

Centring the periphery: northern Morocco as a hub of transnational anti-colonial activism, 1930–43*

David Stenner

Department of History, Christopher Newport University, 1 Avenue of the Arts, Newport News, VA 23606, USA
E-mail: david.stenner@cnu.edu

Abstract

During the interwar years, Moroccan anti-colonial activists organized a propaganda campaign abroad to discredit the French and Spanish protectorates that had been established in 1912. Yet it was not the famous nationalist leaders from the country's major urban centres but a small group from the marginalized northern city of Tetuan that played a pivotal role in the internationalization of the Moroccan question. This article demonstrates that, by analysing the emergence of Morocco's nationalist movement through a transnational framework, rather than within the confines of the nation-state, we can rearrange the geographical and political hierarchies of local history as previously disregarded individuals and locations suddenly emerge to the forefront of the narrative.

Keywords colonialism, decolonization, Morocco, periphery, transnationalism

From 1930 until the convulsions of the Second World War temporarily put an end to their efforts, a group of Moroccan nationalists commenced a well-organized campaign to bring their grievances against the colonial authorities to the attention of global public opinion. Fully aware that the growing protest movement at home would not by itself be sufficient to bring about significant change to the Treaty of Fez of 1912, which had established a French protectorate as well as a small zone under Spanish control in the north of the kingdom, the anti-colonial activists presented their demands on the exterior in order to challenge the moral authority of the two European colonial powers. Of course, they were only part of a much larger movement of 'colonial internationalism' that 'offered a future-oriented conception of politics'.¹ During the

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1 Manu Goswami, 'Imaginary futures and colonial internationalisms', *American Historical Review*, 117, 5, 2012, p. 1463.

interwar period, many Asians and Africans advocating for their peoples' right to self-determination established links to like-minded activists abroad in order to promote their respective causes.² Paris and London in particular emerged as centres of anti-colonialism that brought together individuals from across the world.³ Yet as the Moroccans joined this wave of international activism, it was not the usual suspects, known to us from the standard works on Moroccan nationalism, but rather a few semi-forgotten activists from the historically marginalized Spanish zone who led the charge.

Historians of Moroccan nationalism have traditionally focused on Fez and Rabat as the centres of the independence movement, because the majority of nationalist leaders hailed from these two major cities of French Morocco.⁴ In contrast, this article argues that, by adopting a transnational framework of analysis, we discover that a largely ignored group of actors from the small northern city of Tetuan actually played an equally important role in the development of the movement during the 1930s. Located in the Mediterranean coastal region under Spanish control, and thus on Morocco's periphery, these mostly older notables used their unique position to establish a hub that connected the 'interior' of the country, the French zone, to Europe and the Middle East. Whether smuggling letters past postal censors, providing significant financial support, or using their personal connections to influential personalities abroad, the contributions made by the activists from Tetuan were manifold and of pivotal importance to the establishment of a nationwide nationalist movement. Therefore, if we seek to truly comprehend the domestic dynamics of interwar Morocco, we must look first to the north and from there beyond the borders of the North African kingdom.⁵

