Berber Consciousness & Resistance:
From the Algerian Berber Spring to the Libyan Berber Revolution
by

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Le jour où les hommes à l’honneur jaloux ne seront plus
Ceux que nous battions nous battront
(The day when men of jealous honor will be no more
Those we were fighting will defeat us)
-Mohand Mousa des Ait Ouagouennoun
from “Quand mourront les jaloux”
Transcribed by Mouloud Mammeri in Poèmes anciens kabyles

For my mother and father
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Introduction

On December 17, 2010, vegetable cart owner Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia, sparking the popular uprisings that spread throughout North Africa and the Middle East and soon became collectively known as the Arab Spring. Two months later, on February 15, 2011, the uprising against the regime of Muammar Gaddafi began in Libya. Though facile observation would designate this revolution as merely another addition to the Arab Spring, the Libyan Berber population played a pivotal role in the defeat of Gaddafi, who had long suppressed any expression of their language and culture. Libyan Berber revolutionaries fought both for the removal of Gaddafi, and for the free expression of their identity. Their victory generated a major rupture in consciousness of both political and cultural dimensions. For the first time since Gaddafi took power, Libyan Berbers openly celebrated their culture and language.

This Berber cultural resurgence stands outside the general context of the Arab Spring. It more closely resembles an earlier rupture in consciousness, that of the Berber Spring of 1980 in Algeria. That uprising began after the Algerian government’s cancellation of a lecture on Berber poetry by the linguist, professor, and novelist Mouloud Mammeri. In response, the first sustained, mass movement emerged to protest the suppression of Berber language and culture, and to call for democracy and respect for human rights. The goal of this thesis will be to explore the connection between these two events. Why did the subject of Berber poetry unleash such a major political movement? What is the role of Mouloud Mammeri in the formation of Berber political consciousness? How has the memory of the Berber Spring been preserved as a
transnational movement? Finally, how have Libyan Berbers drawn upon the consciousness developed through the Berber Spring?

An appreciation of Berber identity, or *Berbéritude*, is essential for the understanding of the link between the Berber Spring and Libyan Berber uprising. However, this identity has often been misunderstood and falsified for political purposes. Léopold Senghor, the poet, cultural theorist, and former president of Senegal identifies Berbers, alongside the “peuple noir” as one of the “deux colonnes de l’Africanité.”

However Senghor also writes, “Ce qui précède rend artificielle la distinction entre “Arabes”…et “Berbères”…L’histoire…fera d’eux la même ethnie.” While Senghor is correct in pointing out that the differences between North African Arabs and Berbers are not racial, linguistic and cultural differences separate the groups substantially. In fact, the vast majority of North Africans share common Berber ancestry. As Senghor asserts, “Le Maghreb est fondamentalement peuplé de Berbères.” The Berbers, indigenous to North Africa, have been subject to successive invasions by the Romans, Arabs, and French, but while the majority of North Africans have been “Arabized,” a significant population of Berbers remains culturally and linguistically distinct. Salem Chaker, professor of Berber linguistics at the Institut National des Langues et Civilizations Orientales (INALCO) in Paris defines Berber identity as a willful act of consciousness, writing, “To be a Berber

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3 “That which precedes makes the distinction between “Arabs”… and “Berbers” artificial… History…will make them into *the same ethnicity*.” Senghor, *Liberté III: Négritude et Civilisation de l’Universel*, 120.
today, and to want to stay one, is to necessarily commit an act that is at once military, cultural, possibly scientific, and always political." To retain their identity Berbers have continuously engaged in battles of consciousness, the most transformative being those of the Berber Spring and Libyan Revolution.

The official administrations of North Africa have consistently twisted and denied Berber identity, leading to the surges of Berber defiance in 1980 and 2011. Both geographically and statistically, Berbers stand outside official recognition. Though without a state of their own, Berbers identify their native land as an area known as Tamazgha, which stretches west to east from the Canary Islands to the desert oasis village of Siwa in western Egypt and north to south from the Mediterranean Sea to the Saharan desert. However, Berber communities are not connected throughout this territory, but rather make up pockets surrounded by larger Arab-speaking areas. Berber-speakers make up an estimated 40% of the population in Morocco, 25% in Algeria, 10% in Libya, and 1% in Tunisia. These numbers should be viewed as very rough estimates because, as Salem Chaker attests, “Il n’existe pas de recensement de linguistique dans

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6 These statistics leave out the Touareg (nomadic Berbers of the Saharan desert) population. Touaregs live mainly in Mali and Niger. Though they speak the same language as other Berbers, their history has been markedly different, and thus I will not be focusing on them for most of this thesis. Salem Chaker, “Perspectives pour les Berbères libyens et autres marginaux de la région? Des groupes minoritaires à la croisée des chemins,” (paper presented at the conference Libye: quels changements après Kadhafi ? Evolutions politiques et sociétales et bouleversements régionaux (Sahel, Maghreb, Paris, France, January 17 2013).
North African governments have consciously avoided linguistic censuses in order to minimize or even deny the presence of Berbers within their nations, thus Algerian and Libyan Berbers struggled to make their authentic identities visible.

Berbers have struggled to define their own identity against the hostility of outside powers since ancient times. The word “Berber” itself comes from the Greek word *barbaroi*, meaning “barbarian.” To counter the unappealing implications of this title, Berbers often call themselves *Imazighen*, or “free men” (*Amazigh* in the singular), thereby asserting the freedom essential to their identity. Just as outsiders fabricated their name, they have throughout history fabricated Berber historical and linguistic genealogy. Arab scholars often claimed Berber origin from the East, and French colonizers conceived of them as primitive Europeans. Since decolonization, Berbers have faced the persistent rumor that their language was the creation of colonizers. All of these theories have attempted to deny that North Africa is fundamentally Berber at its origin, and that Berbers have their own unique history, society, and language separate from the foreign powers that have invaded their territory. The Berber language, *Tamazight* is not closely related to Arabic or European languages, but rather separated from the same source as ancient Egyptian “before the definitive drying out of the Sahara between 2,500 and 2,000

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7 “A linguistic census does not exist in any country of the Maghreb.” Chaker, “Perspectives pour les Berbères libyens et autres marginaux de la région? Des groupes minoritaires à la croisée des chemins.”

8 The terms *Berber* and *Imazighen* (or *Amazigh*) are often used interchangeably, but I will be using *Berber* for the purposes of this thesis. Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, “The Berber Question in Algeria: Nationalism in the Making?,” in *Minorities and the State in the Arab World* ed. Ofra Bengio, et al. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), 31.

For most of their history, Berber language and culture survived orally. Their history was therefore written and obscured by outsiders, whether European or Arab. The Algerian government’s denial of Mouloud Mammeri’s attempt to reclaim oral Berber culture for his people initiated the Berber Spring in 1980.

Ancient North African history has become a battleground for Berbers, who have opposed the position of North African authorities that history did not begin until the Arab conquest of the region. Mammeri countered this position, and the Berber Spring itself produced a reevaluation of identity and history. In ancient times, Berbers assert they did not passively stand outside the great civilizations that surrounded them, but rather quite actively interacted with, contributed to, and at times, opposed these powers. Berbers have drawn upon their ancient history to emulate their ancestors’ strength and rebellious spirit.

The history of Berbers as a people with their own society and civilization begins in 202 BC when Masinissa formed the independent Kingdom of Numidia, the first major autonomous Berber state, which spread over modern-day Algeria and part of Tunisia. From 112 to 105 BC, Numidia fought against the Roman Empire in what was known as the Jugurthine War, after the Numidian king Jugurtha. Though greatly outnumbered, Jugurtha engaged the Romans with guerilla warfare. Numidia eventually lost the war and became incorporated into the Roman Empire, but Berbers have since empowered themselves through the history of this kingdom and the war with Rome, proof of the significance of their society before the introduction of Islam and of their resistance against strong foreign powers. Massinissa and Jugurtha have gained symbolic significance.

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as heroes, the first for establishing a distinctively Berber civilization and the second for exemplifying the Berber determination to fight back against more powerful outsiders.

The outside power that has most permanently impacted Berbers first appeared in the seventh century AD when the Arabs began their conquest of North Africa. Soon, the vast majority of Berbers converted to Islam, whether by force or choice. The majority eventually did abandon their original language and culture, though the Arabic spoken in North Africa differs significantly from classical Arabic and contains a great deal of Tamazight words and influence. As linguist Mohand Tilmatine writes,

> Les parlers arabes d’Afrique du Nord possèdent sans aucun doute des traits communs… qui leur donnent un caractère linguistique particulier et les différencient nettement de l’arabe oriental…L’influence du berbère sur l’arabe n’est bien sûr pas un phénomène recent.\(^{11}\)

And as the anthropologist Smail Chadli notes, “Le phénomène d’arabisation est culturel sans impact démographique sur les populations autochtones.”\(^{12}\) Thus, a nuanced understanding of North Africa should avoid simplistically categorizing the region as part of the Arab world, as even the “Arab” majority of the region retains, at least ethnically and linguistically, strong traits of their Berber origins. Even in Tunisia, where the “Arab Spring” began and Berber-speakers form only a small portion of the population, the people remain tied, whether consciously or not, to their Berber origins.

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Berbers did resist the Arab conquest, and this resistance produced another figure of symbolic power for future generations, Kahina. Kahina, a female prophet and military leader, defeated the invading army of Hasn ibn al-Nu’man, who traveled from Egypt to invade Carthage in 695 AD. Like Jugurtha, she was eventually defeated in battle by the more powerful invaders. As Arabs conquered North Africa, they invented mythologies to support their own superiority and justify their domination. The Islamic geographer Ibn al-Faqih al-Hamadhani (d. 903) expresses a commonly held belief, writing, “The Berbers originated in Palestine. They moved to the Maghreb when their king, Goliath, was killed by David,” and going on to call Berbers “heedless and dull-witted.” Just as Kahina stands as a precursor to modern Berber struggles, this medieval conception of Berbers’ pre-Islamic history anticipates modern North African governments’ warping of their region’s identity, denying or denigrating its Berber origin. However, the introduction of Islam did not necessarily create discrimination against North Africa’s native people, as many adopted the beliefs of Kharijism, which maintains, “Only the best Muslim was entitled to govern the community, irrespective of race.” Berbers and Arabs have not always been opposed to one another—the Berber Spring movement strove for recognition of both Berber and Arab components to the Algerian identity—but in the face of continuing repression imposed by the Arabist ideology, Kahina has remained an enduring icon of Berber perseverance.

The Manichean opposition between Berbers and Arabs, and thus the struggle of the Berber Spring to overcome this opposition, begins with the French colonization of North Africa. This colonization began on June 14, 1830 when French soldiers arrived in

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Algeria, ending 300 years of Ottoman rule over the region, and 1,100 years of Islamic rule. Following the Divide-and-Rule policy that they applied throughout their colonial empire, the French treated Berbers and Arabs quite differently. As the French anthropologist Robert Montagne wrote in 1934, “on pouvait concevoir une “politique berbère” distincte de la “politique arabe” de la France.” The French conceived of the Berbers as primitive Europeans, who could be civilized, as opposed to the Arabs, for them, a lost cause. French historians of the initial colonization of Algeria, Eugène Daumas and Paul Fabar wrote in 1847,

> Sous l’écorce musulmane on trouve de sève chrétienne. On reconnaît alors que le people kabyle, en partie autochtone, en partie germain d’origine, autrefois Chrétien tout entier, ne s’est pas complètement transfiguré dans sa religion nouvelle.

In an attempt to “re-Christianize” the Berbers, the French sent Catholic missionaries, known as *Pères Blancs* to Kabylie, though all but a very small number of Berbers remained Muslim. Daumas and Fabar go on to simplify and dichotomize the relationship between Kabyles (Algerian Berbers of the Kabylie region) and Arabs to pit them against one another, writing “Partout un abîme infranchissable les sépare; ils ne s’accordent que sur un point: le Kabyle déteste l’Arabe, l’Arabe déteste le Kabyle.” As colonial theorist Frantz Fanon writes in *A Dying Colonialism* (originally published in 1959),

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16 “Under the Muslim skin, one finds Christian lifeblood. Therefore, one recognizes that the Kabyle people, one part native, one part of German origin, entirely Christian in the past, has not completely transfigured itself into its new religion.” Eugène Daumas and Paul Fabar, *La Grade Kabylie: études historiques* (Paris: L. Hachette, 1847), 77.
17 “Everywhere an insurmountable abyss separates them; they only agree on one point: the Kabyle hates the Arab, the Arab hates the Kabyle.” Daumas and Fabar, *La Grade Kabylie: études historiques*, 75.
[The] originality of the Kabyle woman [not wearing a veil] constitutes, among others, one of the themes of colonialist propaganda bringing out the opposition between Arabs and Berbers.\(^{18}\)

While the French did not invent the fact that cultural differences existed between Arabs and Berbers, they used these differences to direct tension against one another, rather than their colonial oppressors.

The French attempts to pit Berbers and Arabs against one another resulted in long-lasting tensions throughout North Africa. In a speech at the First Congress of Negro Writers and Artists in 1956, Fanon comments on the “privileging” of a small Berber elite in Kabylie, writing,

"The appointment of “reliable men” to execute certain gestures is a deception that deceives no one. Thus the Kabyle djemaas [village leaders] named by the French authority are not recognized by the natives."\(^{19}\)

The creation of a tiny Berber bourgeoisie by the French did not in any way affect the vast majority of Berbers, who suffered from the same colonial oppression as Algerian Arabs, and refused to recognize the “leaders” that the French created for them. As the French sociologist Jacques Berque wrote, the French colonial policy was that "Berbers would remain good savages, worthy of love and respect, but whose ultimate promotion would consist in a N.C.O.’s stripes."\(^{20}\) Though Berbers generally suffered greatly during the colonial period, the Berber Spring hinged around the legacy of the “politique berbère,” as Mammeri combated the false assertion that colonists created the Berber language.

\(^{18}\) Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 36.
\(^{19}\) Frantz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution (Political Essays)* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 34.
Disproving any perceived affinity between Berbers and the French colonizers, Berbers fought actively in the Algerian Revolution, but the victory they helped ensure led to Arabization, nearly eradicating Berber identity. Each of the North African states, as they decolonized, adopted the ideology of a unified, singular Arab-Muslim national identity, excluding any Berber component. This pan-Arab ideology was imported from the Middle East, as were teachers brought in to instruct North Africans in standardized Arabic, which they had never previously spoken. Berber language faced seemingly inevitable annihilation, as state authorities repeatedly attacked Tamazight as an invention of the colonizers, and Berber children were forbidden from speaking their language in school. Authorities prohibited public displays of Berber culture, such as Berber singing at the annual Cherry Festival in Kabylie. Though the situation appeared bleak for the survival of Berber language and culture, a Berber intellectual movement of self-reflection had emerged in the early twentieth century with figures such as Mohand Saïd Lechani and Si Amar Ou Saïd Boulifa, who concentrated on the shared characteristics of Berbers throughout North Africa and the continual resistance to elimination and assimilation throughout Berber history. In the Revolutionary period, Algerian Berbers countered the dominant pan-Arab ideology with songs evoking the heroes of Berber resistance (Massinissa, Jugurtha, Kahina) as predecessors to the anti-colonial battle. Algerian Berber political activism proliferated in the 1970s, and many were arrested for

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opposing the regime’s institutional repression. Though Berber culture and resistance never died, its ultimate preservation and current large-scale vitality throughout the international Berber community is due to the work of Mouloud Mammeri, and to the Berber Spring movement, which his work inspired.

In chapter one of this thesis, I will explore how Mouloud Mammeri fought against the disappearance of Berber culture and provided tools for its rediscovery, and then turn to the Berber Spring itself, evaluating how and why it became such a significant event for the international Berber community and the region as a whole. In chapter two, I will examine the preservation and ritualization of the memory of the Berber Spring through annual commemorations, and the evolution of the movement spawned from that event, which has grown more defiant over time. Finally, in chapter three, I will discuss the direct link and parallels between the Berber Spring of 1980 and the Libyan Berber revolutionary struggle of 2011.
The Berber Spring of 1980 transformed the consciousness of the entire Berber people. Though throughout history Berbers have resisted the cultural oppression imposed upon them, the Berber Spring was the first mass uprising by Berbers in defense of their identity, bringing Berber culture firmly into the political realm. As a popular movement, involving all aspects of Berber society, not merely politicians or scholars, the Berber Spring unified the Berber community in its resistance. Through the careful use of media, the Berber Spring organizers internationalized their movement, attracting the attention of foreign reporters and human rights organizations, as well as the transnational Berber community. Thus, Berbers became more visible to the world at large and a new level of political activity emerged in Berber communities outside of Algeria. Finally, in adopting universal values in support of democracy and human rights, the Berber Spring operated as a catalyst for political change in the entire region of North Africa. The Berber Spring did not merely exist as a transitory event, but developed into a major movement that has remained ingrained into the Berber community ever since. Mouloud Mammeri, whose cancelled lecture initiated the Berber Spring, played a central role in making the event a movement of political and cultural awareness that lived on well beyond the actual event, spreading across nations and generations to the Libyan Berbers who joined the Revolution of 2011.

