those "high-caste" or "noble" lineages, often separate from Sharif families who historically distinguished themselves from "Amazigh" tribes through the symbolic capital of descent from the Prophet and their religious orthopraxy (Ensel 1999). Both further differentiated themselves from local agriculturalists (denoted, often pejoratively, as Haratin or Iqablin) serving as sharecroppers on Amazigh- or Sharif-controlled land—as well as from emancipated slaves (Ismakhan) and those working in degraded professions like blacksmiths and butchers—who were denied direct representation in tribal assemblies and who were racialized as "black" (Chaker 1984, 567, cited in McDougall 2003, 68-69; Rignall 2021, 4, 22). Many of Sharifian descent have found themselves in the fight for Tamazgha, though social requisites of Islamic propriety have made them leery of certain public articulations of Amazigh secularism—much as historical tensions between maraboutic and secular lineages in Kabylia have animated divisions within the MCB and the political rivalry of the FFS and the RCD.

In contrast, those from Iqablin and Ismakhan ethnic collectivities often feel excluded from the Amazigh movement, despite speaking Tamazight and being more indigenous to the immediate region than those from the pastoral lineages who had descended from the High Atlas only a century before (El Manouar 2004; Skounti 2012). They tend to see in the Amazigh movement an effort to re-assert the domination of former notable families over a region that has shifted demographically in the favor of former "black" sharecropping families who have deployed migrant remittance monies to purchase land and political power (Ilahiane 2004; Rignall 2022, 5, 59). They suspect certain Amazigh activists of promoting tribalism, if not white supremacy. A number of them have joined Marxist student movements who have fought brutal battles with Amazigh student activists for control of regional universities. While, for the latter, Tamazgha connotes freedom, autonomy, and self-determination, for those of Iqablin and Ismakhan descent it recalls a past of social hierarchy, caste, and even enslavement (Silverstein 2021).

These divergences have not precluded notable acts of solidarity, whether locally when Amazigh and Marxist-oriented social development organizations unite in support of infrastructure projects (e.g. electrification of villages, school building, or provision of running water), in defense of collective lands from state or private expropriation, or nationally under umbrella groups like the February 20th Movement with its demands for social justice, living wages, and fiscal decentralization. In such instances, people's spatial belonging on the rural periphery of a geographic Tamazgha supersedes their particular genealogical identities. The struggle for Tamazgha is here about the inclusion of all Moroccans in national prosperity and against the economic and political dominance of an entrenched ruling class. As Karen Rignall (2021, 131) has described in her ethnography of small-scale farmers in the Mgoun Valley of southeastern Morocco, many of those hitherto excluded from land and resources call for "a new ethical community based on the right to subsistence rather than a state-sanctioned tribal affiliation that encoded long-standing social hierarchies." Theirs is a common struggle—indeed, a struggle over the commons—for equal access to the fruits of global capital and full participation as global citizens.

The current fight for economic justice and political inclusion builds on the long history of anti-colonial and decolonial resistance already discussed. Such historical political framing has a decidedly gendered dimension, with male warrior-activists principally occupying the public platform as valiant heroes and martyrs, while women—if important symbolic figures of Tamazgha—tend to be relegated to support or domestic roles. Female bards during the anti-colonial struggle sang less of their own roles than that of their kinsmen: lionizing the latter's deeds, encouraging their bravery, and mocking them when they failed to perform hegemonic masculinity (Peyron 2021). The assassinated Kabyle folksinger, Lounès Matoub is a more recent case in point: a self-proclaimed "rebel," his compositions were politically charged and he even sang wearing military fatigues, in support of what he saw as a Kabylia "at war" during the Black Decade. In the meantime, his sister (Malika) and wife (Nadia), while outspoken and courageous activists themselves, came to function principally as public mourners and participants in Matoub's canonization through their own speech and writing (M. Matoub 1999, N. Matoub 2000; Silverstein 2003).