- 2 Jonathan Derrick, *Africa's 'agitators': militant anti-colonialism in Africa and the West, 1918–1939*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2008; Niroda Kumara Baruwa, *Chatto: the life and times of an Indian anti-imperialist in Europe*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004; Fredrik Petersson, 'Hub of the anti-imperialist movement: the League against Imperialism and Berlin 1927–1933', *Interventions: The International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 16, 1, 2014; Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian moment: self-determination and the international origins of anticolonial nationalism*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- 3 Marc Matera, 'Black London: the imperial metropolis and decolonization in the twentieth century', Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015; Jennifer Anne Boittin, *Colonial metropolis: the urban grounds of anti-imperialism and feminism in interwar Paris*, Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2010; Michael Goebel, *Anti-imperial metropolis: interwar Paris and the seeds of Third World nationalism*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- 4 Books on the modern history of Morocco hardly mention Tetuan at all: C. R. Pennell, *Morocco since 1830: a history*, New York: New York University Press, 2000, pp. 247–8; Susan Gilson Miller, *A history of modern Morocco*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 136–8; Daniel Rivet, *Histoire du Maroc*, Paris: Fayard, 2012, pp. 321–2. While all historians of Moroccans nationalism deal with the emergence of anti-colonialism in the northern zone, they usually treat it as a peripheral phenomenon rather than a central part of the overall movement: John P. Halstead, *Rebirth of a nation: the origins and rise of Moroccan nationalism, 1912–1944*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967, pp. 149–50, 167–8, 201–3, 257–60; Charles-André Julien, *L'Afrique du nord en marche: Algérie-Tunisie-Maroc, 1880–1952*, Paris: René Julliard, 1972 (1st edn 1953), pp. 130–54; Charles-André Julien, *Le Maroc face aux impérialismes: 1415–1956*, Paris: Éditions Jeune Afrique, 1978, pp. 173–89; Abu Bakr al-Qadiri, *Mudhakirati fi-l-baraka al-wataniyya al-maghribiyya: 1930–40 (My memoirs of the Moroccan nationalist movement: 1930–40)*, Casablanca: Matba'a al-Najah al-Jadida, 1992, pp. 207–15; Jonathan Wyrzten, *Making Morocco: colonial intervention and the politics of identity*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015, pp. 151–4. Apart from scholarship specifically focused on Spanish Morocco, the only books describing the nationalists in the north in detail are Robert Rézette, *Les partis politiques marocains*, Paris: A. Colin, 1955, pp. 83–87, 113–27; and 'Abd al-Karim Ghallab, *Tarikh al-baraka al-wataniyya bi-l-maghrib (History of the Moroccan nationalist movement)*, Casablanca: Matba'a al-Najah al-Jadida, 2000, vol. 1, pp. 191–221, although the latter fails to acknowledge the profound differences between Spanish and French colonial rule and their impact on the anti-colonial movement.
- 5 For a similar approach in the case of Algeria, see Amal N. Ghazal, 'Tensions of nationalism: the Mzabi student mission in Tunis and the politics of anticolonialism', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 47, 1, 2015, pp. 47–63.

The recent increase of scholarship on transnational topics has opened new pathways for challenging the confines of the nation-state without necessarily engaging in a macro-scale global history.⁶ Such studies focus on ‘connections across particular political units’ by tying together local histories into larger regional or international narratives.⁷ Through analyses of the nexus between particulars they enable us to see the greater picture.⁸ In contrast, this article seeks to look beyond the borders of the nation-state to rearrange the geographical and political hierarchies within a specific country. In other words, it understands ‘local structures and events ... as the results of spatial movements’, and shows how transnational studies allow us to rewrite local histories in ways that go beyond simply adding new insights to the existing body of knowledge.⁹

In order to recuperate northern Morocco from the sidelines of academic scholarship, I reassess the history of local anti-colonial activism from the vantage point of Tetuan. By approaching the emergence of nationalist politics through a transnational framework, if the focus of our investigation zooms out from the borders of the nation-state to a larger unit of analysis, the scales begin to shift and the ‘capital of the north’ appears as the geographical epicentre of the narrative, whereas the Moroccan heartland under French rule recedes to the margins of a global sphere of political activism. Now it becomes possible to visualize the Spanish zone as the crossroads between the tightly controlled French protectorate and the wider Mediterranean world, with Tetuan constituting a nodal headquarters linking the nationalists abroad to their compatriots back home. As a result, a new set of actors moves to the forefront of the historical record. A transnational study of the early Moroccan nationalist movement thus does more than merely add a new perspective to the existing body of knowledge – it also allows us to rearrange the hierarchy of actors and locations within the political borders of Morocco itself and thereby rewrite national history.¹⁰ But let us begin by turning towards the capital of the Spanish protectorate.