The importance of Mouloud Mammeri for the Berber Spring movement is not limited to the lecture that he never gave. Rather Mammeri conveyed to the event its long-
lasting intellectual, cultural and political dimension through what he said, did and wrote over the course of his career and lifetime. The content of his work, though typically discussed separately from the historical details of the Berber Spring, is essential for the understanding of the political event that followed, but as a linguist, writer, and professor, who was never actively involved in a political organization, Mammeri typically does not receive the credit he is due as a political figure. For example, Ali Guenoun, author of *Chronologie du mouvement berbère, un combat et des hommes*, calls Mammeri “plutôt modéré” in comparison to the more virulently anti-Arabist, pan-Berberist current of the Paris-based Académie berbère, noting, “Son activité est essentiellement l’enseignement de la langue berbère, la planification linguistique et l’édition.”

Consigning Mammeri’s work to the linguistic realm ignores the, at times subtle, but nevertheless firmly political message of his work. And while Michael Brett and Elizabeth Fentress call Mammeri the “symbol and chief protagonist of the revival of Berber culture,” they mention him only in passing and devote no time to analyzing his work or discussing its political implications.

Though never the leader of a Berber political party, Mammeri raised Berber consciousness from the dead, turning it from a dying culture into a lively celebration, both popular and intellectual. Mammeri documented the decline of Berber culture in his novels, thus fostering awareness of the threat of its extinction. He also fought against this collapse of the Berber culture and language. In his work as a professor, he taught Tamazight to a young generation of Berbers, who had born the brunt of the Algerian

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government’s Arabization policy. Many of his students became the militants who took part in the Berber Spring. In working to restore and preserve orally transmitted poetry in written form, Mammeri further helped ensure the consciousness of Berber identity and instilled a strong desire to oppose its eradication and oppression. The Algerian government found Mammeri’s message threatening, and understood that by speaking to university students, Mammeri would have been able to spread this message widely to a young audience. Thus, in 1980, they cancelled the lecture he was set to give on Kabyle poetry, which contains a message of opposition to oppression, a topic of great importance for Berber identity and their political liberation.

Mammeri fought against the death of Berber culture by instilling awareness of its decline. Born in 1917 in the village of Taourirt Mimoun in Kabylie (the largest Berber region of Algeria), Mammeri experienced the richness of Berber culture and its dissipation in the face of oppression first by the French colonizers and then the Arabization policies of the Algerian government. He worked to preserve and revitalize the Berber language and culture so that it would not disappear or become mere folklore, but rather actively resist oppression. In his childhood, Mammeri shared Berber culture and identity with those around him without self-reflection. He relates, “Mine was a culture that was lived, not learned. I was imbued with it without even being aware of it.”  

Though unaware of the cultural tradition he took part in, from an early age he appreciated the connection between orally transmitted poetry and the social customs of his society. He relates,

My father… could recite verses for hours…When the villagers wondered how to

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act in one or another circumstance they went to see my father, for my father knew everything the ancestors had done.\textsuperscript{26}

In Berber society, oral tradition transmitted from one generation to the next poems, stories, and the values that distinguished Berber culture from others, one of the most important being resistance to oppression. Oral transmission played an important part in the fight against colonialism, as “itinerants carried news and spread rumours; stories could be an incitement to rebellion.”\textsuperscript{27} Mammeri understood the power of resistance that oral tradition could unleash, and in a sense that is exactly what happened in 1980.

In chronicling the death of Berber culture, Mammeri instilled a consciousness, which was necessary for the culture’s eventual revitalization. In his first two novels, \textit{La Colline Oubliée}\textsuperscript{28} (1952) and \textit{Le Sommeil du Juste}\textsuperscript{29} (1955), Mammeri describes the reaction of Berbers as a colonized people to the cultural oppression of the French, a process described in very similar terms by Frantz Fanon in \textit{Toward the Algerian Revolution}. Fanon writes that a constant in the behavior of an oppressing people is “the destruction of cultural values, of ways of life. Language, dress, techniques are devalorized.”\textsuperscript{30} Physical violence is always matched with cultural violence because in order to truly enslave a people, “its systems of reference have to be broken.”\textsuperscript{31} Just as the oppressing people intends, “The cultural mummification leads to a mummification of individual thinking. The apathy so universally noted among colonial peoples is but the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{26} Mortimer, “Profile: Mouloud Mammeri,” 26.
  \item \textsuperscript{27} David Macey, \textit{Frantz Fanon: A Biography} (London: Verso, 2000), 231.
  \item \textsuperscript{28} \textit{The Forgotten Hill}
  \item \textsuperscript{29} \textit{The Sleep of the Just}
  \item \textsuperscript{30} Frantz Fanon, \textit{Toward the African Revolution (Political Essays)} (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 33.
  \item \textsuperscript{31} Fanon, \textit{Toward the African Revolution (Political Essays)}, 33.
\end{itemize}
logical consequence of this.” At first, finding that their culture no longer serves a purpose in the hostile world of their oppressor, Berbers seem to accept the destruction of their way of life. Fanon describes the beginning of this cycle,

Having witnessed the liquidation of its systems of reference, the collapse of its cultural patterns, the native can only recognize with the occupant that “God is not on his side.” Mammeri observes this resignation to defeat, writing in *La Colline Oubliée*, “C’était comme si Sidi Hand ou Malek, le Saint qui veillait depuis près de quatre siècles sur notre village et notre tribu tout entière, s’était désintéressé de nous.” But in recording this fatalism, Mammeri’s work had the opposite result, combating the passivity of assimilation.

Mammeri’s reflection of the death of his society was informed by an economic understanding of the effects of French colonialism, thus conveying the oppression of his people and concentrating the anger of Berbers against their oppressors. In *La Colline Oubliée*, published two years before the beginning of the Algerian Revolution in 1954, Mammeri describes the destruction of Berber culture accompanied and spurred on by the economic destruction of Berber society. The Kabyle village, Tasga where the novel is set suffers from almost unbearable poverty, forcing many villagers to migrate in search of work, thus leaving behind their culture. Mammeri writes,

Ils avaient quitté l’école très tôt et depuis l’un ou l’autre disparaissait quelques mois pour aller gagner un peu d’argent chez les Arabes ou en France, car chez

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32 Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution (Political Essays)*, 34.

33 Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution (Political Essays)*, 38.

34 “It was as if Sidi Hand ou Malek, the Saint who had stayed by the side of our village and our whole tribe for nearly four centuries, had lost interest in us.” Mouloud Mammeri, *La Colline Oubliée* (Meaux (Seine-et-Marne), France: Librarie Plon, 1952), 36.
Mammeri, who himself left Algeria to study in Paris, records from firsthand experience, the lack of economic opportunities that forced many Berbers of his generation to leave behind their villages and culture.

Mammeri describes how the economic weakening of their society leads to the abandonment of cultural values by the youth, who gravitate toward those of their oppressors. The young people have no interest in the tajmaït (village assembly), traditionally of paramount importance in Berber culture. Mammeri writes, “Les discours des jeunes ressemblaient aux conversations des épiciers: ils étaient secs, froids, sans ordre, sans citations.” Mammeri writes that this new attitude toward Berber traditions is sparked by the economic changes of colonialism. The tradition of Timechret, the sacrifice of sheep or cows, is questioned by a horsetrader, who asks, “Cela coûte trop cher et puis à quoi cela sert-il?” In tying the loss of Berber cultural interest to the economic changes under French colonization, Mammeri suggests that in adopting the attitudes of the people who have made them impoverished, Berbers are contributing to their own oppression, rather than fighting back.

Mammeri presents the attitude of Berber self-alienation and identification with the values of their oppressors in order to then demonstrate the self-destruction inherent in this stance. As Fanon writes, at first

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35 “The had left school very early and one after the other disappeared for a few months to go earn a little money in the Middle East or in France, because at home there is no work.” Mammeri, La Colline Oubliée, 24.
36 “The speeches of the young people resembled the conversations of grocers: they were dry, cold, without order, without quotations.” Mammeri, La Colline Oubliée, 36.
37 “This costs too much and, moreover, what’s the point of it?” Mammeri, La Colline Oubliée, 37.
the racialized social group tries to imitate the oppressor and thereby to deracialize itself. The “inferior race” denies itself as a different race. It shares with the “superior race” the convictions, doctrines, and other attitudes concerning it.\(^{38}\) Mammeri confirms this identification with the oppressor’s values and alienation from one’s own, as Toudert, a Berber character in his second novel *Le Sommeil du Juste*, asserts, “Il faut souhaiter la victoire [des Français]. Avant eux nous n’avions pas de médecins, pas de route, pas d’école; nous vivions comme les animaux de la forêt.”\(^{39}\) But in denying their own culture, Berbers are merely reacting to cultural oppression, and in no way changing the fact that they are an oppressed people. Mammeri understood the error of this perspective and relayed it through his literature.

Mammeri demonstrates the impossibility of assimilation, a realization necessary for the renewed interest in Berber culture. As Fanon writes, the oppressed soon discovers that no matter how desperately he tries to abandon his own culture and integrate into that of his oppressor, “he continues to be the object of racism and contempt.”\(^{40}\) Mammeri and Fanon both learned this lesson through their studies in France, and Mammeri shares consciousness of this realization with his people through his work. The protagonist of *Le Sommeil du Juste*, Arezki tries to abandon his native Berber culture and assimilate into French culture by immersing himself in French literature, and adopting the ideals of French humanism as his own. However, he discovers “chaque jour plus irréfutablement

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\(^{39}\) “We must wish for the victory [of the French]. Before them, we didn’t have doctors, roads, or schools; we lived like the animals in the forest.” Mouloud Mammeri, *Le Sommeil du Juste* (Meaux (Seine-et-Marne), France: Librarie Plon, 1955), 8.

Throughout the novel, Arezki hears himself designated by the French as an “Imann,” which stands for “indigène Musulman Algérien non-naturalisé.” Mammeri’s realization of the impossibility of assimilation sparks a return of interest to Berber culture and anti-colonial anger.

While Mammeri conveyed the impossibility of assimilation into the colonizer’s society, he also recognized the emergence of a new type of assimilation, which would also create cultural amnesia for Berbers. Mammeri describes at the same scene of ritual sacrifice in *La Colline oubliée*, a Qu’ranic student “récemment arrivé de l’Université d’El-Azhar au Caire,” who calls the sacrifice “péché dans notre religion.” In asserting the outside origins of this newly popular attitude of Islamic orthodoxy, Mammeri demonstrates that this new assimilation does not represent an authentic path toward liberation, rather mimicking the French colonizers by adopting values from outside the region. This assimilation was to the ideology of Salafism, an Islamic intellectual movement, which grew in popularity from the 1920s onward. Salafism called for a return to the piousness of early Islam and purity of the Arabic language, thus discouraging use of the languages actually spoken in North Africa, dialectic Arabic with its Berber phrases and the Berber language, Tamazight. This quickly became the dominant ideology of the Algerian Revolution, as in 1948, the Mouvement pour le Triomphe des Libertés

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41 “each day more irrefutably that man did not exist, that what existed is the Imann and the others.” Mouloud Mammeri, *Le Sommeil du Juste* (Meaux (Seine-et-Marne), France: Librarie Plon, 1955), 136.
Démocratiques (MTLD), a precursor to the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN), released a memorandum to the United Nations, stating, “La nation algérienne, arabe et musulmane, existe depuis le VIIe siècle.” The Salafist movement proposed an opposition between Arab and Western civilizations, excluding the Berber dimension from North African identity. Mammeri understood the danger this would pose for Berber identity.

Mammeri asserted the importance of the revitalization of Berber culture for authentic liberation of the Berber people. As Fanon writes, at the point of realization of the impossibility of assimilation, the “culture abandoned, sloughed off, rejected, despised, becomes for the inferiorized an object of passionate attachment.” This recognition makes Mammeri the political figure so vitally important for the Berber Spring movement. At the First World Congress of Black Writers and Artists at the Sorbonne in September 1956, Mammeri, along with fellow Algerian writers Malek Haddad and Mostefa Lacheraf contributed a message to the Congress. The message states,

This Congress is testimony to the vitality of cultures which, strengthened by the will of the people, are now shaking off the yoke of their exploiters, and a reminder that, without our cultural heritage, our freedom will be no more than illusory.

While the first part of this statement reflects the revolution Algeria was engaged in at the time, the second part anticipates the illusory freedom that was to follow for Berbers, who

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44 The main revolutionary body during the Algerian Revolution and the single ruling political party after independence
45 “The Algerian nation, Arab and Muslim, has existed since the seventh century.” Ali Guenoun, Chronologie du mouvement berbère (Algiers: Casbah Editions, 1999), 20.
though freed from the yoke of their French colonizers were denied free expression of their cultural heritage. Mammeri writes in *Le Sommeil du Juste*, “L’honneur…kabyle c’est plus que tout, plus que la paix, la richesse… plus que la vie… plus que la mort.”

He recognized that the concept of “l’honneur kabyle,” could be used as a weapon against the values of Berbers’ oppressors, whether they be the colonialist French before the Algerian War or the Algerian government who replaced them.

Mammeri fosters consciousness of the path to liberation through appreciation of Berber culture and history. In *Le Sommeil du Juste*, he presents the historical antecedent to the Berber Spring he went on to inspire. Toudert, the character who at the beginning of the novel expresses hatred for his own culture typical of the colonized, exclaims at the novel’s end that Kabyle revolutionaries “parlent de gens inconnus de nous, de moi en tout cas, de Masinissa, de Jugurtha, certainement des anti-Français.” Masinissa and Jugurtha, unknown to Toudert, as he does not know his own culture or history, were both Kings of Numidia, the Berber kingdom in present-day Algeria. Since both Masinissa and Jugurtha fought against the Carthaginians and Romans, these Berber revolutionaries invoke them as heroes who fought against invasion, just as the revolutionaries fight the French. As Fanon writes,

> On emerging from these passionate espousals [of culture and history], the native will have decided, “with full knowledge of what is involved,” to fight all forms of exploitation and of alienation of man.

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48 “Kabyle honor is more than everything, more than peace, wealth…more than life…more than death.” Mouloud Mammeri, *Le Sommeil du Juste* (Meaux (Seine-et-Marne), France: Librarie Plon, 1955), 8.
As Mammeri demonstrates, Berber revolutionaries fought the French not merely as a reaction against colonial oppression, but as an assertion of their own culture and history of resistance to cultural imperialism. However, unlike the Berber Spring, this movement did not mobilize Berber consciousness on the same scale, as Berbers played an essential role in national liberation, but their victory nearly led to the permanent disappearance of Berber language and culture.

After independence, the Berber language faced an even graver danger of disappearance, due to the new government’s policy of Arabization. Mammeri preserved Tamazight in face of the menace it faced by giving unofficial courses in the language at the Université d’Alger. He suggested teaching these courses in an official capacity, to which the Minister of Education Sa’id Mohammedi responded, “Tout le monde sait que ce sont les Pères Blancs qui l’ont inventé le berbère,” thus expressing the commonly held falsehood that the Berber language was invented by the colonizers. Kamal Naït-Zerrad, Berber linguistic professor at the Institut National des Langues et des Cultures Orientales (INALCO) in Paris, assesses the importance of Mammeri’s courses, stating,

La plupart des étudiants qui assitaient à son cours…ce sont les gens là qui étaient justement à l’origine de ‘80—du mouvement ‘80. Le mouvement culturel berbère, c’est eux. Ça veut dire que Mammeri est très important parce qu’il a initié ce mouvement.

So not only did Mammeri impact the consciousnesses of many Berbers through his writing, but he directly transmitted his linguistic knowledge to many of the militants who

52 “The majority of the students who took his classes…these were the people who were at the origin of the Berber Spring movement. They are the Berber cultural movement. Mammeri is very important because he initiated this movement.” Kamal Naït-Zerrad, interview by author, Paris, France, January 16, 2013.
organized the Berber Spring. As Hend Sadi, another prominent Paris-based Berber intellectual, told me,

C’est moi qui avait invité Mouloud Mammeri, que je connaissais déjà de longue date parce que j’étais son élève des années ‘68, ‘69 quand j’avais commencé mes études à l’Université d’Alger.\(^{53}\)

Therefore, Mammeri’s clandestine work teaching Tamazight against the will of the Algerian government led directly to the events of the Berber Spring.

Mammeri ensured the preservation not only of Berber language, but also culture, through his transcriptions of Berber poetry. In 1980, Mammeri published *Poèmes kabyles anciens*, a collection of oral poetry that Mammeri transcribed in both French and Tamazight, along with commentary that gives a good idea of what he would have lectured on had the government not intervened, thus provoking the Berber Spring. In the introduction, Mammeri writes,

Les poèmes ici rapportés ne sont pas pour moi des documents indifférents…Ils vivent, ils font partie des réalités qui donnent un sens à l’existence du groupe qui les a créés.\(^{54}\)

Mammeri opposes the folklorization of Berber culture, instead transcribing these poems in order to preserve culture that has existential value for Berbers in the present. He considers this task necessary because, as he acknowledges, “J’ai vu mourir les derniers viellards pour qui le sens de l’existence et sa valeur résidaient encore dans les vers

\(^{53}\) “I invited Mouloud Mammeri, whom I knew already for a long time because I was his student in 1968 and 1969 when I began my studies at the University of Algiers.” Hend Sadi, interview by author, Paris, France, January 17, 2013.