In the meantime, male Amazigh activists consistently uphold women, in their roles as mothers and keepers of the domestic hearth, as the heart and soul of Tamazgha, as uniquely responsible for its cultural and linguistic—alongside its biological—reproduction (Sadiqi 2007). Male Amazigh poets and singers build on the repertoire of folklore which they first heard as cradle songs and bedtime stories. Male Amazigh activists and artists likewise underline the archaeological and ethnological evidence in support of indigenous Amazigh matriliney—even matriarchy—subsumed by Arabo-Islamic patriliney and patriarchy. In this sense, they highlight the Jewish Shawiya queen Dihya Kahina, emphasizing her key role in contesting the Arab invasion of Numidia and even defeating the Umayyad forces at the Battle of Meskiana (Hannoum 2001); her image has been reproduced by many Amazigh artists and adorns Amazigh gatherings. They likewise connect her to Kabyle anti-colonial resistance leader Lalla Fatma N'Soumer who defended Kabylia from invading French forces in the 1840s and 1850s. Statues honor her across Algeria, Kabyle schools are named after her, and her life has recently been depicted by Kabyle filmmaker Belkacem Hadjhadj who directed the first full-length film in the Amazigh language, *Machaho* (1995). Such historical images are paralleled by the recent transnational campaign by Amazigh associations across Kabylia and the diaspora to name June 5 the International Day of the Kabyle Dress (*la robe kabyle*), generalizing localized celebrations in Kabylia and Paris over the

last decade which have implicitly sought to counter the spread of Islamic religious fashion and present an alternative vision of defiant Amazigh femininity.

Female defiance, as a suggestive metaphor for Tamazgha (itself a feminine word), condenses the central gender friction within the Amazigh revival. As Amazigh men leave their rural homes to seek their economic and political fortunes in North African cities and the diaspora, as male activists demonstrate and are arrested for Tamazight, their kinswomen are often left behind to tend the soil/homeland (*tamazirt*) (Hoffman 2008a). It is they, more than anyone, who have an existential stake in the integrity of individual and collective land and recognize its value for the future of Tamazgha, as a country made inhabitable only by generations of back-breaking female labor. In the Sulaliyyat movement, rural Moroccan women—who may or may not self-identify as Amazigh—have put their bodies at further risk to demand their shares of collective lands and protect them from individual (male) profit, corporate spoliation, and state expropriation (Salime 2016). In so doing, they defy not only the Moroccan government but also local patriarchal power and global expectations of Muslim female submissiveness.

But Amazigh women refuse to be relegated to such reproductive roles and a lifetime of physical toil. Many also defy the expectations of their parents and communities in demanding education and mobility and in insisting on their freedom to choose their profession and marriage partner. In some cases, young women flee their rural homes for the urban centers and industrial zones, preferring the relative autonomy that comes with sweatshop, domestic, and even sex work (Crawford 2008; Cheikh 2020; Montgomery 2019). Others follow more authorized routes to university admission and on to breaking the glass ceilings of civil service, education, journalism, medicine, the law, and ultimately Amazigh politics itself (Sadiqi 2016). These banal acts of defiance build on the courage of generations of Amazigh women who have worked the boundaries of rural patriarchy, finding spaces for self-creation within their limits (Kasriel 1989; Maher 1974). Their efforts have helped build a Tamazgha based on everyday forms of care and solidarity, of collective labor and community building, but also of individual dreams and strivings. Their struggles for equality are ongoing both in North Africa and specifically within the Amazigh movement. They do not simply symbolize and reproduce some temporally static Amazigh culture but actively model new and diverse ways of being Amazigh and living one's Amazighitude (as it intersects with other diacritics of self-identification) for future generations, whether growing up on the rural periphery or in urban metropolises.

Conclusion

The plurality of co-existing, non-isomorphic, sometimes competing, and even conflicting Tamazghas is a strength, not a weakness. As Anna Tsing (2005) has argued, divergent projects can produce unexpected coalescences. Friction may chafe, but it also enables movement forward. Or, as Jacques Rancière (2015) has suggested, dissensus is not a problem to be solved but the condition of possibility for political transformation. At once a backward-looking narrative, forward-looking anticipation, and an assertion of radical presence, “Tamazgha” connotes a multiplicity of overlapping Amazigh lifeworlds, not all of which are officially recognized nor necessarily name themselves as such. It is a multifaceted project, activist and artistic, material and intellectual. And it is a dynamic one, with emergent engagements and residual inheritances pushing back against would-be dominant hegemonies (Williams 1977, 121-127). One of those emergent facets is the *Tamazgha Studies Journal*, whose mission is to elevate the multiplicity of Amazigh voices and

perspectives from across the region and the diaspora. Its eventual contribution to the Tamazgha's productive plurality cannot be fully foreseen, but it will surely be welcome.

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