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- 6 For an introduction to the debates on transnational history, see Akira Iriye, *Global and transnational history: the past, present, and future*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013; Klaus Kiran Patel, ‘Transnationale Geschichte’, 2010, <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/patelk-2010-de> (consulted 1 September 2015); Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, ‘Vergleich, Transfer, Verflechtung: der Ansatz der Histoire croisée und die Herausforderung des Transnationalen’, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 28, 4, 2002, pp. 607–36; Jürgen Osterhammel, ‘Transnationale Gesellschaftsgeschichte: Erweiterung oder Alternative?’, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 27, 3, 2001, pp. 464–79; Albert Wirz, ‘Für eine transnationale Gesellschaftsgeschichte’, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 27, 3, 2001, pp. 489–98.
- 7 Sven Becker in C. A. Bayly et al., ‘AHR conversation: on transnational history’, *American Historical Review*, 111, 5, 2006, p. 1453.
- 8 Andrew Arsan, Su Lin Lewis, and Anne-Isabelle Richard, ‘Introduction: global civil society in the interwar era’, *Journal of Global History*, 7, 2, 2012, pp. 157–65; Götz Nordbruch and Umar Ryad, ‘Introduction: toward a transnational history of Islam and Muslims in interwar Europe’, in Götz Nordbruch and Umar Ryad, eds., *Transnational Islam in interwar Europe: Muslim activists and thinkers*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. 1–10; Michael Goebel, ‘Von der Hispanidad zum Panarabismus: globale Verflechtungen in Argentinien Nationalismen’, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 37, 4, 2011, pp. 523–58; Stacy Fahrenthold, ‘Sound minds in sound bodies: transnational philanthropy and patriotic masculinity in *al-Nadi al-Homsi* and Syrian Brazil, 1920–1932’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 46, 2, 2014, pp. 259–83; Burleigh Hendrickson, ‘March 1968: practicing transnational activism from Tunis to Paris’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 44, 4, 2012, pp. 755–74.
- 9 Ulrike Freitag, ‘Translokalisierung als ein Zugang zur Geschichte globaler Verflechtungen’, *H-Soz-u-Kult*, 2005, <http://www.hsozkult.de/article/id/artikel-632> (consulted 10 September 2015).
- 10 For two examples ‘provincializing’ important urban centres, see Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, ‘Provincializing Paris: the center-periphery narrative of modern art in light of quantitative and transnational approaches’, *Art@ Bulletin*, 4, 1, 2015; Lara Putnam, ‘Provincializing Harlem: the “Negro Metropolis” as northern frontier of a connected Caribbean’, *Modernism/Modernity*, 20, 3, 2013, pp. 469–84.

Tetuan, capital of the north

Located on the slope of a majestic mountain range facing the sea, Tetuan constituted the social link between the rugged countryside of the Rif and the wider Mediterranean world. With many among its population tracing their origins back to the Muslims and Jews expelled from Spain following the *reconquista* during the fifteenth century, a particular Andalusian culture – discernible in both language and architecture – clearly set it apart from other Moroccan cities. Historically semi-autonomous and outside the direct influence of the *makhzan* (central government), the city's prominent families formed a self-conscious elite. Yet this small universe was not self-contained, as Tetuan constituted a major commercial hub that brought together merchants from as far away as the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, the wealthy and educated traditionally sent their sons to study Islamic sciences at the prestigious *Qarawiyyin* university in Fez, thus ensuring that future generations would maintain the pivotal networks of interpersonal relationships spanning North Africa. The members of the significant Jewish community also maintained links across the region, thus further globalizing Tetuan. 'A closed and secret town, yet also open to external influence, ... jealous of its political autonomy ... and characterized by a strong civic cohesion', Tetuan constituted both a world apart and an integral part of the Moroccan social fabric.¹¹