\(^{54}\) “The poems here collected are not indifferent documents for me…They live, they make up part of the realities that give a sense to the existence of the group that created them.” Mouloud Mammeri, *Poèmes kabyles anciens* (Tizi-Ouzou, Algeria: Éditions Mehdi, 2009), 7-8.
amoureusement conservés.”55 So as the oral poetic tradition no longer existed in the way it did during Mammeri’s childhood, he wrote down these poems in order for his people to understand their own identity.

Through transcribing these poems, Mammeri preserves the fundamental elements of Berber society, values that remain tremendously important for Berber identity into the present day. He writes, “Une des bases de ces sociétés sans État ni hiérarchie, c’est la parfaite égalité des membres.”56 This concept of equality explains the emphasis that the Berber Spring movement would place on democratization. Poetry is also the source for the value of honor that Mammeri places above all others in Le Sommeil du Juste: “la vertu… primordiale: le nif, l’honneur.”57 Through this poetry, Mammeri transmits the elements that make Berber identity unique, allowing his people to take pride in these distinctions. Through the poetry, Berbers can recognize that they are not barbaric, as they have been made to feel through colonization and cultural oppression, but rather a people of dignity. He refers to the prevailing attitude toward pre-Islamic Berber Society “en termes d’hérésie et de régression” as “anté-historique, anhistorique.”58 Through the poetry he collects, Mammeri provides a means through which to rediscover Berber culture, language, and history and to appreciate the value of Berber society.

Mammeri identifies the enemy of the movement that he helped form, writing that “la pratique politique des gouvernements maghrébins actuels” has been to relegate “la

55 “I saw the death of the last old men for whom the sense of existence and its value still resided in lovingly conserved verses.” Mammeri, Poèmes kabyles anciens, 9.
56 “one of the bases of these societies without State nor hierarchy is the perfect equality of its members, and thus, one of the major dangers, disunion.” Mammeri, Poèmes kabyles anciens, 38.
57 “the primordial virtue: honor” Mammeri, Poèmes kabyles anciens, 45.
58 “in terms of heresy and regression” “anti-historical, ahistorical” Mammeri, Poèmes kabyles anciens, 54.
Mammeri sets the stage for the Berber resistance to these governments that was to follow throughout the region. Once Berbers across the Maghreb have recognized their common adversary, they can then tap into the power of the poems Mammeri has provided to stand up against the injustice they face. Mammeri publishes these poems as tools for combat and ultimately liberation of the Berber people. He writes, “La poésie est arme…et, de fait, elle peut de l’arme avoir jusqu’à la vertu meurtrière.”

The definite link between oral transmission and combat in Berber society makes poetry a particularly threatening subject for the Algerian government. Mammeri states, “On se bat pour des mots,” underlining the political potential that words can hold. Poetry is a channel for engagement, spurring its listeners on to action, and expressing the connection between Berber social values and combat. In ‘Jeudi,’ Yousef-ou-Kaci, whose dates are uncertain (Mammeri places them anywhere from 1612 to the late 18th century), asks, “Combien de longs fusils sont tombés/Pour l’honneur kabyle?” In rediscovering their identity, Berbers also rediscovered this combative spirit.

Mammeri ends his introduction by expressing his essential message, which made him, as a defender of Berber culture the political leader of this movement. He asks,
“Qu’est-ce qu’une culture vraie sinon un instrument de libération?”63 In presenting Berber poetry as a tool for liberation, Mammeri forms the basis of the entire Berber cultural movement that emerged from the Berber Spring: the connection between Berber cultural celebration and political militancy, opposing the prevailing powers of the North African region. Mammeri goes on to state,

Pour que la culture berbère de ce temps soit un instrument d’émancipation et de réelle désaliénation…elle ne peut pas être une culture de réserve indienne ou une activité marginale, plus tolérée qu’admise.64

He states here that his goal in collecting these poems is to keep their spirit living among the people they came from, rather than as relics of a time that has long since past. Through this living reclamation of Berber culture comes emancipation.

The Algerian government’s attempt to silence this living reclamation of Berber culture that Mouloud Mammeri set in motion led to the Berber Spring uprising, an event immediately understood as a rupture in the consciousnesses of all involved. On March 10, 1980, the government cancelled Mammeri’s lecture for the stated reason of “risques de troubles de l’ordre public.”65 Ironically, the cancellation was what did in fact cause trouble for the public order of Algeria. More than 1000 people66 waited to see Mammeri, who was instead stopped at a police roadblock and driven to the region’s governor (wali), who had ordered the ban. This was the moment in which the students of the Université de

63 “What is a true culture if not an instrument of liberation?” Mammeri, Poèmes kabyles anciens, 56.
64 “So that Berber culture from this time onward should be an instrument of emancipation and of real disalienation…it cannot be a culture of an Indian reservation or a marginal activity, more tolerated than accepted.” Mammeri, Poèmes kabyles anciens, 56.
Tizi-Ouzou fully embraced the consciousness that Mammeri had helped form, and the necessity of action that consciousness entailed. Aziz Tari, a student at the time, recalls saying to Mammeri, “Désormais ce n’est plus votre affaire, c’est la nôtre.” Through these words, Tari symbolically transferred Mammeri’s cause from the intellectual realm of consciousness to the popular realm of action. He announced to his fellow students,

“Demain nous ferons une manifestation. Je suis fatigué des grèves, il faut porter la contestation sur la place publique, et un élec trochoc pour répondre à cet acte ignoble et mesquin!”

Mammeri’s preservation and strengthening of Berber consciousness had led to the first public, popular movement of contestation against the Algerian government’s suppression of Berber cultural expression.

Immediately those involved within the Berber Spring were conscious of the significance of their movement. Tari writes,

“C’est, en effet, la première fois depuis la fin de la guerre, qu’un mouvement politique ose exprimer, sur la place publique, son rejet d’un régime honni, qui nous a enfermés et qui a piétiné notre honneur.”

In invoking the concept of honor, Tari ties the Berber Spring to Mammeri’s project of culture as a tool of liberation. He goes on to clarify what he means by honor, writing,

“Our code d’honneur est l’unité dans la diversité, tout le monde a le droit d’exister mais

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67 “Henceforth this is no longer your affair, it’s ours.” Aziz Tari, “Plutôt mourir que capituler!,” in Avril 80: Insurgés et officiels du pouvoir racontent Le ‘Printemps berbère’ coord. Arezki Aït-Larbi (Algiers: Koukou Editions, 2010), 41.
68 “Tomorrow we will protest. I am tired of strikes. We must take the protest into the streets and create an electroshock to respond to this vile, petty action.” Tari, “Plutôt mourir que capituler!,” 41.
69 “It is, indeed, the first time since the end of the war, that a political movement dared to express, in public, its rejection of a loathed regime, which imprisoned us and stamped on our honor.” Tari, “Plutôt mourir que capituler!,” 44.
tout le monde doit respecter le consensus et le débat qui nous fait avancer.” Mammeri had transmitted this conception to the Berber Spring movement. In fighting for honor and equality, Berbers embraced the values intrinsic to their society, leading them on the path to resistance and democratization.

From a small demonstration, the Berber Spring soon grew into a widespread movement against the oppression of the Algerian government. Close to 700 people joined the initial demonstration. The protesters marched at the headquarters of the FLN and Tizi-Ouzou’s city hall. They chanted in both French and Tamazight, and held banners, which contained slogans such as “Halte à la répression culturelle!” The next day, at a second general assembly, students drafted an open letter to the Algerian president describing the cancellation of the lecture, and demanding the right to speak Tamazight and express Berber culture, as well as the adoption of Tamazight as a national language. By March 18, 8 days after the cancelled lecture, protests spread from Tizi Ouzou to other cities in Kabylie, such as Larbaa Naït Irathen, Azazga, and Aïn El Hammam. Tari describes the group of protesters as “jeune…composé d’étudiants, et de jeunes cadres, professeurs et travailleurs; [il] représente un échantillon représentatif de la société kabyle et de son état d’esprit.” Though Mammeri inspired the movement, he did

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70 “Our code of honor is unity in diversity, everybody has the right to exist, but everyone must respect consensus and the debate that we are advancing.” Tari, 46.
73 “young, composed of students and young professionals, professors and workers; it represents a representative sample of Kabyle society and of its state of spirit.” Aziz Tari, “Plutôt mourir que capituler!,” in Avril 80: Insurgés et officials du pouvoir racontent Le “Printemps berbère” coord. Arezki Aït-Larbi (Algiers: Koukou Editions, 2010), 45.
not oversee it and there were no veteran politicians behind the scenes. This was a popular movement that drew its energy from young students and was embraced by all segments of the Berber population. Salem Chaker writes that the Berber Spring was the moment at which Berbers as a people “arrivait à la conscience de soi. La disparition des Berbères et de leur langue n’était plus une donnée inéluctable.” The self-consciousness that Mammeri had grasped was finally passed down to his people as a whole.

The movement grew and mobilized through the use of media, and in response to an even more direct attack on Berber culture. On March 20, the Algerian national newspaper and propaganda-mouthpiece for the FLN, *El Moudjahid* published the article “Les donneurs de leçons,” written by the paper’s head writer, Kamal Belkacem. In this article, Belkacem affirms the Arabo-Islamic character of Algeria’s culture, and calls Tamazight, “une langue étrangère qui fût la langue de nos oppresseurs, de notre dépersonnalisation.” This attack on Berber language and culture as remnants of the colonial past served as motivation for the growth of the movement. On April 5, students occupied a copying center of the University of Tizi-Ouzou, printing thousands of copies of Mouloud Mammeri’s response to Belkacem’s article. In this article, titled “Le malaise kabyle,” Mammeri writes, “La poésie kabyle fait partie du patrimoine national.”

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75 “a foreign language that was the language of our oppressors, of our depersonalization.” Kamal Belkacem, “Les donneurs de leçons,” *Tamazgha*, March 20, 1980, [http://www.tamazgha.fr/Les-donneurs-de-lecons-l-article-ordurier-de-Kamal-BELKACEM_540.html](http://www.tamazgha.fr/Les-donneurs-de-lecons-l-article-ordurier-de-Kamal-BELKACEM_540.html).

Responding to Belkacem’s accusation that the Berber language and culture are imposed from colonialist outsiders upon Algeria, Mammeri asserts instead that all Algerians share a common Berber cultural heritage. This article was distributed throughout Algeria and was published on April 11 in *Le Matin de Paris*, articulating the message behind the Berber Spring and countering the distortion of history spread in *El Moudjahid*. Students continued to occupy the copy center, printing tracts, statements to the press and government, and messages used to organize demonstrations and strikes. Through the use of mass media, the Berber Spring movement spread beyond the confines of Kabylie, beginning the transnational spread of Berberism so essential for the combat of Libyan Berbers in 2011.

However, it was the violent and authoritarian response of the Algerian government to the protests that transformed the movement into a major, popular uprising that drew the full attention of the international press. On April 7, protests were organized in Tizi-Ouzou, Algiers, and other cities throughout Algeria. Additionally, 400-500 protesters marched outside of the Algerian embassy in Paris.77 Rachid Chaker,78 assistant professor in economics at Université de Tizi-Ouzou at the time of the Berber Spring, writes that in Algiers, one group of protesters was “sauvagement matraqué” by the police, who arrested 110 protesters, and kept 20 overnight; government agents discouraged participation in the protests, calling the protesters “réactionnaires, agents de


78 Rachid Chaker is also the brother of Salem Chaker. He died soon after completing this chronology in an accident on August 5, 1980.
l’impérialisme.” It was at this point that students called for the unlimited general strike that would shut down all of Kabylie, and that the international press began to pay greater attention to the Berber Spring, alerting much of the world for the first time of the cultural oppression of Berbers and of their desire for liberation. As Salem Chaker states,

Deux éléments essentiels…qui constituent une véritable rupture, vont caractériser le “Printemps berbère”: L’écho international des événements; L’irruption dans la contestation de la société civile à travers une mobilisation de masse.\

As a mass movement that drew international attention, the Berber Spring became permanently etched in the consciousnesses of Berbers as the moment in which Berbers as a community strove for liberation and gained recognition from the outside world.

By involving the international press in their struggle, the Berber Spring both drew attention to the cultural recognition they strove for and the human rights violations of the Algerian government. Students at the Université de Tizi-Ouzou formed an Anti-Repression Committee, which held a press conference on April 9 attended by correspondents from *Le Monde* and *AFP* (Agence France Presse), in which members of the Committee explained the movement as a response to “le rejet du “berbérisme.” By April 13, a representative of the *Associated Press* was in attendance at another Anti-Repression Committee press conference. Two days later, Alain Meynargues, a reporter

80 “Two essential elements…which constitute a veritable rupture characterize the Berber Spring. The international echo of the events; the eruption into protest of the civil society through mass mobilization.” Salem Chaker, “Regard sur le “Preintemps berbère”: Témoignage et réflexions d’un acteur-observateur,” in *Avril 80: Insurgés et officials du pouvoir racontent Le “Printemps berbère”* coord. Arezki Aït-Larbi (Algiers: Koukou Editions, 2010), 127.
for France Inter, was arrested after interviewing a student and professor. Chaker writes that until this sudden attention from the international media,

L’Algérie “révolutionnaire” avait réussi ce tour de force de museler toute opposition, de pratiquer la répression structurelle de toute contestation, de procéder à des arrestations et détentions extrajudiciaires à grande échelle, de pratiquer régulièrement la torture et les exécutions sommaires, la liquidation physique des opposants, sans que quasiment jamais la presse internationale et les organisations de défense des droits de l’homme ne se saisissent des cas.  

Therefore, just as the Berber Spring was a point of rupture in the struggle for Berber culture, so too was it a point of rupture for human rights, which finally received the attention that had long been absent in Algeria. As Chaker writes, “Les acteurs du “Printemps berbère”…avaient compris que…leur plus sûre protection contre la répression était l’écho international donné à leur protestation.”  

In attracting the attention of the international press, the Berber Spring both spread its message transnationally and ensured that the Algerian government would receive scrutiny in its attempts at repression.

As the movement grew, so too did its aims—from ending repression of Berber cultural expression to a more all-encompassing message attacking governmental corruption and calling for democracy. On April 13, a tract called “Appel à la grève le 16 avril 1980” appeared and was widely distributed throughout Kabylie. This tract,

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82 ““Revolutionary” Algeria had succeeded in this tour de force of muzzling all opposition, practicing structural repression of every protest, proceeding to arrests and extrajudicial detentions on a large scale, regularly practicing torture and summary executions, physical liquidation of opponents, without the international press and organizations in defense of human rights practically ever seizing upon these cases.” Salem Chaker, “Regard sur le “Preintemps berbère”: Témoignage et réflexions d’un acteur-observateur,” in Avril 80: Insurgés et officials du pouvoir racontent Le “Preintemps berbère” coord. Arezki Aït-Larbi (Algiers: Koukou Editions, 2010), 127.

83 “The actors of the Berber Spring understood that their most sure protection against repression was the international echo given to their protest.” Chaker, “Regard sur le “Preintemps berbère”: Témoignage et réflexions d’un acteur-observateur,” 128.
attributed to a mysterious group known as *Le Comité de Soutien aux Etudiants et Travailleurs en grève*, called for a general strike, declaring,

> Le lot quotidien de l’Algérien est réduit à un problème de survie, l’affrontant ainsi: aux pénuries de produits de première nécessité; à une crise de logement sans pareil; à une corruption organisée; au mensonge journalier de la presse; au trafic des élections; à l’allégeance des valets du pouvoir.  

This tract demonstrates the expansion of the Berber Spring from a protest against the repression of Berber culture to a movement attacking even greater and more fundamental flaws and corruptions in the Algerian state. The tract addresses fellow countrymen, telling them that by joining the strike, “tu te démarqueras d’un régime anti-démocratique et anti-populaire,” thus characterizing the as-yet-unnamed Berber Spring as a pro-democratic movement, rather than simply a pro-Berber one. On April 16, businesses, schools, and factories closed their doors throughout Kabylie, as the general strike began. From a small student-led protest, the Berber Spring now emerged as a widespread political movement of opposition, relevant for the entire region of North Africa and Berber community at large.

Confrontation between the Berber Spring movement and the authorities reached its peak on April 20, the day that has since been commemorated annually, serving as a focal point for both opposition to oppression and celebration of Berber culture. After a long general assembly the night of April 19, at 4:15 AM the next morning, riot police

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armed with bayonets, billy clubs, and tear gas invaded the University of Tizi-Ouzou. Chaker writes, “Coups de crosse et de baïonnette pleuvent sur les étudiants.” 86 After this police raid, protesters took to the streets in great numbers, facing off against increased police brutality. As Chaker puts it, “C’est une véritable guerre civile qui se déclenche dans toute la Kabylie.” 87 Large police patrols roamed the streets with weapons and dogs, spraying teargas at protesters. Rumors of rapes and deaths spread throughout Kabylie.

Arezki Aït-Larbi, a student at the Université de Tizi-Ouzou, initially released a statement reporting 32 deaths, later explaining that decision, writing, “Pourquoi 32 morts? Parce qu’il m’a semblé plus crédible qu’un chiffre rond.” 88 In fact, no rapes or deaths occurred, though 453 were wounded and hundreds were arrested. 89 Regardless of the exaggerated reports, the repression by the authorities was brutal and left a lasting impression in the consciousness of Berbers, who had now witnessed on a mass scale the physical oppression that accompanied the Algerian government’s oppression of their culture.

From this point onward, it was clear that mass opposition to the policies of the Algerian government would be an ever-present possibility. The change in consciousness for Berbers was to be permanent, and the struggle for democracy and human rights in the region had also begun. On May 16, Radio-Alger announced the names of twenty-four prisoners to be placed on trial at the Court of Security of the State in Médéa for their roles

87 “A true civil war is going off in all of Kabylie.” Chaker, “Journal des événements de Kabylie (mars-mai 1980): Lundi 7 avril 1980.”
89 Aït-Larbi, “Ce “Printemps” qui a réinventé l’espoir,” 183.
in confrontations with police. From this point on, the liberation of the twenty-four prisoners became the most urgent demand for organizers of protests and strikes. These continued until May 26 when students at Université de Tizi-Ouzou voted to return to classes, while at the same time creating three new Commissions: the first for the Liberation of Prisoners; the second for (Berber) Cultural Activity; and the third for the Democratization of the University. These Commissions convened at the month-long Seminar of Yakouren, at the end of which they published a 124-page platform, presented to the Algerian government, and published in Paris. In the end, the Algerian government did make some concessions to the Berber Spring movement. By June, the twenty-four political prisoners were released without a trial. A chair in Berber Studies was created at the University of Tizi-Ouzou, and Tamazight courses were allowed to proliferate. However, the new Cultural Charter formulated that same summer, declared Algeria’s national culture to be “a synthesis of the collective experience, our Muslim religion, our Arabic language, our membership in the Arab-Islamic civilization, and our popular culture patrimony.”90 Though a major transformative moment of consciousness, the Berber Spring did not have major transformative effect on the policies of the Algerian government, and thus the movement born from the Berber Spring has continued in its resistance, and expanded in scope, as its message and values remain potent for the entire region.

Chapter Two:
The Preservation and Transformation of the Berber Spring Movement

The Berber Spring was a point of rupture in political consciousness not only for Kabyles, but for the entire Berber community and all of North Africa, as the first major movement for democratization in the region. Almost immediately, members of the Berber Spring movement began to view the Berber Spring in a symbolic sense that transcended the immediate issues of cultural repression. Though the Berber Spring movement fought for the expression of Berber identity, that was only one facet of a struggle for human rights for individuals and free political expression. The symbolic representation of the Berber Spring has allowed its memory to be well preserved into the present day. Throughout North Africa and the Berber Diaspora, the Berber Spring has been drawn upon as a shared memory of resistance and celebration, passed down from one generation to the next. Since 1980, the movement born from the Berber Spring continues to grow in size, spawning new political organizations, and to become more defiant, challenging governmental authority more directly, leading toward the armed conflict of Libyan Berbers in 2011.

Though historians have reflected on the ritualization of the Berber Spring through its annual commemorations, they have typically discussed the Berber Spring as an event, rather than an ongoing movement. Jane E. Goodman writes, “As ritual, April 20 has become a repository for a sedimented history that Kabyles can tap into as they seek to
lend weight to emergent concerns,“\(^9\) thus analyzing the Berber Spring as a source of energy intermittently returned to, while ignoring the continuously advancing movement that did not end with the events of 1980. Others such as Michael Brett and Elizabeth Fentress have acknowledged that the cancellation of Mammeri’s lecture “touched off not only a series of demonstrations, but also the beginning of process which had not been foreseen: the creation of a Berber movement in Algeria.”\(^9\) However, this summation leaves out the more far-reaching consequences of the Berber Spring for the entire international Berber community and the region of North Africa as a whole.

The Berber Spring opened the political consciousnesses of many Kabyles, but from the very beginning, those who participated in the movement saw it as an event whose goal was to liberate the consciousnesses of all Algerians, whether Berber or not. As the first major pro-democratic movement in North Africa, the Berber Spring is greatly significant for the entire region. This shift in consciousness is reflected in the first and most direct result of the Berber Spring: the Seminaire de Yakouren, which was organized by participants within the Berber Spring, and began on August 1, 1980, little over two months after students voted to end their strike and resume classes at the Université de Tizi-Ouzou. The Seminaire, which lasted for a month and took place in Yakouren, a town within the province of Tizi-Ouzou produced a “dossier culturel,” entitled Algérie, Quelle identité?\(^9\) published in Paris in 1981. The title of this document indicates that from the

\(^9\) *Algeria, What Identity?*
beginning, the Berber Spring movement concerned itself not just with Kabyle identity, but with the identity of all of Algeria.

The report begins by invoking the Berber Spring as “le mouvement de Tizi-Ouzou du printemps 1980,” explaining that this movement was motivated by the following factors:

la recherche de l’identité algérienne effective; la volonté de promouvoir les deux langues de la nation: Tmaziɣt⁹⁵ et Arabe algérien; la soif de la culture; le droit à la libre expression.⁹⁶

While this opening emphasizes the desire for recognition of the Berber language as a national language of Algeria, expression of Berber identity and culture is not presented as the central motivation for the movement, so much as a reevaluation of the identity and culture of all of Algeria. The desire to openly express Berber culture and use the Berber language is only one facet of a larger struggle for democratization, free speech, and recognition of the true nature of Algeria’s cultural and linguistic history and identity. The organizers of the Seminaire de Yakouren emphasize that the conference “a été ouverte à tout citoyen concerné par le problème culturel.”⁹⁷ They do not exclude or condemn Arab-speaking Algerians as their enemies. Rather, they wish to identify “la confusion entre

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⁹⁵ An alternate spelling of Tamazight.
⁹⁶ “the search for the actual Algerian identity; the desire to promote the two languages of the nation: Tmaziɣt and Algerian Arabic; the thirst for culture; the right to free expression.” Algérie, Quelle identity?: Seminaire de Yakouren, Août 1980 (Paris: Imedyazen-Atelier Berbère de Production et de Diffusion, 1981), 5.
⁹⁷ “was open to every citizen interested in the cultural problem.” Algérie, Quelle identity?: Seminaire de Yakouren, Août 1980, 3.
arabité (un des faits culturels du pays) et arabisme (idéologie pan-arabe).”

The political authorities of Algeria have instituted this “arabisme” to the detriment of not only the Tamazight-speaking, but also the Arabic-speaking population of the country, as the classic Arabic chosen as Algeria’s official language “n’est la langue maternelle d’aucun Algérien.” This movement began within the Kabyle community, but the movement does not limit itself to emancipation of Kabyle culture. It rather strives for cultural emancipation of the entire Algerian people.

The Berber Spring prompted a reexamination of Algerian history, as documented in *Algérie, Quelle identity?* This task of historical self-examination is necessary because Algerian history “a été déchiffrée et analysée par des étrangers, souvent par nos oppresseurs même.” The Seminaire de Yakouren marks perhaps the first time that a thorough, critical recording of Algerian history has been undertaken by its own people. This document does not intend to record every detail of Algerian history. Rather it states, “l’histoire ne nous intéresse...que par ses répercussions sur le présent et ses implications sur l’avenir.” This historical sensibility reflects the antiquarian mode of history, as described by Nietzsche. Just as Nietzsche cautions that “antiquarian history degenerates from the moment when the fresh life of the present no longer animates and inspires it,”

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98 “the confusion between Arabité (a cultural fact of the country) and Arabism (the pan-Arab ideology).” *Algérie, Quelle identity?: Seminaire de Yakouren, Août 1980*, 6.


100 “was deciphered and analyzed by foreigners, often even by our oppressors.” *Algérie, Quelle identity?: Seminaire de Yakouren, Août 1980*, 14.


the writers of this document actively seek to tie the history that they describe to the present, and specifically to the movement borne out of the Berber Spring.

This historical undertaking begins with the assertion that “depuis la nuit des temps notre terre s’est trouvée caractérisée par la présence berbère.”\(^{103}\) So while arabité is not discounted as a fundamental element of Algerian identity, the Seminaire de Yakouren emphasizes the Berber origins of the country. Just as Algerian history has been marked from the beginning by Berber presence, it has also been marked by imperialism and colonialism. Algeria has been subject to “une série de conquêtes et colonisations qui, l’une préparant l’arrivée de l’autre, ne prendront fin que le 5 Juillet 1962.”\(^{104}\) Therefore, the Algerian identity begins above all with an understanding of the Berber origin of the Algerian people and of the constant struggle against outside, invading powers. This conception of Algerian identity opposes “l’hégémonie de l’idéologie arabo-islamique,” which provides “la definition officielle de l’identité du people algérien [qui] exclut le fait Amaziɣ.”\(^{105}\) This opposition is at the crux of the movement that organized and grew from the Berber Spring.

The writers of *Algérie, Quelle Identité?* are careful to distinguish their opposition to the Arabism and Islamism of the Algerian government from opposition to Arabophone Algerians and Islam. In fact, Islam is presented as a tool for social equality rather than

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\(^{103}\) “since time immemorial our land has been characterized the presence of Berbers.” *Algérie, Quelle identité?: Seminaire de Yakouren, Août 1980* (Paris: Imedyazen-Atelier Berbère de Production et de Diffusion, 1981), 16.

\(^{104}\) “a series of conquests and colonizations that, one preparing the arrival of the next, will not end until July 5 1962.” *Algérie, Quelle identité?: Seminaire de Yakouren, Août 1980*, 16.

subjugation, as “les populations converties à l’Islam refusaient l’hégémonie des
gouverneurs arabes, en se réfugiant dans le Karidjisme qui affirme l’égalité entre tous les
musulmans.”

While this document opposes the Islamist ideology of the Algerian government, it maintains that “l’islamité populaire n’a rien à voir avec les courants politiques qui ne voient dans la religion qu’un moyen pour freiner la prise de conscience politique des masses.”

The writers of this document also affirm Algerian Arabic as an authentic language of Algeria: “le résultat progressif des contacts et relations qu’entretenaient nécessairement les populations au cours de la vie sociale.”

This distinction situates the Berber Spring, at least in its beginning stages, as a movement of reform, rather than division. Their intention is not to divide Algeria between Arabic-speakers and Tamazight-speakers, or between Muslims and secularists but rather to unify the country with a cultural identity that is true to the country’s history, and not imposed by outsiders.

The document maintains that the “opposition entre “berbérophones” et “arabophones” est un mythe entretenu par la France pour mieux dominer le peuple algérien.”

This world-view in which Algeria is divided between two culturally and linguistically opposed peoples is contrary to the true history and culture of Algeria.

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106 “the populations converted to Islam refused the hegemony of Arab governors, taking refuge in Kharijism, which affirms equality between all Muslims.” Algérie, Quelle identity?: Seminaire de Yakouren, Août 1980, 23.

107 “the popular Islamité has nothing to do with the political currents that only see religion as a means to restrain the capture of political consciousness by the masses.” Algérie, Quelle identity?: Seminaire de Yakouren, Août 1980, 31.

108 “the progressive result of contacts and relations necessarily maintained by the populations in the course of social life.” Algérie, Quelle identity?: Seminaire de Yakouren, Août 1980, 23.

109 “opposition between “Berber speakers” and “Arab speakers” is a myth maintained by France to better dominate the Algerian people.” Algérie, Quelle identity?: Seminaire de Yakouren, Août 1980, 34.
Rather, the “réalité du people algérien [est] sa diversité culturelle. Celle-ci ne représente pas un frein à l’unité du people algérien, mais une richesse de ce peuple.” Therefore, the movement of the Berber Spring is not an exclusively Kabyle movement opposing the Arab population of Algeria, but rather a movement seeking to express cultural diversity as a positive attribute of Algeria, opposed by a government that views any expression differing from their Arabist-Islamist ideology as a threat to the nation’s unity. The document cites an article in the national newspaper El-Moudjahid from 1974, entitled, “Tout algérien qui refuse de s’arabiser se sentira étranger dans son propre pays.” This headline quite accurately describes the phenomenon of “arabisation,” in which the government imported teachers from the Middle East to teach Algerians their official, national language, classic Arabic, a language that had never been spoken by Algerians before independence. Algerians who remained authentic to their cultural heritage would necessarily feel like strangers in their own country, forced to learn a foreign language and discouraged from communicating in the languages of their ancestors. As a strongly and succinctly worded manifesto, Algérie, Quelle identité? proves the potency of the Berber Spring movement as an intellectual counterweight to the dominant Arabist ideology of North Africa’s authorities.

The Berber Spring is today still viewed by members of the Berber intellectual community as the greatest moment of change in political consciousness for Berbers and for the region of North Africa as a whole. This is confirmed by two interviews I

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110 “réalité du Algerian people is its cultural diversity. This does not represent an obstacle to the unity of the Algerian people, but a richness of this people.” Algérie, Quelle identité?: Seminaire de Yakouren, Août 1980, 35.
111 “Every Algerian who refuses to Arabize will feel like a foreigner in her own country.” Algérie, Quelle identité?: Seminaire de Yakouren, Août 1980, 81-82.
conducted in January 2013 in Paris. I first interviewed Kamal Naït-Zerrad, professor of Berber language and linguistics at INALCO (Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales). Naït-Zerrad affirmed that the Berber Spring

est peut-être l’événement le plus important pour toute la région, qui a permis de changer des choses—les régimes autoritaires…Je pense que ‘80 était le moteur de toutes ces évolutions.112

As the first major movement that dared to oppose the oppressive government of a post-colonial North African state, the Berber Spring opened up the consciousness that this type of opposition was possible. I conducted my second interview with Professor Hend Sadi, who organized the cancelled lecture by Mouloud Mammeri that sparked the Berber Spring. Sadi said of the Berber Spring, “Ça a libéré la parole, ça a libéré la conscience, ça a libéré l’expression.”113 The Berber Spring was an event that gave people the courage to express themselves in ways that had previously seemed impossible. It demonstrated that the authorities could not silence its people. This new consciousness has been preserved symbolically and spread outside the confines of Kabylie.

The symbolic representation of the Berber Spring has been essential for the preservation of its memory. Most visibly, the Berber Spring is commemorated each year on April 20 throughout North Africa and the Berber Diaspora. Significantly, these commemorations are popular events that include the entire community of Berbers of all age groups, genders, and classes. While Berbers have struggled against cultural oppression throughout their history, this commemoration of the Berber Spring as a

112 “is perhaps the most important event for all of the region, as it allowed things to change—authoritarian regimes…I think ’80 was the motor for all these evolution.” Kamal Nait-Zerrad, interview by author, Paris, France, January 16, 2013.
113 “It liberated the word, it liberated consciousness, it liberated expression.” Hend Sadi, interview by author, Paris, France, January 17, 2013.
singular moment of defiance serves as focal point for self-aware historical reflection on this struggle. As historian Pierre Nora writes, “Tradition is memory that has become historically aware of itself.”\(^\text{114}\) In commemorating the Berber Spring, Berbers consciously reflect upon the event as a celebration of Berber cultural identity and a moment of active, public, and explosive defiance. The struggle of the Berber Spring did not end in 1980, but rather has continued to inspire generations of new political activists. Referencing the French Revolution, Nora writes, “Memory thrives on great events and perceives permanence exclusively through discontinuity.”\(^\text{115}\) Like the French Revolution for French history, the Berber Spring was a moment of rupture in Berber history, and the history of North Africa. While reflection on Berber identity and confrontations against oppressive authorities existed before the Berber Spring, a new, heightened expression of “Berbéritude” was born from that event and has remained vital and vibrant into the present day.

The younger generations who participate in commemorations of the Berber Spring appreciate its symbolic importance and confirm its transcendence of the initial circumstances from which it arose. Fatima, a student in Tamazight at the Université Colonel Mohand-Oulhadj de Bouira in Algeria, who participated in the 32\(^{\text{nd}}\) anniversary commemoration of the Berber Spring in 2012, declared, “Le 20 Avril est le symbole du combat pour l’identité amazighe et la liberté.”\(^\text{116}\) As with the original organizers of the


movement, the younger generations are conscious of the Berber Spring’s significance not only for the struggle to assert Berbéritude, but also its more universal implications for human rights. Another student, Allaoua, proclaimed, “Le 20 Avril est un acte de naissance des luttes pacifiques pour une Algérie plurielle. Il symbolise la liberté, la démocratie et l’identité.” These students understand the Berber Spring as both a cultural event for all Berbers and as a political movement for plurality, a concept relevant for the entire region of North Africa. The testimony of these students proves that through commemorations the memory and spirit of the Berber Spring has been well preserved for younger generations.