All certainties of this small community were shattered in 1860, as Spanish forces conquered Tetuan to regain the country's military glory amid the rapid demise of its empire in the Americas. During the subsequent two years, the occupiers transformed the urban landscape through European-style buildings, the visible presence of Spanish military superiority, and the introduction of modern technological advances such as the printing press and newspapers. For the local population, the sudden defeat constituted a profound experience, 'an unprecedented loss', and the awareness that a new century had begun 'in which only rich and strong states could live, whereas those suffering from ignorance and ... chaos were predisposed for a violent and sudden death'.¹² Thus, decades before their countrymen in the south eventually became exposed to the disastrous consequences of direct foreign occupation, the inhabitants of Tetuan had already experienced first-hand the effects of European colonial modernity. When the technology of photography reached Morocco in the late nineteenth century, for example, Tetuan became the site of the first professional photo studio established outside cosmopolitan Tangier.¹³

It was not until November 1912, though, a few months after France had forced sultan 'Abd al-Hafid to consent to the establishment of a 'protectorate' over Morocco, that Spain would officially return to rule the Rif region as a junior partner of the powerful French rival. On the basis of a clause in the Treaty of Fez that had promised an 'understanding with the Spanish government regarding the interests, which this government has in virtue of its geographical position and territorial possessions on the Moroccan coast', Paris granted Madrid a 'Spanish zone of influence ... governed by a *khalifa* under the supervision of a Spanish high commissioner'.¹⁴ From that point on, just like the rest of the country, Tetuan

11 Jean-Louis Miège, M'hammad Benaboud, and Nadia Erzini, *Tétuan: ville andalouse marocaine*, Paris: CNRS Editions, 1996, pp. 100, 102.

12 Muhammad Dawud, *Mukhtasir tarikh Tituan (A brief history of Tetuan)*, Tetuan, Morocco: al-Matba'a al-Mahdiyya, 1955, pp. 195–6.

13 Ken Jacobson, *Odalisques and arabesques: orientalist photography, 1839–1925*, London: Bernard Quaritch Ltd., 2007, pp. 95, 250–1.

14 'Protectorate Treaty between France and Morocco', *American Journal of International Law*, 6, 3, 1912, p. 208; 'Treaty between France and Spain regarding Morocco', *American Journal of International Law*, 7, 2, 1913, p. 81.

would remain under foreign rule for more than four decades. However, with few economic and military resources at their disposal, the Spanish military struggled to establish full control over the poor mountainous region. The tribal rebellion, led by the Hispanophone Mohamed Ibn ‘Abd al-Karim al-Khattabi from 1921 until 1926, caused a wave of solidarity across the Islamic world: Egyptian sympathizers collected money in mosques following Friday prayers, while Indian Muslims sent letters to the League of Nations, in which they expressed their solidarity with their ‘Riffian brothers’.¹⁵ In addition to the extremely brutal campaign of military subjugation in the countryside, which included the use of chemical weapons, the Spanish authorities chose to work with local notables to secure the cooperation, or at the very least acquiescence, of the native population.¹⁶

Having recently lost the last Latin American and Asian colonies as a result of the Spanish–American War of 1898, King Alfonso XII, nicknamed ‘El Africano’, sought to restore his nation’s prestige and extract raw materials from its new North African possession. Usually marginalized within the concert of European powers, Spanish politicians and intellectuals desired to prove that they too were ‘modern’ and ‘advanced’, and the best way to achieve this was by participating in the colonial ventures of the age. Yet at least as important was the idea of ‘Hispano-Moroccan brotherhood’ that emerged in the nineteenth century and served as a justification of Spain’s colonial ambitions in North Africa.¹⁷ It was centred on the notion of a shared history, geography, and racial origins between the inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula and North Africa as the legacy of medieval al-Andalus, and led to the Spaniards seeing themselves as uniquely positioned to form a bridge between Europe and Africa.¹⁸ Thus, Spain’s colonial project differed from France’s *mission civilisatrice* in the Maghrib because it combined pervasive perceptions of European superiority with the nebulous idea of fraternity that sought to embrace the local Moroccan population.