The commemorations of the Berber Spring are popular events, but they are also organized by a variety of organizations that ensure the continued relevance of the Berber Spring to address political issues of the present day, and spread the memory of the event transnationally. In Algeria, the RCD (Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie), one of the largest Kabyle political parties, organized marches in Bouira, Tizi Ouzou and Béjaia to commemorate the Berber Spring on April 19 and 20, 2012. Demonstrators carried signs with slogans, “qui vont de l’officialisation de Tamazight à la réhabilitation de l’histoire et de l’identité nationales confisquées par le régime en place.” These marches

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117 “April 20th is a birth certificate of the peaceful struggles for a pluralist Algeria. It symbolizes liberty, democracy and identity.” Chih, “Célébration du 32e anniversaire du printemps amazigh, Les jeunes ravivent la flamme du 20 Avril.”
demonstrate the continuation of the Berber Spring’s defiant spirit. The commemoration of the Berber Spring also serves as an opportunity for Berbers from around the world to learn from one another and strengthen ties. On April 20, 2012, the Association Euro-Berbère Tudert organized a conference and celebration of the Berber Spring in Pierrefitte sur Seine, France. This conference included testimony by Saïd Khelil, a participant in the Berber Spring, along with lectures by Kamel Saidi of the Congrès Mondial Amazigh on recent events in Libya and Azawad, and Aïcha El Hassani, who spoke of the situation for Berbers in Morocco. El Hassani states, “Le printemps amazigh étant initialement un moyen de révolte et de revendication est devenu une obligation de résultat!”¹¹⁹ This conference demonstrates the strengthening of transnational connections through commemorations of the Berber Spring, which is viewed as an essential event by Berbers from many different countries.

The memory of the Berber Spring has not only been preserved through annual yet transitory commemorations, but also institutionally, through the renaming of the Université de Tizi-Ouzou as the Université de Mouloud Mammeri.¹²⁰ While commemorations take place each year and then disappear, the permanent renaming of the university honors the memory of the man who initiated the Berber Spring in the place where the movement began. The Berber Spring remains significant symbolically for people of all social classes. However, the intellectual work of Mammeri and activity of university students formed the basis for the event. Therefore, the naming of the

¹²⁰ In my research I was unable to find exactly when this renaming took place.
Université de Mouloud Mammeri is significant because it demonstrates the permanent preservation of the Berber Spring’s memory within this intellectual context. It also demonstrates that the Algerian government cannot prevent the permanent preservation of this memory. As Hend Sadi puts it, “L’université de Tizi-Ouzou dont quelle on avait interdit accès en ‘80, elle porte son nom. Elle s’appelle l’université Mouloud Mammeri. Même le pouvoir ne pouvait éviter ça.”¹²¹ The connection between the university and the memories of Mammeri and the event he inspired have been consciously preserved since that moment. Dr Iddir Ahmed Zaid, an administrator at the Université de Mouloud Mammeri writes, “L’université reste intimement liée [aux événements du Printemps Amazigh d’avril 1980].”¹²² This connection is expressed openly through the rebaptism of the university and the reflection on history that renaming provokes.

The memory of the Berber Spring has also been preserved permanently and intellectually through two documents, which I learned about through the interviews I conducted in Paris. After my interview with Kamal Naït-Zerrad on January 16, 2013, Nāït-Zerrad recommended a book called Avril 80: Insurgés et officials du pouvoir racontent Le “Printemps berbère,”¹²³ which was published in 2010, thirty years after the Berber Spring. The next day, Hend Sadi presented me with Tafsut Imaziɣen: Actes du

¹²¹ “The University of Tizi-Ouzou where access was forbidden in ’80 carries his name. It is named the Mouloud Mammeri University. Even the authorities could not avoid that.” Hend Sadi, interview by author, Paris, France, January 17 2013.
¹²³ See Appendix 5. April 80: Insurgents and Government Officials Recall The “Berber Spring”
colloque sur le Printemps Berbère, published in 1994, fourteen years after the Berber Spring. Both documents proved to be valuable evidence that the memory of the Berber Spring has remained vitally important for the scholarly community of Berbers.

*Tafsut Imaziɣen: Actes du colloque sur le Printemps Berbère* is a product of the Berber Spring’s commemoration, just as *Algérie, Quelle identité?* was a product of the Berber Spring itself. This proves that the Berber Spring, through its memory, continues to produce intellectual reflection. This document is the publication of lectures given at a symposium on the subject of the Berber Spring organized by the Association de la Culture Berbère in Paris on April 20, 1992. The document begins with a quote by Mouloud Mammeri, written in both Tamazight and in French: “Qui a une voie à frayer va comme il peut, jamais comme il veut.” This quote recognizes that the Berber Spring and the movement that it inspired grew both in spite of and because of the opposition and obstacles they were forced to overcome. And in opening with the words of Mammeri, this document parallels the Berber Spring itself. Just as the Berber Spring was the formative event for the Berber cultural movement, Mammeri is the formative writer and intellectual for this movement.

In commenting on the commemoration of the Berber Spring, *Tafsut Imaziɣen* provides an intellectual framework to explain the symbolic importance of the event. In the introduction of the symposium, Idir Amara states, “Aujourd’hui en France, nous sommes restés fidèles à l’esprit de cette revendication et nous tenons à célébrer ce

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124 *Tafsut* means *Spring* in Tamazight. *Imaziɣen* is an alternate spelling of *Imazighen.*

douzième anniversaire du mouvement Amaziɣ.” Thus, Amara marks the Berber Spring, not just as a significant event in Berber history, but as the beginning of a movement that continues to draw upon the spirit of that event for inspiration. The commemoration of the Berber Spring is “un acte inaugural du processus du recouvrement de nos droits et libertés confisqués.” This annual repetition of commemoration ensures that the ideas produced by the Berber Spring continue to be discussed and transmitted throughout the Berber community. In his lecture on “Réflexions et témoignage sur le 20 avril 1980,” Hend Sadi comments on the evolving nature of the Berber Spring’s commemoration:

Durant les années qui ont suivi cet événement on avait voulu faire du 20 avril une journée nationale contre la répression parce que cette journée avait été marquée par cette répression. Et au fil des années, la célébration de cette journée a donné lieu à des animations culturelles, bref à un discours un peu plus positif.

While the repression faced by Berbers continues to be a theme invoked through the commemoration of the Berber Spring, the celebration has also become an opportunity for positive expression of Berber culture and identity. Mammeri’s cancelled lecture would have explored this culture in order to provoke political consciousness. As the commemoration of the Berber Spring serves as an opportunity both to strive against repression and to celebrate culture, the legacy of Mammeri also lives on.

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126 “Today in France, we stayed loyal to the spirit of this protest and we are eager to celebrate this twelfth anniversary of the Amaziɣ movement.” Tafsut Imaziɣ: Actes du colloque sur le Printemps Berbère, 9.
127 “an inaugural act of the process of recovering our confiscated rights and freedoms.” Tafsut Imaziɣ: Actes du colloque sur le Printemps Berbère, 10.
128 “During the years that followed this event we had wanted to make April 20th into a national day against repression because this day had been marked by this repression. And, over the course of years, the celebration of this day gave rise to cultural activities, in short to a more positive discourse.” Tafsut Imaziɣ: Actes du colloque sur le Printemps Berbère, 33.
*Tafsut Imaziɣen*, though a document produced in an intellectual setting, situates the Berber Spring as a popular movement of continuing relevance, inspiring a defiant political message into the present day. The document concludes with the “Proclamation du 17 Janvier,” signed by the M.C.B. (Mouvement Culturel Berbère) on January 17, 1994. The Proclamation states, “Depuis 1980, un mouvement populaire initié par la jeunesse interpelle les pouvoirs par des luttes pacifiques sur le terrain.” Significantly, this declaration makes clear that although preserved by both intellectuals and organizations across the Maghreb and France, the Berber Spring and the movement that followed it is not led by theoreticians, academics, or politicians. Mouloud Mammeri developed a consciousness, which in 1980 was fulfilled as popular political action. As Sadi says,

“L’idéologie” du mouvement berbère de cette époque s’est forgée dans les commissariats de police. Cette revendication a été portée par des gens de condition sociale souvent très modeste. Ce n’était ni les intellectuels en place, ni les universitaires installés qui ont posé ce problème dans le champ politique.

As a popular movement, the Berber Spring represents the coming of age of political consciousness for an entire people, rather than a small group of elites. The Proclamation ends by declaring,

Le mouvement du 17 janvier est le fruit et le prolongement du printemps amaziɣ de 1980. Ce mouvement populaire nous permet de proclamer de fait qu’à partir d’aujourd’hui TAMAZI’T EST LANGUE NATIONALE ET OFFICIELLE EN ALGERIE. C’est au pouvoir de s’adapter au peuple et non l’inverse.

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129 “Since 1980, a popular movement initiated by the youth questioned the authorities through peaceful struggles in the field.” *Tafsut Imaziɣen: Actes du colloque sur le Printemps Berbère*, 67.

130 “The ideology of the Berber movement of this period was forged in police stations. This protest was carried out by people often of very modest social condition. This was neither the intellectuals in place, nor the established professors who posed this problem in the political field.” *Tafsut Imaziɣen: Actes du colloque sur le Printemps Berbère*, 35.
This defiant proclamation demonstrates that the Berber Spring continues to inspire strong assertiveness of Berbéritude, as well as opposition to its suppression by official powers.

_Avril 80: Insurgés et officials du pouvoir racontent Le “Printemps berbère,“_ illustrates that those who participated in the Berber Spring sought to sacralize the event and to preserve it for future generations. This document is compiled solely of testimonies of those involved in the Berber Spring. Arezki Aït-Larbi, who coordinated the compilation, writes in the introduction,

> Par ces temps d’impasse politique, de regression sociale et d’incertitude sur l’avenir, l’esprit du “Printemps berbère” mérite d’être revisité. Dans notre histoire tourmentée, c’est une étape salutaire de ressourcement.\(^\text{132}\)

This opening suggests frustration with the current political climate in Algeria, but the action of publishing this book does much to demonstrate that the spirit of the Berber Spring has not been lost and that the memory of this event still provokes strong reactions from those who were involved.

Among those whose recollections are collected in the volume, Aziz Tari provides evidence of the immediate desire to sacralize the event as it unfolded. Tari, who in 1980 was a student in Science at the CUTO (Centre universitaire de Tizi-Ouzou) and whose

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\(^{131}\) TAMAZIIT is an alternate spelling of TAMAZIGHT. “The movement of January 17 is the fruit and the continuation of the Amazigh Spring of 1980. This popular movement allows us to proclaim in fact that from today onward TAMAZIIT IS A NATIONAL AND OFFICIAL LANGUAGE IN ALGERIA. The authorities must adapt to the people and not the inverse.” _Tafsut Imaziɣen: Actes du colloque sur le Printemps Berbère, 68_.

\(^{132}\) In these times of political impasse, of social regression and of incertitude for the future, the spirit of the Berber Spring deserves to be revisited. In our tormented history, it is a beneficial stage of return to our roots.” Arezki Aït-Larbi, coord. _Avril 80: Insurgés et officials du pouvoir racontent Le « Printemps berbère »_ (Algiers: Koukou Editions, 2010), 10.
idea it was to hold the first demonstration after the cancellation of Mammeri’s lecture, speaks of the beginning of the Berber Spring in spiritual terms:

Sous les rayons d’un soleil encore timide, l’air frais dégage un parfum divin. Une page nouvelle, blanche, vient de s’ouvrir. A nous d’écrire, par la ferveur de notre jeunesse, les mots qui nous accrocheront à l’histoire, celle de nos ancêtres fiers et souverains sur cette terre, où les montagnes chantent la liberté d’un people qui refuse de se laisser marcher sur les pieds.\textsuperscript{133}

In this passage, Tari consecrates the Berber Spring as a holy event for the Berber people, and establishes it as the beginning of a new historical period, while at the same time tying it to the history of Berber defiance and freedom. He recalls that from the very beginning, those involved in the Berber Spring were conscious of its historic importance and of the necessity for its memory to live on. After two hours of demonstrations on the first day of the Berber Spring, “Tout le monde est dehors, par petits groupes, discutant et commentant l’événement. Comment sacraliser l’instant et lui donner une dimension éternelle.”\textsuperscript{134} The actors of this movement themselves, rather than outside commentators, immediately recognized the historical importance of the Berber Spring.

Another testimony, that of Saïd Khelil, a pharmacist-biologist, demonstrates that the Berber Spring has not only remained significant for the generation that took part in the movement itself, but that the memory of the Berber Spring has been effectively passed down to younger generations. He writes, “Un jour, mon fils devait disserter sur

\textsuperscript{133} “Under the rays of a still timid sun, the fresh air releases a divine perfume. A new, white page just opened. It is on us to write, by the fervor of our youth, the words that will hitch us to history, that of our proud ancestors and sovereigns on this land, where the mountains sing the liberty of a people who refuse to let others walk all over them.” Aziz Tari, “Plutôt mourir que capituler!,” in \textit{Avril 80: Insurgés et officials du pouvoir racontent Le “Printemps berbère”} coord. Arezki Aït-Larbi (Algiers: Koukou Editions, 2010), 42.

\textsuperscript{134} “Everybody is outside, in little groups, discussing and commenting on the event. How to sacralize the moment and give it an eternal dimension.” Tari, “Plutôt mourir que capituler!,” 44.
l’emprisonnement, après l’étude d’un poème dont c’était le thème.”¹³⁵ While for the generation of students who participated in the Berber Spring, the education system forbid them from speaking their own language and thus denied the expression of their identity, Khelil’s son is able to learn about the political struggle of his father’s generation through his studies. Fittingly, poetry is the method of transmission for this lesson, just as poetry, and the liberating message it contained, sparked the Berber Spring. Khelil, who was imprisoned on April 20, 1980 and charged with “atteinte à la sûreté de l’Etat”¹³⁶ for his role within the Berber Spring movement, was able to impart vividly detailed information about his imprisonment to his son. He writes, “Ces expériences laissent des traces indélébiles et profondes en vous, même après des décennies.”¹³⁷ Writing thirty years after the Berber Spring, Khelil still finds the memory of his involvement significant and has transmitted that memory to his son, just as Berber culture and history have been passed down from one generation to the next since ancient times. Thus, despite not being allowed to give his lecture, the substance of Mammeri’s argument about orally transmitted Berber culture has survived through Berber Spring activists like Khelil. As Ferhat Mehenni, founder of the Mouvement pour l’autonomie de la Kabylie (MAK),¹³⁸ writes, “Je ne voudrais pas que la jeunesse kabyle d’aujourd’hui vive sans repères et sans

¹³⁵ “One day, my son needed to discuss imprisonment in studying a poem for which that was the theme.” Tari, “Plutôt mourir que capituler!,” 77.
¹³⁷ “These experiences leave indelible and profound traces in you, even after decades.” Saïd Khelil, “Risquer sa vie pour sauver son âme,” 77.
¹³⁸ Movement for the Autonomy of Kabylie
transmission de l’héritage mémorial.” Through documents such as Avril 80, the participants of the Berber Spring preserve and transmit the memory of their struggle for younger generations, just as Mammeri wished to through the lecture that the authorities cancelled.

Though the spirit of Mammeri and the Berber Spring have been passed down to generations of Berbers, the spirit of both the writer and event lived on most profoundly through the singer, Lounès Matoub. Matoub emerged in the years following that event as the most popular and iconic Kabyle musician, whose music and commitment to the Berber cultural movement were intrinsically linked. In the postscript of Rebelle (1995), Matoub’s autobiography, Hend Sadi writes that Matoub was “un symbole du Mouvement culturel berbère (MCB). Il s’est jeté corps et âme dans le combat pour l’identité.” The Berber Spring coincided with the beginning of Matoub’s success as a performer and was a defining moment for his political consciousness, as it was for much of his generation. He writes,

J’enrageais de ne pas y participer, mais il y avait l’Olympia, et mon premier grand concert à Paris…Lorsque je suis entré sur la scène de l’Olympia…je portais un treillis militaire, une tenue de combat. Geste de solidarité envers la Kabylie, que j’estimais en guerre.

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141 “I was enraged to not participate there, but there was the Olympia, and my first big concert in Paris…When I entered the stage at the Olympia…I wore a combat uniform, a battledress. A gesture of solidarity toward Kabylie, that I considered to be in war.” Matoub, Rebelle, 83.
At the same moment that he announced himself as a major artist, he also announced his militancy in direct response to the events later known as the Berber Spring. Matoub, who became a symbol for the movement that grew from the Berber Spring, recognized the symbolic and substantive importance of Mouloud Mammeri for his generation. He writes, “Nous considérons [Mammeri] comme un veritable modèle...Il a largement nourri notre génération. Pour nous, il était devenu un symbole et son enseignement était essentiel.”

Matoub inherited the symbolic role of Mammeri, as both preserved and created Berber culture with a strong message of political liberation.

In his songs, Matoub invoked the same poetic tradition whose survival Mammeri helped ensure. In “Tidett yeffren/La vérité enfouie,” Matoub sings, “Mon Coeur s’émeut au souvenir de... Si-Mohand-Ou-Mhand.” Si-Mohand-Ou-Mhand (c. 1848-1905) was a Kabyle poet, whose work Mammeri collected in Les Isefra. Matoub sings about him as an embodiment of poetic suffering and struggle. The song ends, “Exilé, étranger/En des pays lointains/Terreurs et malheurs/Est-ce là un décret divin?” The suffering of Mohand, who experienced the beginning of the French colonization of Kabylie, symbolizes that of his people. As Mammeri wrote, “Mohand est vite devenu l’homme d’une vocation et à travers elle le symbole d’un destin collectif.”