Among the people of Tetuan, one well-respected individual stood out as an ideal partner for the colonizers: ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna was a wealthy businessman who came to occupy different offices in the early Spanish colonial administration, before spending several years in the Middle East during the 1920s. Calm and dignified, with a neatly trimmed beard, and always wearing an elegant white *jalabiyya* (robe), he represented the model *évolué* capable of cooperating with the colonizers in order to uplift his own race – at least in the eyes of most Europeans. But, despite his willingness to work for the Spanish authorities, Bennouna, together with his dear friend and *fqih* (legal scholar) Mohamed Daoud, also brought into existence a small circle of Tetuanis seeking to transform the nature of the protectorate with the ultimate goal of obtaining the complete independence of the entire country. While university students in French Morocco formed secret nationalist cells, these middle-aged gentlemen positioned themselves as interlocutors between the colonizers and the city’s restive population. By the time of Bennouna’s untimely death in 1935, he had become the unofficial ‘father of Moroccan

15 María Rosa de Madariaga, *Abd-el-Krim el Jatabi: la lucha por la independencia*, Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2009, pp. 480–1.

16 Sebastian Balfour, *Deadly embrace: Morocco and the road to the Spanish civil war*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 83–156.

17 Josep Lluís Mateo Dieste, *La ‘hermandad’ hispano-marroquí: política y religión bajo el protectorado español en Marruecos (1912–1956)*, Barcelona: Edicions Bellaterra, 2003; Víctor Morales Lezcano, *Africanismo y orientalismo español en el siglo XIX*, Madrid: UNED, 1988.

18 Susan Martin-Márquez, *Disorientations: Spanish colonialism in Africa and the performance of identity*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008, pp. 50–1.

nationalism', as one French observer later called him, whose legacy would inspire the next generation of anti-colonial activists across the entire country.¹⁹

The emergence of anti-colonial nationalism abroad

In parallel to Spain's halting colonization of the north, France had begun transforming its territory into a modern protectorate, thereby unintentionally laying the foundations for the emergence of a local nationalist movement. As a result of the establishment of a modern system of education for the scions of the local elites, the first generation of young Moroccans from Fez and Rabat moved to the metropole to pursue higher studies at French universities, where they met their counterparts from Algeria and Tunisia. In order to foster solidarity among each other, the students founded the Association des Étudiants Musulmans Nord-Africains (AEMNA) in 1927, with the aim of providing aid to North Africans residing in the French capital.²⁰ This new organization quickly became a clearing house for anti-colonial ideas, bringing together intellectuals from across the Maghrib and exposing them to the most important political ideologies of their time.²¹

During their time in Paris, the students became acquainted with Shakib Arslan, the famous Lebanese proponent of pan-Islamism and one of the most prolific Arab journalists of his time. Since 1925, the Prince of Eloquence (*amir al-bayan*) had been residing in Geneva, the seat of the League of Nations, in order to militate against Western colonialism and to advocate for the complete independence of the peoples of the Middle East. Young Moroccans such as Ahmed Balafrej repeatedly travelled to Switzerland to meet and discuss their plans with him; in return, Arslan visited Paris in order to oversee conferences reuniting activists from across North Africa.²² For the young Maghribis, Arslan became a father figure who introduced his young disciples to modern politics. 'I am ready to do any service that you order me to do', Balafrej declared at the end of a letter informing the *amir* about the students' recent political activities.²³

In the meantime, other young Moroccans travelled from Spanish Morocco eastwards to study in the Mashriq. In 1928, 'Abdelsalam Bennouna sent his sons Tayeb and Mehdi to Nablus, Palestine, where they and other future nationalist leaders from Tetuan attended the modern Najah high school, not only to seek 'knowledge and wisdom', but also to strengthen themselves physically and morally by participating in the activities of the boy scout movement run by the local branch of the pan-Islamic Jama'iyyat al-Shubban al-Musulimin (Young Men's Muslim Association, YMMA).²⁴ Meanwhile, several of their older compatriots attended

19 Rézette, *Partis politiques marocains*, p. 72.

20 Mohammed Bekraoui, 'Les étudiants marocains en France à l'époque du protectorat, 1927–1939', in Jean-Claude Allain, ed., *Présences et images franco-marocaines au temps du protectorat*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003, p. 102.

21 Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre, Vincennes (henceforth SHAT), Série 3H, Box 1487, 'Notice sur les mouvements politiques indigènes en Afrique du Nord', March 1940, p. 53; Charles-Robert Ageron, 'L'association des étudiants musulmans nord-africains en France durant l'entre-deux-guerres', *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer*, 70, 258, 1983, p. 32; Halstead, *Rebirth of a nation*, pp. 171–2.

22 William L. Cleveland, *Islam against the West: Shakib Arslan and the campaign for Islamic nationalism*, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1985, p. 101. Juliette Bessis, 'Chekib Arslan et les mouvements nationalistes au Maghreb', *Revue historique*, 526, 1978, pp. 480–1.

23 Royal Moroccan Library (*Khizana Hassaniyya*), Rabat (henceforth RML), Shakib Arslan File, letter from Ahmed Balafrej to Shakib Arslan, 7 February 1931.

24 Bennouna Family Archive, Tetuan (henceforth BFA), Mehdi Bennouna File, telegram from 'Abdelsalam Bennouna to Tayeb Bennouna, 23 February 1930; M'hamed Benaboud, 'Les missions culturelles de Tétouan au Moyen Orient: la mission à Naplouse (1928–31) et les missions au Caire (1938)', in *Elites et pouvoir dans*

universities in Cairo.²⁵ Of course these young men did not dedicate all of their time to academic pursuits either, but immersed themselves in the vibrant cultural and political scene that they encountered in Egypt, which stood in sharp contrast to the rather stale situation in their own country.²⁶ At a time when pan-Islamic sentiments were sweeping across the Arab world, symbolized by newspapers such as Rashid Rida's *al-Manar*, the prolific writings of the YMMA co-founder Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib, the proselytizing of the Muslim Brotherhood, or the publications of the Tawfiq al-Madani, these educational missions to Palestine and Egypt underlined the Tetuanis' desire to establish relationships to their co-religionists in the region.²⁷ Throughout the late the 1920s, these young Moroccans created a network of personal relationships, both in Europe and in the Middle East, which suddenly became politically activated by an important event back home.

Internationalizing the Moroccan question

On 16 May 1930, the French residency in Rabat published the so-called Berber *dahir* (edict), which codified a separate system of jurisprudence based on tribal customs in predominantly Berber territories, thus separating them from the predominantly Arab areas that remained under the jurisdiction of Sharia law.²⁸ Infuriated by this attempt to further divide and conquer the native population, young activists across the country rallied entire communities through public recitations of the *latif*, a prayer to which the faithful usually resorted in moments of great calamities.²⁹ On 26 August, a delegation led by 'Allal al-Fassi and Mohamed Hassan al-Ouazzani went one step further and submitted a list of 'thirteen demands' to the sultan, which called for 'reforming the judiciary ..., unifying the educational programs, ... respecting the Arab language, ... ending the propaganda of the evangelizers, ... [and] considering all inhabitants of the Sharifian Empire entirely as subjects of His Sharifian Majesty completely submitted to his authority and jurisdiction'.³⁰ Although this memorandum was respectful in tone and mild in content, it failed to sway the young and inexperienced Sidi Mohamed to publicly endorse the protesters' demands. It would take several more years before the residency

le monde arabe pendant la période moderne et contemporaine: actes du congrès d'histoire, Tunis, 4–9 Décembre 1989, Tunis: Université de Tunis, Centre d'études et de recherches économiques et sociales, 1992.