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142 “We considered [Mammeri] to be a true model...He largely nourished our generation. For us, he had become a symbol and his teaching was essential.” Matoub, Rebelle, 80.
144 “Exiled, stranger/In faraway lands/Terrors and unhappiness/Is this a divine decree?” Seddiki, “Paroles de la chanson “Tidett yeffren.””
memory of Mohand, Matoub continues the work of Mammeri, preserving Berber history and culture, and asserting its relevance for the current political situation. Matoub, who constantly voiced his animosity toward Islamism, uses the last line of the song to implicitly criticize religious ideologies that discourage political consciousness by calling all suffering divine will. Mohand’s suffering, like that of his people, was not due to divine will, but to political oppression.

Throughout Matoub’s life, he continued to pay homage to the memory of the Berber Spring. He writes in Rebelle, “Cette journée est si fondamentale pour moi que, chaque fois que j’ai dû me rendre à l’étranger, j’ai fait en sorte d’être à Tizi Ouzou le 20 avril.” He paid tribute to the Berber Spring through his music, as well. In “Sleeb-itt ay abehri/Le vent de la liberté,” he sings, “Quand la mer sera devenue désert/Ce jour-là, nous refuserons Tamazight…L’aube nouvelle apparaîtra-t-elle/Où nous accueillerons le printemps.” For Matoub, as for the generation who idolized him, the Berber Spring opened a new type of consciousness, guiding his passionate determination to preserve his language and culture. Just as Mammeri preserved Berbéritude through his words and deeds, Matoub preserved the memory of the Berber Spring and carried on the movement born from that event. Matoub’s transformation into the Rebel, as fans affectionately called him, began with the Berber Spring. As he writes, “Le 20 avril, nous avons pleinement assumé notre combat, et personnellement, je l’ai vécu comme un nouvel acte

146 “This day is so fundamental for me that, each time that I had to be abroad, I made sure to be in Tizi Ouzou on April 20th.” Lounès Matoub, Rebelle (Paris: Éditions Stock, 1995),135.
From that moment onward, Matoub personified the spirit of the Berber Spring.

Matoub risked his career and his life for the political struggle he embraced from 1980 onward. For attacking the Algerian government in his lyrics, Matoub was permanently banned from both Algerian television and radio. He was shot five times by the police during riots in 1988 and kidnapped by the Groupe Islamique Armée (GIA) in 1994 before his eventual assassination four years later. While the exact circumstances of his assassination are unclear, many have attested that the GIA was in fact the creation of the Algerian government itself. A former Algerian spy identified by the pseudonym ‘Yussuf-Joseph’ confirmed this suspicion, telling the Guardian that the GIA was “the work of secret police and army death squads…not Islamic extremists.” In light of his previous confrontations with the government and the murky circumstances surrounding his death, violent protests erupted in Kabylie against the government, rather than Islamists. At his funeral, mourners yelled out “Pouvoir, Assassin,” the title of one of Matoub’s songs. Then,

In an ensuing week of riots throughout Kabyle cities and towns, young demonstrators attacked hundreds of regional government offices and damaged public property, often clashing with state riot police.

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While the Berber Spring movement that Matoub embodied began as a nonviolent movement of reform, the aftermath of his death also demonstrated the growing anger felt by Berbers toward the Algerian government. This animosity continued to intensify, as the nonviolent reformist approach slowly gave way to a more militant, separatist attitude.

The response to Matoub’s death is indicative of changes to the political message developed through the Berber Spring. These changes had been taking place ever since 1980, as the Berber Spring inspired the creation of new political organizations that have become increasingly frustrated and defiant. The event changed the political landscape of Algeria, leading to the formation of underground political organizations that the Algerian government perceived as threats. As evidence of the rapid growth and evolution of the Berber Spring movement, in 1985, 25 political prisoners were put on trial. The proceedings were transcribed in *Au nom du peuple, Vous êtes accusés d’atteinte à l’autorité de l’Etat* in 1986. Many of those on trial had been involved in the Berber Spring and went on to join the Ligue Algérienne des Droits de l’Homme and associations des enfants de Martyrs, organizations that the one-party ruled Algerian government considered illegal. *Au nom du peuple, Vous êtes accusés d’atteinte à l’autorité de l’Etat* contains transcripts of the trials of 25 political prisoners accused of the following crimes: “Atteinte à l’autorité de l’Etat par appel à un changement de régime. Confection et distribution de tracts. Constitution d’associations illégales. Attroupement non armé.”

The introduction, written by the accused, begins with the following declaration:

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152 *In the Name of the People, You Are Accused of Violation of the Authority of the State*  
En 1980, un certain nombre de questions vitales, jusque-là étouffées par les méthodes que l’on sait, ont heurté de plein fouet l’usure politique et idéologique du parti au pouvoir depuis 1962.154

This opening invokes the Berber Spring as a moment of awakening of political consciousness, and the beginning of an intensified resistance to the Algerian government.

The first transcript included in the document demonstrates the impact of the Berber Spring as a starting point for the political involvement of many involved in the Berber cultural movement. The transcript is that of the trial of Arezki Abboute, a professor of biology at the, then still named, Université de Tizi-Ouzou, who had been previously arrested for his role in the Berber Spring. In his speech before the Cour de Sûreté de l’Etat de Médéa155 on December 17 1985, he testifies, “Depuis 1980…je n’ai jamais cessé de dénoncer l’arbitraire du FLN, l’incompétence et le comportement immoral de certains responsables à l’Université et ailleurs.”156 This statement clearly demonstrates a preservation of the political goals of the Berber Spring to fight for human rights against the corruption of the Algerian government, and a consciousness of the Berber Spring as their origin.

The Berber Spring served as a moment of realization of the repression that those on trial would go on to fight. Another defendant, the journalist, Arezki Aït-Larbi157 had also been arrested during the Berber Spring, as he puts it, “pour avoir participé au

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154 “In 1980, a certain number of vital questions, until then stifled by methods everyone knows, collided head on into the political and ideological deterioration of the party in power since 1962.” _Au nom du peuple, Vous êtes accusés d’atteinte à l’autorité de l’Etat. Qu’avez-vous à dire?,_ 5.

155 “The Security Court of the State of Médéa

156 “Since 1980… I never ceased denouncing the arbitrary nature of the FLN, the incompetence and the immoral comportment of certain officials at the University and elsewhere.” _Au nom du peuple, Vous êtes accusés d’atteinte à l’autorité de l’Etat. Qu’avez-vous à dire?_ (Paris: Imedyazen, 1986), 50.

157 Aït-Larbi would go on to coordinate _Avril 80_.

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Mouvement populaire pour la démocratie et les langues maternelles (Arabe algérien et Berbère).” Since the Berber Spring, he had also been arrested on May 19, 1981 with other members of the Collectif Culturel de l’Université d’Alger. Arezki testified that at the time of that second trial,

M. Berrim, Juge d’Instruction…devait me dire: “Vous êtes Kabyle. Donc vous êtes mauvais. Vous êtes un danger pour l’unité du pays et de la nation arabe. Et c’est pour cela que vous devez disparaître [emphasis in original text].”

This anecdote indicates a growing awareness on the part of those involved in the movement inspired by the Berber Spring that the Algerian government is not only culturally repressive, but bigoted and discriminatory. As Ferhat Mehenni, a well-known Kabyle singer and fellow defendant declared, “Le Kabyle est au pouvoir ce qu’est le Juif à l’antisémitisme.” The Berber Spring functions as an awakening, a jumping-off point, for the political awareness and resistance that only grew in the years that followed. Ferhat observes

similitudes avec le monde orwellien. Par ailleurs, l’unicisme du régime, né du complexe du colonisé…a été instauré par la phobie du droit à la différence qui, durant la période coloniale, était invoqué par le colon pour ravaler l’Algérien au rang de sous-citoyen, car différent de l’Européen.

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159 “M. Berrim, committing magistrate…needed to say to me: “You are Kabyle. Therefore you are bad. You are a danger to the unity of the country and the Arab nation. And for this reason you must disappear.” Au nom du peuple, Vous êtes accusés d’atteinte à l’autorité de l’Etat. Qu’avez-vous à dire?, 98.

160 Mehenni later founded the Mouvement pour l’Autonomie de la Kabylie (MAK)

161 “The Kabyle is the authorities as the Jew is to anti-Semitism.” Au nom du peuple, Vous êtes accusés d’atteinte à l’autorité de l’Etat. Qu’avez-vous à dire?, 169.

162 “similarities with the Orwellian world. Moreover, the monism of the regime, born from the complex of colonialism…was established by phobia of the right to difference, which, during the colonial period, was invoked by the colonist to lower the Algerian to the rank of sub-citizen, because he was different from the European.” Au nom du peuple, Vous êtes accusés d’atteinte à l’autorité de l’Etat. Qu’avez-vous à dire?, 168.
The realization is twofold, both of the police-state repression of the government, and of its continuation of the ideology of colonialism.

This realization of political repression sparked by the Berber Spring led to greater defiance, which began peacefully, but carries the threat of violent opposition. Like the French colonialists, the Algerian government does not merely repress the Berber population culturally, but also economically. Therefore, this is a struggle not only for Berber identity, but also for human rights that can be shared by all Algerians. Dr Saïd Sadi, a doctor at the hospital of Tizi-Ouzou and a leader of the Berber Spring, testifies qu’en prime de la répression culturelle permanente qui s’abat sur la Kabylie, le pouvoir a estimé légitime d’y organiser l’asphyxie économique. Pas un projet n’a vu le jour dans cette région depuis plus de six ans maintenant.164

While Algérie, Quelle identité? reflected a desire and hopefulness for reform of the Algerian government, Au nom du peuple presents a much more angry and defiant tone. The political confrontation with the authorities did not cool after the Berber Spring, but only grew in intensity. The movement did not merely awaken cultural awareness, but also sparked political resistance that was only strengthened by continued government oppression. Sadi asks, “Qu’est-ce que le combat culturel, qui sert d’alibi à toutes les basses manoeuvres et dont on est en train de faire consciemment un potentiel de guerre

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163 Later the founder of the Rassemblement pour la culture et la démocratie (RCD). Also the brother of Hend Sadi.
164 “that as a bonus of the permanent cultural repression that beats down on Kabylie, the authorities felt it legitimate to organize economic asphyxiation there. No plan has seen the light of day in this region for more than six years now.” Au nom du peuple, Vous êtes accusés d’atteinte à l’autorité de l’État. Qu’avez-vous à dire? (Paris: Imedyazen, 1986), 210.
While these political activists desire unity and are sensitive to accusations of causing division among the Algerian people, Sadi’s question reflects a growing realization that a much more radical opposition to the government may be necessary. As he declares,

Lorsque des lycéens sont…torturés…pour avoir écrit leur nom en berbère, lorsque des travailleurs…perdent leur travail pour avoir exprimé leur volonté de protéger leur langue et leur culture…il ne faut pas s’étonner que l’on veuille defendre les Droits de l’Homme, mais plutôt relever le miracle qui a fait que, jusqu’à present, nous avons répondu à la folie répressive par des moyens pacifiques.

This statement from a leader of the Berber Spring hints at the shift from nonviolent to violent struggle in the movement that it inspired.

The threat of violent conflict with the government that is hinted at in *Au nom du peuple* was realized fifteen years later in the Black Spring of 2001. After 31 years of frustration and continued repression, the movement born from the peaceful struggle of the Berber Spring turned to violent combat that cost the lives of many, and led to the formation of new more radical political parties. Significantly, the Black Spring began days before the annual commemoration of the Berber Spring on April 18, 2001. That day, a high school student named Guermah Massinissa was arrested without evidence and killed inside the gendarmerie. As Yidir Azwaw writes in *Chronologie de la Kabylie: Et*

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165 “What is cultural combat, which serves as alibi to all the low maneuvers and from which one is making conscious a potential for civil war?” *Au nom du peuple, Vous êtes accusés d’atteinte à l’autorité de l’État. Qu’avez-vous à dire?*, 212.

166 “When the high school students are…tortured…for having written their name in Berber, when workers…lose their job for having expressed their desire to protect their language and their culture…it is not necessary to be astonished that we want to defend human rights, but rather to react to the miracle that, until now, we have responded to the to the repressive madness with peaceful means.” *Au nom du peuple, Vous êtes accusés d’atteinte à l’autorité de l’État. Qu’avez-vous à dire?*, 211.
de Tamazgha, de l’Antiquité libyque à nos jours (2013), “Cette énième provocation des “services” à la veille de la commémoration du Printemps berbère va plonger la Kabylie dans une terrible spirale de violence.” The murder of an innocent teenager alone may have been enough to provoke riots in Kabylie, but its occurrence so close to the date of the annual commemoration of the Berber Spring greatly intensified the Kabyle reaction. The confrontations between Kabyles and the authorities lasted into 2002 at which point 123 people had died. The *International Crisis Group* reports that rioters repeatedly attacked not only the Gendarmerie brigades across the region, but also both state buildings…and offices of political parties…despite the gendarmes’ lethal responses and the mounting death toll.

The riots consummated the violent desperation hinted at in the trial of 1985 and the after the murder of Lounès Matoub.

Two new political organizations, the Mouvement citoyen des Aarchs and the Mouvement pour l’Autonomie de la Kabylie (MAK) formed during the Black Spring, in response to what many perceived as the end of the nonviolent, reformist aspect of the Berber Spring movement. The Mouvement citoyen des Aarchs explains its organization as a return “vers la structure ancestrale qui est le Aarch (la tribu) à base de l’organisation...”

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167 *Chronology of Kabylie: And of Tamazgha, from Libyan Antiquity to the Present*

168 “This umpteenth provocation of “services” on the eve of the commemoration of the Berber Spring will plunge Kabylie in a terrible spiral of violence.” Yidir Azwaw, *Chronologie de la Kabylie: Et de Tamazgha, de l’Antiquité libyque à nos jours* (2013), 237.


170 “Algeria Unrest and Impasse in Kabylia,” 10.

171 Citizens Movement of Aarchs (Tribes)
This return to the traditional Kabyle governing structure demonstrates a rejection of the political system of Algeria. The MAK, which calls for the autonomy of Kabylie, also affirms the necessity for a separation between Kabylie and the rest of Algeria. While the participants of the Berber Spring called for Algerian unity and diversity, the events of the Black Spring, which began with the commemoration of the Berber Spring, seemed to demonstrate the impossibility of unity or peaceful reform to the Algerian state. As Berber casualties mounted, violence emerged as a potential or even necessary solution for Berber liberation, though few could have predicted that Berbers would take up arms against their oppressors in Libya, rather than Kabylie.

Ten years after the Black Spring, a series of popular uprisings began throughout North Africa and the Middle East in protest against widespread governmental corruption, high unemployment, and human rights violations. Journalists, beginning with Marc Lynch in a January 6, 2011 article in *Foreign Policy*, quickly labeled these events collectively as the “Arab Spring.” On February 15, a month after that article appeared, the Revolution against the regime of Muammar Gaddafi began in Libya with a protest in Benghazi against the arrest of human rights lawyer Fathi Terbil. Media coverage of the events in Libya soon designated the budding revolution as part of the greater Arab Spring movement that had already spread from Tunisia to Egypt. In a BBC article less than a week after the Terbil protest, Shashank Joshi commented, “It would be ironic if Colonel Muammar Gaddafi were to become the third head claimed by this Arab Spring.” However, this simplistic conception of the Libyan Revolution does a disservice to its more complex reality. Berbers, who make up an estimated ten percent of the Libyan population, played an important role in the overthrow of Gaddafi. Anti-Gaddafi Berber revolutionaries of the Nafusa Mountains, near the capitol of Tripoli, provided a strategically important second front for the rebels, who based their operations at the opposite eastern end of the country in Benghazi. In loose coordination with the Benghazi-based rebels, Berbers of Nafusa took up arms for the same goal of ousting Gaddafi, but

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also for the assertion of their identity. Gaddafi, who once called the Berber language “poison du colonialisme,”[^1] was not just a dictator for Libyan Berbers, but an existential enemy. The Libyan Berber revolutionaries both repeated the rupture of consciousness of the 1980 Berber Spring and drew upon that movement’s symbolic power.

From the very start, Libyan Berbers seized their role within the revolution as an opportunity to assert their identity. Their participation casts a new light on the plurality of identities at stake within the “Arab Spring.” Salem Chaker and Masin Ferkal, both Paris-based Berber intellectuals, report,

> Les édifices publics symbolisant Kadhafi et son régime furent saccagés, des panneaux en tifinagh et des “Z” en tifinagh (Z, deuxième consonne et médiane du mot “amazigh”…symbole identitaire universellement adopté par la militance berbère) sont apparus sur les murs des villes et villages.[^2]

This action symbolizes that in joining the Revolution, Libyan Berbers were both ridding themselves of the despotic rule of Gaddafi, and at the same time openly announcing and celebrating their identity for the first time without fear of reprisal. In self-identifying with the word “amazigh” or “free man,” the Libyan Berbers announced that their fight against Gaddafi was a fight for freedom and identity, concepts that for them are inseparable. Freely, Libyan Berbers raised flags and wore T-shirts with the symbolic Tifinagh “Z” on them, published declarations and magazines in Tamazight, and began to teach the


[^2]: Tifinagh is the ancient Berber alphabet, which only Touaregs continued to use until its recent revival as a symbol of Berber identity. “As the public edifices symbolizing Gaddafi and his regime were destroyed, signs in Tifinagh and “Z”s in Tifinagh (Z, second consonant and median of the word “Amazigh”…identity symbol universally adopted by the Berber militance) appeared on walls in cities and villages.” Salem Chaker and Masin Ferkal, “Berbères en Libye: un paramètre méconnu, une irruption politique inattendue,” Tamazgha, July 9, 2012, [http://tamazgha.fr/Berberes-de-Libye-un-parametre.html#nh36](http://tamazgha.fr/Berberes-de-Libye-un-parametre.html#nh36).
language in schools. None of this was possible before the Revolution. Like the Berber Spring of 1980, the Libyan Revolution produced a Berber cultural renaissance. While this renaissance can be viewed as a repetition, in another sense the Libyan Berber struggle inverts the history of the Berber Spring. The “Arab Spring,” at least in principle, consummates the goals of the Berber Spring, the first movement for democracy in North Africa. In Algeria, the repression of Berber cultural expression eventually led to demands for universal values—democracy and human rights, whereas thirty-one years later, Libyan Berbers joined a struggle for those same universal values and emerged with celebrations of their identity.

The revolutionary combat of Libyan Berbers can be said to represent the consummation of the second stage in the movement that began with the Berber Spring from non-violent protest to armed combat. The Libyan Berbers engaged actively in warfare with Gaddafi’s forces, and did so with their Berber identity and language firmly in mind. Combatants from the Nafusa Mountains painted “Igrawliyen n Adrar n Infusen (“Révolutionnaires du Djebel Nefoussa”) en Tamazight”\(^\text{177}\) on their vehicles, asserting their linguistic identity as they fought against Gaddafi. In entering this violent conflict for their identity outside of Algeria, Libyan Berbers have provided evidence that the Berber Spring movement had succeeded in spreading transnationally. Of course, unlike the Kabyles of the Berber Spring, Libyan Berbers fought for their national liberation in conjunction with Arabs, as Kabyles did during the Algerian Revolution. However, as is the case in the comparison with the Berber Spring, the Libyan Berber revolutionaries invert the history of Berber involvement in the earlier Algerian Revolution. In Algeria,

\(^{177}\) Chaker and Ferkal, “Berbères en Libye: un paramètre méconnu, une irruption politique inattendue.”
cultural pride led Berbers into battle, but after the national liberation, their culture was in crisis, deeply suppressed until 1980. In Libya, through joining the national revolution, Berbers emerged culturally exultant. In the Algerian Revolution, Berbers set aside concerns for their cultural identity to focus on colonial liberation, but in Libya, they fought within the national struggle for their identity.

In using violence to fight a war for their identity, Libyan Berbers emerged with a strong, defiant consciousness of their culture. As Fanon writes in *The Wretched of the Earth* (first published in 1961), “Enlightened by violence, the people’s consciousness rebels against any pacification.”\(^{178}\) This is a new kind of violence, not inflicted upon Berbers, but harnessed by them for their own liberation. Libyan Berber activist Mazigh Buzakahar confirms this strengthening of consciousness through violence, reflecting,

> What’s different from Algeria and Morocco is that the consciousness of the Amazigh people is stronger in Libya, because we’ve paid the price…We have had martyrs who gave their lives to preserve their language, and ensure they are part of the political environment of the new Libya for generations to come.\(^{179}\)

Through violent revolution, Libyan Berbers produced a decisive rupture in their consciousness. In Algeria and Morocco there is a much longer history of open professions of Berber identity, but both countries lack the power unleashed by this violence. Whether or not Buzakhar is biased in judging the consciousnesses of the three countries, there is no doubt that since the Revolution, Libyan Berbers’ cultural expression has been massive, especially considering the relatively small size of their population.

The history of Libyan Berbers both parallels and draws from connections with the Algerian movement that culminated in the Berber Spring. This twin similarity and debt

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\(^{178}\) Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 52.
with the Berber Spring movement explains the strength of Libyan Berber cultural expression after the long period of harsh repression under Gaddafi. As with Mouloud Mammeri in Algeria, one Libyan Berber literary figure preserved Berber consciousness in face of its imminent extinction. Saïd Sifaw (1946-1994), born in the town of Jado in the Nafusa Mountains, devoted himself to the written preservation of the Berber culture and language of Libya. He wrote that in publishing a collection of fifteen Berber myths, he was attempting to “rescue and preserve an oral tradition much hated by its people who considered it a kind of superstition.”¹⁸⁰ This self-hatred that Sifaw refers to mirrors that of Kabyle Berbers described by Mammeri in his first two novels, La Colline Oubliée and Le Sommeil du Juste. Like Mammeri, Sifaw built Berber political consciousness through literature, and Mammeri and Sifaw met in 1971.¹⁸¹ Buzakhar mentions this meeting without providing any further details in the Journal Tilelli, the first Libyan Berber newspaper published after the Revolution. No matter the substance of the meeting, it represents a symbolic transfer of the more developed Algerian Berber consciousness through the most significant Algerian Berber literary-political figure to the most significant Libyan Berber literary-political figure, and thus, Libyan Berbers as a whole.

The connection between the Algerian Berber cultural rebirth and Sifaw is also attested to by the musical repertoire of Libyan Berbers. After the Revolution, In Zuwarah, a Libyan Berber village, guitarist Khaled el Naggiar plays music by the Algerian singer Idir and musical arrangements of Sifaw’s poetry, commenting that before the Revolution,

“if I had recorded [this music], I would have been in jail.”\textsuperscript{182} Libyan Berbers managed to illicitly carry Berber recordings from Algeria and France into their country during the 1970s. Yusef Hefyana, a Libyan later arrested for “Berber Activism,” recalls traveling outside the country, and returning “to the mountain with books and cassette tapes of Amazigh music.”\textsuperscript{183} This Algeria-based cultural consciousness, along with the work of Sifaw, generated Libyan Berber cultural consciousness that was forced to remain underground to avoid the reprisals of Gaddafi. As Naggiar observes, Berber music “counted as politics.”\textsuperscript{184} Gaddafi imposed the politicization of their culture on Libyan Berbers, but in circulating Berber recordings and Sifaw’s poetry, Libyan Berbers committed deliberate political actions, defying the authoritarianism of Gaddafi.

Both parallel to and as a result of the transformation of Mammeri’s literary consciousness into the political upheaval of the Berber Spring, Sifaw’s literary consciousness had its own political consequences in Libya. In 1980, just as Mammeri played a key role in the Berber Spring, Sifaw was significantly involved in the first major moment of Libyan Berber political conflict. Indicative of the more tightly controlled authoritarian regime in Libya, Libyan Berbers faced the repressive aspect of the Berber Spring without the opportunity to publicly express any cultural or political messages. Following the Berber Spring in Algeria, forty Berber Libyans, including Sifaw, were


arrested for “forming a Berber political party.” As the Tamazgha organization notes in their 2004 report on “Imazighen en Libye” to the United Nations’ Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), “Cette arrestation est survenue aux événements du Printemps Berbère en Kabylie dont l’écho s’est propagé dans toutes les régions berbérophones.” As in Algeria, the Berber Spring redefined the scale of the conflict between Gaddafi’s regime and Berber identity. Though Gaddafi had never been a friend to Berbers, he now made clear that he viewed Berbers as his enemy. Sifaw wrote that the Libyan Berber political party was “a fictitious organization,” created by Gaddafi, who, following the events of the Berber Spring in Algeria, began to view Berbers as serious threats to his regime. As in Algeria, the Berber Spring brought Berber cultural consciousness face to face with its political repercussions.

The mass arrest in 1980 made it clear to Libyan Berbers just how dangerous it was for them to express Berber consciousness in their country. In Libya under Gaddafi, media was much more tightly controlled, and the Berber population much smaller and more isolated than in Algeria. Any open expression of Berber identity in Libya would likely result in arrest, or even “physical liquidation.” 1980 was not only the year of the Berber Spring, but also the year in which Gaddafi instituted the policy of “physical liquidation,” in which

Libyan dissidents inside and outside the country were killed in circumstances suggesting that they had been extrajudicially executed by members of the Libyan security forces or by agents acting on behalf of the Libyan authorities.\textsuperscript{188}

The very real danger of execution did not prevent Libyan Berbers from commemorating the Berber Spring both abroad and within Libya itself. As Fanon writes, “Far from breaking the momentum, repression intensifies the progress made by the national consciousness.”\textsuperscript{189} Whereas before the Berber Spring, Libyan Berber consciousness had largely remained underground and confined to the realm of cultural expression, after 1980, Libyan Berbers became more politically active, both as a result of the Berber Spring, and in a parallel movement of their own. Kamal Naït-Zerrad, Berber linguistic professor at the INALCO in Paris, states, “‘80, ça a été le socle de ce qui s’est passé pour toute qui concerne les Berbères. C’est le détonateur, le moteur des revendications qui sont venues plus tard, pas juste en Kabylie.”\textsuperscript{190} Berber intellectual authorities like Naït-Zerrad attest to the symbolic impact of the Berber Spring on the entire Berber community, including Libyans.

Remainning connected to their Algerian compatriots and to the spirit of the Berber Spring, Libyan Berbers participated in annual commemorations of the event. Chaker and Ferkal attest to “la présence régulière de militants berbères libyens à Tizi-Ouzou à l’occasion de la commémoration annuelle du “Printemps berbère.””\textsuperscript{191} Travelling to Tizi-

\textsuperscript{189} Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 32.
\textsuperscript{190} “…’80 was the basis from which all that concerns Berbers has happened. It’s the detonator, the motor of protests that came later, not just in Kabylie.” Kamal Naït-Zerrad, interview by author, Paris, France, January 16, 2013.
\textsuperscript{191} “the regular presence of Libyan Berber militants in Tizi Ouzou at the time of the annual commemoration of the “Berber Spring.”” Salem Chaker and Masin Ferkal,
Ouzou for the Berber Spring commemoration clearly constituted a dissident act under Gaddafi’s regime, and some Libyan Berbers did fall prey to his “physical liquidation” policy. As Yidir Azwaw reports,

Des Berbères invités à assister à la commémoration du sixième anniversaire du “Printemps berbère” de Kabylie seront interceptés à la frontière algéro-libyenne. À ce jour, aucun d’eux n’a réapparu.\textsuperscript{192}

In Libya itself, the anniversary of the Berber Spring became a date around which the Berber political uprising and repression of 1980 reoccurred. In 1984,

La population berbère du nord-ouest de la Libye s’appréchait à commémorer le quatrième anniversaire du Printemps berbère…L’intervention musclée des éléments de la sécurité annihilera cette démonstration pacifique. Des dizaines de personnes seront arrêtées.\textsuperscript{193}

These commemorations were defiant acts against Gaddafi’s regime, just like the Berber Spring itself. Through the literary work of Sifaw and the mass arrests after the Berber Spring, Libya’s Berber population had become fully politicized, and the Berber Spring movement remained a focal point for their political activity.

However, it is difficult to gauge exactly how active the Libyan Berber community was politically and culturally in the period between the Berber Spring and the Libyan Revolution. Libyan Berbers could not openly publish any documents or media relating to their identity while Gaddafi was still in power. A 2011 Human Rights Watch Report on

\begin{quote}
“Berbères de Libye : un paramètre méconnu, une irruption politique inattendue.” \\
\textit{Tamazgha}, July 9, 2012, \texttt{http://tamazgha.fr/Berberes-de-Libye-un-parametre.html#nh22}.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{192} “Berbers invited to attend the commemoration of the sixth anniversary of the “Berber Spring” of Kabylie were intercepted at the Algerian-Libyan border. To this day, none of them have reappeared.” Yidir Azwaw, \textit{Chronologie de la Kabylie: Et de Tamazgha, de l’Antiquité libyque à nos jours} (2013), 205.

\textsuperscript{193} “The Berber population of the northwest of Libya got ready to commemorate the fourth anniversary of the Berber Spring…The strong-armed intervention of elements of the police annihilated this peaceful demonstration. Dozens of people were arrested.” Azwaw, \textit{Chronologie de la Kabylie: Et de Tamazgha, de l’Antiquité libyque à nos jours}, 205.
Libya demonstrates the extent to which Gaddafi took to prevent communication of Libyan Berbers online, blocking the “Amazigh website *Libya Imal*” and arresting “Amazigh activist Ali Abu al-Seoud…in connection with his online writings on Amazigh rights.”\(^1\) Mainly, the evidence of Libyan Berber activism within Libya before the Revolution is of its suppression. However, Libyan Berbers were able to assert their identity outside of Libya. In 2002, the Libyan Tmazight\(^2\) Congress was formed in London, declaring its goal to “protect, defend and develop T’mazight\(^3\) existence, identity and culture within Libya’s national existence.”\(^4\) But though Libyan Berbers could be more easily politically active abroad, they still faced repercussions from Gaddafi. WikiLeaks published a report from the American Embassy in Tripoli on “Regime-Orchestrated Attacks Against Berbers in Yefren [a town in Nafusa]” in January 2009. The report states that Madgis Madi and Imhemmed al-Hamrani had both been arrested “after they attended a World Amazigh Congress in Meknes, Morocco October 31-November 2, 2008.”\(^5\) Though not as well documented as in Algeria, Libyan Berber consciousness survived in spite of Gaddafi’s attempts to suppress it.

Until 2011, this Libyan Berbers could not easily display their cultural consciousness. Since the Revolution, Libyan Berbers have made clear their desire to make this consciousness visible, and thus, preserve it. As Kabyles did during the Berber


\(^2\) Alternate spelling of Tamazight

\(^3\) Another alternate spelling of Tamazight


Spring of 1980, Libyan Berbers have actively used media to promote their visibility internationally. Whereas the participants in the Berber Spring of 1980 used newspapers and pamphlets to spread their message, Libyan Berbers in the Revolution of 2011 have used the Internet and social media for the same purpose. The material that testifies to the Libyan Berber cultural renaissance is therefore both more accessible for a wider audience and more fragile than that of the Berber Spring, as it is, by and large, preserved virtually, rather than in print. Since the Libyan Revolution began in February 2011, Libyan Berbers have not only openly celebrated the Berber Spring, but they have taken photos and videos of these celebrations, which they have posted to social media websites, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Through these celebrations, Libyan Berbers have consciously connected the Berber Spring of 1980 with their own movement, making clear that they have preserved the consciousness gained by the earlier movement.

Libyan Berbers have conceived of their revolutionary struggle as a second Berber Spring. Before Marc Lynch coined the term “Arab Spring,” and before the Libyan Revolution began, ImazighenLibya posted the video, “Tafsut Imazighen Libya 2011 Le printemps libyen”\(^{199}\) to YouTube. The video contains images of Berber villages and monuments in Libya, accompanying a song that announces the beginning of a Berber Spring in Libya. The singer of the song, whose identity is not revealed in the video, declares, “Hands in hands/We will write about the darkness (of the regime)/We will write in Tifinagh (our language) because we refuse to die.”\(^{200}\) This video defiantly declares the existence of Berber identity within Libya, and ties that declaration of identity to the

\(^{200}\) ImazighenLibya, “Tafsut Imazighen 2011 Le printemps libyen.”
rejection of “oppression and [the turning] to freedom.” Connecting the expression of Berber culture to political liberation, this video anticipates the repetition of the same symbolic struggle of the 1980 Berber Spring within Libya.

Since the Libyan Revolution began, Libyan Berbers have commemorated the Berber Spring of 1980, using that struggle as symbolic power for their own movement for recognition of Berber identity within Libya. In the Berber Diaspora, commemorations united Berbers from many different nations both in memory of the Berber Spring of 1980 and in support of the Libyan Berber struggle. In Saint-Denis, France, a group calling itself Le Collectif “Un Printemps pour Tripoli” organized an event called “Un Printemps pour Tripoli: Meeting de Soutien aux Amazighs Libyens” on April 15, 2012. The Collectif states in a public Facebook event, posted by Ayrad Tacfin,

De voir les combattants amazighs libyens arborer le drapeau de notre identité commune, symbolisant la liberté retrouvée, est un moment de victoire commune. Une victoire qui s’inscrit dans le droit fil du printemps amazigh de 1980.

The Collectif links the two events through their assertion of identity, an action of liberation for the consciousnesses of all Berbers. They go on to declare, “La célébration du 32ème Printemps amazigh doit être dédiée à nos soeurs et frères amazighs libyens.” This dedication symbolically transfers the power of the original Berber Spring to the Berber community of Libya.

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201 ImazighenLibya, “Tafsut Imazighen 2011 Le printemps libyen.”
202 The “A Spring for Tripoli” Collective
204 “To see Libyan Amazigh combatants displaying the flag of our common identity, symbolizing recovered liberty, is a moment of common victory. A victory which is wholly in keeping with the Amazigh Spring of 1980.” Tacfin, “Un printemps pour Tripoli.”
205 Tacfin, “Un printemps pour Tripoli.”
Within Libya, Berbers have commemorated the Berber Spring since the
Revolution in order to assert their identity and demand the recognition of human rights.
Just like the Berber Spring of 1980, these commemorations are popular events that
involve all aspects of Libyan Berber society. Libyan Berbers have used television and the
Internet to preserve and spread the message drawn from the Berber Spring in a way that
was impossible before the Revolution. ImazighenLibya, who also posted the “Tafsut
Imazighen Libya” video, posted to YouTube a segment from the Libyan television station
Al Ahrar on the “32ème anniversaire du printemps berbère à Tripoli en Libye.” The
video shows marchers waving Berber flags and carrying signs in Tifinagh in Libya’s
capital on April 20, 2012. By using national media and YouTube, Libyan Berbers have
raised awareness transnationally of their solidarity with the principles of the Berber
Spring, and thus, of their particularity within the context of the “Arab Spring.” The At-
Yefren Media Center posted photos from the same commemoration to its Facebook page
in an album titled “Tafsut n Imazighen.” In one of these
photos, a lady carries a sign in English that reads, “No to Racism & oppression.” As
has historically been the case, this Berber Spring commemoration served as an
opportunity to both celebrate Berber identity and to oppose oppression.

In Nalut, a Berber town in the Nafusa Mountains, another commemoration took
place on the same date, which poster tatr11 uploaded to YouTube under the title

206 “32ème anniversaire du printemps berbère à Tripoli en Libye,” ImazighenLibya, “32ème
anniversaire du printemps berbère à Tripoli en Libye,” YouTube, April 21, 2013,
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hx3dLfuUawU.
207 “The Berber Spring” At-Yefren Media Center, “Tafsut n Imazighen” Facebook, April 20, 2012,
https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.412710652079901.102081.2253826308127
05&type=3.
208 At-Yefren Media Center, “Tafsut n Imazighen.”
"Though tatrit1 has titled this video in Arabic and does not include a description, a Twitter user named Talafsa tweeted the video with the description “Printemps Amazigh le 20 Avril a Nalout en Libye,” making the video accessible to a Francophone audience. In this video, marchers also carry Berber flags and hold signs, some of them in English, saying, “We want our rights NOW!” and “We don’t accept Discrimination.” These slogans further demonstrate the intertwining of Berbéritude and calls for human rights that Libyan Berbers assert through the commemoration of the Berber Spring, just as Algerians did in 1980.

Though in terms of method—armed combat—the Libyan Berber revolutionaries have more in common with the earlier Berber involvement in the Algerian Revolution, in content Libyan Berber rhetoric has been remarkably similar to that of the Berber Spring movement. In a declaration published on August 12, 2011 entitled “Comment le Mouvement amazigh libyen voit la Libye de demain,” the Mouvement culturel amazigh of the Nafusa Mountains states, “Afin de construire prochainement un Etat démocratique qui respecte la liberté, la dignité et l’égalité, nous pensons que le respect des Droits de l’homme est incontournable.” Above all, this movement supports the creation of a democratic Libyan state that respects human rights, embracing unity for all Libyans rather than separating Libyan Berbers from Arabs. The language is strikingly reminiscent

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211 “So as to construct in due course a democratic State which respects liberty, dignity and equality, we think that the respect of human rights is indispensable.” Mouvement culturel amazigh, “Comment le Mouvement amazigh libyen voit la Libye de demain,” Tamazgha, August 12, 2011 http://tamazgha.fr/Pour-le-mouvement-amazigh-la-Libye.html.
of that of Algérie: Quelle identité?, the work published directly after the Berber Spring. The document goes on to call for the recognition of Tamazight as an official language of Libya, but this is only one of six points, that also include calls for laïcité and respect for women’s rights. However, the Libyan constitution still does not recognize Berber language or identity, and tension has grown between the Berber community and the transitional government. On December 31, 2012, Berber representatives held a press conference in Tripoli, in which they warned of “dire consequences” and “great surprises” if Prime Minister Dr. Ali Zidan does not enact changes. Mirroring the situation in Algeria, Libyan Berbers, who began the Revolution by fighting for a united Libya that would recognize their identity, have become increasingly frustrated and defiant, as they have failed to receive this recognition.

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Conclusion

My impetus in writing this thesis was to explore whether a substantive connection existed between the Berber Spring of 1980 and the Libyan Berber revolutionaries of 2011. I read certain articles written by Western journalists about the Libyan Berber cultural revitalization that mentioned the Berber Spring, but did not establish whether the Libyan Berbers themselves consciously appreciated the link between the two events. For some journalists, the use of the term “Berber Spring” was simply a reference to the “Arab Spring,” within which Libyan Berbers seemed to be fighting. In the BBC, Sylvia Smith wrote an article on August 31, 2011 titled “Flying the flag for North Africa’s ‘Berber spring,’” which, despite its title, makes no mention of the movement of 1980. Another article, “Will the US Respond to Amazigh Rights in Libya?” was written by Ann Marlowe and published in the World Affairs Journal on December 20, 2011. In this article, Marlowe writes,

Since the so-called Berber spring massacre in Algeria in 1980, Amazigh in Algeria, Morocco, Libya, and other North African countries have joined their efforts to draw attention to their oppression and marginalization.

She goes on to report on a small demonstration by American Berbers calling for the United States to support the officialization of Tamazight in the new Libyan constitution. Marlowe at least references the Berber Spring of 1980 (though incorrectly referring to it a massacre), but she does not reflect in specific terms on its importance for Libyan Berbers.

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I was surprised by the extent to which I found that my hypothesis of a connection between the Berber Spring and Libyan Berber cultural renaissance was confirmed by my research. When I asked leading Paris-based Berber intellectuals Kamal Naït-Zerrad and Hend Sadi whether they believed that a connection existed, they confirmed, at least in theory, my conjecture. Naït-Zerrad told me, “C’est l’influence de ’80. C’est au Maroc, en Libye, partout, c’est ’80 qui est l’événement majeur.” Sadi asserted, “Il y a cette préparation, cette sensibilisation par le mouvement berbère…Ça a joué sans doute un rôle important en Libye.” Nevertheless, the Libyan Berbers themselves provided the most striking corroboration of my theory. In the videos and photos that I found online, Libyan Berbers expressed a strong desire to make a connection with the Berber Spring of 1980. This was not a connection that foreign journalists or even Kabyle intellectuals were imposing upon them. Rather, in their celebrations of the Berber Spring, Libyan Berbers claimed the history for themselves and displayed it vibrantly.

In these photos and videos, we see the Berber Spring movement embodied through the Libyan Berbers, who are both celebratory and defiant in their commemorations. The history and memory of that event transcend the realm of the intellectual and are manifested in physical, human activity. In Paris, I found the written material of my research tangibly embodied on three occasions. At the Association de Culture Berbère where I interviewed Hend Sadi, a wall was covered with covers of the magazine, *Actualité et Culture Berbère*, published by the association. Frantz Fanon

215 “It’s the influence of ’80. It’s in Morocco, in Libya, everywhere, it’s ’80 which is the major event.” Kamal Naït-Zerrad, interview by author, Paris, France, January 16, 2013.

216 “There is this preparation, this awareness by the Berber movement…No doubt it played an important role in Libya.” Hend Sadi, interview by author, Paris, France, January 17, 2013.
appeared on the cover of one of these magazines, and below and to the right of Fanon was Mouloud Mammeri. The connection I had made between the two authors was no longer theoretical, but professed by Berbers themselves. The next day, I stumbled into a restaurant called Le Numide Couscous for lunch. At the time, I did not reflect on the restaurant’s name, a reference to the Numdian Kingdom, the autonomous Berber state that had once existed in Algeria. However, on entering the restaurant, I immediately recognized a framed photograph of Matoub Lounès with the words “Le Rebelle,” and a portrait of Kahina, the Berber priestess who resisted Arab conquest. Then, the next day in the Superfly record store, I found a copy of A Vava Inouva by Idir, the Kabyle singer whose music the Libyan guitarist Khaled el Naggiair has played openly since the Revolution, along with arrangements of Sifaw’s poetry. Through the videos and photos of Libyan Berbers and those I have included from my trip to Paris, we see Berber history and culture—and the Berber Spring itself—palpably resilient and insurgent.

To ask a new question, what does the future hold for Berbers? At the very least, the Berber Spring and Libyan Berber uprising against Gaddafi have ensured that governments in North Africa cannot ignore their Berber populations. On face value, Morocco would appear to be the country where Berbers have had the most success in receiving recognition of the Berber component within the national identity. As part of the concessions made in response to Morocco’s own protest movement, which began February 20, 2011, Tamazight was made an official language of the country. Berber identity had already received recognition as “a principal element of national culture, as a

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217 See Appendix 1.
218 See Appendix 2.
219 See Appendix 3.
220 See Appendix 4.
cultural heritage present across all stages of Moroccan history and civilization with the royal edict *(dahir)* of October 17, 2001 that created the Royal Institute of the Amazigh Culture (IRCAM). However, not all Moroccan Berbers see these developments as benevolent progress. Instead, some perceive that the government has officialized Berber language and culture in order to more easily control the Berber population, and ensure that their identity remains consigned to the cultural realm. Opposing the IRCAM, another group called Amazigh Movement has emerged, announcing, “We are now done with the cultural.” This statement is a reaction against Berber cultural consciousness that, unlike that fostered by Mammeri, appears stagnant, without the political potential released in Algeria and Libya.

As in Morocco, the Algerian Berber political community has suffered from disunity. Like the Amazigh Movement in Morocco, in Algeria, the Mouvement pour l’Autonomie de la Kabylie (MAK) stands opposed to the more mainstream Algerian Berber political organizations, the Front des Forces socialistes (FFS) and Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie (RCD). The secretary of the MAK, Bouaziz Aït-Chebib stated in an interview in 2011 that the FFS and RCD “n’ont pas tiré les leçons des terribles échecs des formations kabyles.” As with “the cultural,” many Berbers have

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abandoned the idea of Berber identity forming part of the larger whole of North African nations. Instead, the MAK advocates for Kabyle autonomy. Renouncing the formulation of the “Algérie algérienne,” the conception of Algerian identity that would include Berber identity as one of its components, the MAK promotes the conception of “Kabylie kabyle,” separating the Berber region from the rest of the Arab-dominated nation. Berber activists throughout North Africa have echoed this desire for autonomy.

However, division among Berbers undermines the potential for their autonomy. Though the idea itself appears increasingly appealing to Kabyles, frustrated by the continuing repression of their identity, the MAK is by no means universally supported by the greater Kabyle community. Among prominent Berber intellectuals, Hend Sadi told me, “Tout le monde a défendu l’idée d’une certaine décentralisation, même dans le mouvement ’80. Mais…le personnel qui compose le MAK est très contestée en Kabylie.”224 And Kamal Naït-Zerrad contended that whereas in

les regions berbérophones de la Libye, la Nafusa, etc… ils ont…des conseils locaux, des représentants locaux, etc. Ils ont investi en fait le terrain. Ils sont pratiquement, plus ou moins, autonomes… En Kabylie, on ne fait pas ça en fait. Ceux qui veulent l’autonomie n’ont pas investi le terrain. C’est-à-dire, on reste toujours avec les déclarations, c’est bien, mais sur le terrain, il n’y a rien.225

Kabylie, though the birthplace of the Berber Spring, and thus of the movement that spread throughout the international Berber community, remains deeply divided politically, making autonomy far more difficult to attain. The barbed remarks by both

224 “Everybody has supported the idea of a certain decentralization, even in the movement of ’80. But…the personnel that composes the MAK is very controversial in Kabylie.” Hend Sadi, interview by author, Paris, France, January 17, 2013.
225 “the Berber speaking regions of Libya, the Nafusa mountains, etc…they have…local councils, local representatives, etc. They have invested the land, in fact. They are practically, more or less, autonomous…In Kabylie, we have not done this. That is to say, we have declarations, but in the field, there is nothing.” Kamal Naït-Zerrad, interview by author, Paris, France, January 16, 2013.
politicians themselves and the intellectuals who help form Berber consciousness reflects this division. Libyan Berbers, strengthened in unity through their shared combat against Gaddafi, govern themselves far more effectively. And as they have been excluded from representation in the official post-Gaddafi Libyan government, self-government appears to Libyan Berbers as an appealing alternative.

Though the Berber Spring was the first North African movement to call for democracy, the democratization of the region has not always benefited Berbers, and has presented them with a new set of challenges. Greater democratic participation is key for Berbers to voice their opposition to the Arab-Islamic ideology of North African states. However the opening of democratic reforms also provides opportunities for Islamists. This was the case in Algeria when the introduction of a multi-party system in 1989 allowed Berber political parties like the FFS and RCD to operate legally, but also led to the emergence of the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) and the beginning of the decade-long Algerian Civil War or Décennie Noire in which tens of thousands died. However, the rise of Islamism may also have its own strengthening effect on Berber communities. In Morocco, a Berber activist named Mohammed el-Ouazguiti attested,

“We were all divided and couldn’t get anything done, but with the rise of the Islamists, we have become united…We are the opposite of them, we are the only movement in Morocco that is officially secular.”

The division between Berber political groups and leaders has been a major hurdle in their struggle for liberation, but the strengthening of Islamism throughout North Africa at least provides a common enemy to combat.

The struggle between Berbers and Islamists manifested itself most recently and concretely in Northern Mali. The Touaregs, Berbers of the Sahara, have had their own history of uprisings since the 1960s separate from the Kabyle-based Berber cultural movement. However, they share the same language, and solidarity between Touaregs and other Berbers has been fostered with greater strength in recent years. Taking the most direct, militant action in favor of Berber autonomy thus far, the Touareg rebel group, Mouvement National pour la Libération de l’Azawad (MNLA) declared the beginning of an insurrection against the government of Mali on January 12, 2012. Hend Sadi evaluates the situation, wondering,

Est-ce que ça va aller vers plus de justice et une reconnaissance d’une forme d’autonomie pour le Nord du Mali? Je pense que c’est le seul chemin qui permettrait une certain stabilité de la région.²²⁹

A growing consensus is forming among Berbers—the intellectual elite, the political leaders, and the people themselves—in support of autonomous Berber governance separate from the post-colonial national borders they find themselves within.

The problem remains that Berbers lack support, both financial and otherwise, that other competing forces in the region—the national governments and Islamist groups, as well as arms dealers and drug traffickers have to a much greater degree. The Touaregs succeeded in taking control of Northern Mali/Azawad, but soon better-financed Islamist groups highjacked their rebellion, defeating the MNLA in the cities of Gao and Timbuktu where they imposed strict Sharia law, carrying out public flogging, stoning, and

²²⁷ This area is called Azawad by its Touareg inhabitants.
²²⁸ National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad
²²⁹ “Will this go more toward justice and a recognition of a form of autonomy for Northern Mali? I think that is the only path that would permit a certain stability of the region.” Hend Sadi, interview by author, Paris, France, January 17, 2013.
amputations, and destroying ancient monuments and manuscripts. As Sadi points out, “tous les pétro dollars du Moyen Orient, des islamistes, ça vit essentiellement avec ça. Les Berbères du Mali, eux n’ont aucun soutien.”

This remains the basic challenge for Berbers—the lack of financial support and visibility of their cause. As the French intervened in Mali, many reporters failed to mention the root of the conflict in the Touareg rebellion. On January 11, the date that the French began Opération Serval, their military operation into Mali, the New York Times published an article introducing the conflict simply by explaining, “The sudden introduction of Western troops upends months of tortured debate over how – and when – foreign nations should confront the Islamist seizure of northern Mali.”

There is no mention in the article of the MNLA or Touaregs. Thus international unity of the Berber community and increased visibility through the use of the Internet and social media presents the best opportunity for Berbers to find support from those who share the same universal values, such as democracy and respect for human rights. Though Berbers are far from perfectly unified and suffer from a lack of attention from the rest of the world, the two great ruptures of Berber consciousness, the Berber Spring and Libyan Berber cultural renaissance and revolution have greatly strengthened the ties of solidarity between Berbers worldwide and the visibility of their shared struggle.

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230 “All the oil money of the Middle East, the Islamists live essential off of that. The Berbers of Mali, they have no support.” Sadi, interview by author.

Appendix

Appendix 1

The wall is displayed with covers of the magazine, *Actualité et Culture Berbère*. Frantz Fanon is on the top left corner and Mouloud Mammeri is on the bottom right corner. I took this photo at the Association de Culture Berbère in Paris on January 17, 2013.
Appendix 2

Appendix 3

Kahina, Berber priestess and leader of the resistance against the Arab conquest. I took this photo at Le Numide Couscous in Paris on January 18, 2013.
Appendix 4

A Vava Inou Va by Idir, the popular Kabyle singer, whose music helped spread Berber consciousness to Libya. I purchased this at the Superfly Record Store in Paris on January 19, 2013.
Appendix 5

Avril 80: Insurgés et officiels du pouvoir racontent Le “Printemps berbère.” The cover photo is of a protest for the release of prisoners arrested during the Berber Spring. I purchased this at the L’Harmattan Librairie Méditerranée Moyen-Orient in Paris on January 19, 2013.


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