- 25 BFA, Mehdi Bennouna File, photo of the Moroccan student delegation in Nablus on its visit to the Moroccan student delegation in Cairo, Summer 1931; BFA, 'Abdelkhaleq Torres File, letter from M'hamed Bennouna to 'Abdelsalam Bennouna, 24 March 1931.
- 26 BFA, 'Abdelkhaleq Torres File, diary entries, 24 March and 30 September 1929, and 5 May 1931.
- 27 Nadia Elissa-Mondeguer, 'Al-Manâr de 1925 à 1935: la dernière décennie d'un engagement intellectuel', *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, April 2002, pp. 95–8; Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi, 'Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib (1886–1969)', MA thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1992; Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, London: Oxford University Press, 1969, pp. 9–20; James McDougall, *History and the culture of nationalism in Algeria*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- 28 Charles-Robert Ageron, 'La politique berbère du protectorat Marocain de 1913 à 1934', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 18, 1, 1971, p. 51; Edmund Burke III, 'The image of the Moroccan state in French ethnological literature: new light on the origins of Lyautey's Berber policy', in Ernest Gellner and Charles Micaud, eds., *Arabs and Berbers: ethnicity and nation-building in North Africa*, London: Duckworth, 1974, p. 187; Jonathan Wyrzten, 'Performing the nation in anti-colonial protest in interwar Morocco', *Nations and Nationalism*, 19, 4, 2013, pp. 615–34.
- 29 Kenneth Brown, 'The impact of the Berber *dahir* in Salé', in Ernest Gellner and Charles Micaud, eds., *Arabs and Berbers: from tribe to nation in North Africa*, Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath & Co, 1972, p. 209.
- 30 Translation and copy of a petition and a list of demands of the Moroccan people submitted to His Majesty the Sultan of Morocco, *La Nation Arabe*, 8, October 1930, pp. 9–10.

finally decided to partially abort the judicial reform project, thereby handing a significant moral victory to the protesters.³¹

While the campaign against the Berber *dahir* constituted a pivotal moment in the modern history of Morocco because it galvanized the native urban population against the colonial authorities for the first time, events of equal importance were taking place abroad. The students in Paris and Cairo began a passionate anti-colonial propaganda campaign, supported by Shakib Arslan, whose prominent newspaper, *La Nation Arabe*, ‘provided the Moroccans with a channel of communication to the Islamic world at large’.³² The press across the Middle East quickly picked up the story, and public figures from Damascus to Istanbul condemned the actions of the French authorities. In Cairo, Prince ‘Umar Tusun founded a Committee for the Defence of Moroccan Muslims, the ulama of the venerable al-Azhar mosque demanded that the Egyptian king intervene with the colonial authorities, *al-Manar* published several articles supportive of the protesters, and thousands of Muslims from Senegal to Indonesia ‘took up the cudgels on behalf of Morocco’.³³ A French official showed himself dismayed by this outpouring of anti-French sentiments, explaining that ‘the articles of Shakib Arslan in the Egyptian press have given the largest publicity [possible] throughout the entire Muslim world to [the Moroccans’] first campaign’.³⁴ In the wake of the international protests against the Berber *dahir*, the reality of pan-Islamic solidarity manifested itself on the global stage.

Inspired by this initial success, the activists invited Arslan to Morocco; in August 1930, the *amir* visited Tetuan in order to encourage the protesters and advise them on organizational issues.³⁵ This decision made sense, not only since he had already planned a trip to Spain anyway but also because the French authorities would have never allowed him to enter the territory under their control. Furthermore, Arslan had long been in contact with ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna, who at the age of forty-two had a very different relationship with the elderly Lebanese gentleman than his much younger compatriots. Throughout his five days in Tetuan, Arslan consumed countless cups of sugary mint tea at the ceremonies organized in his honour, while troupes of activists from the French zone, having made the pilgrimage to the capital of the Spanish protectorate, stood in line in order to meet their idol.³⁶ One nationalist would later underline that, thanks to this visit, ‘Morocco’s struggle had ... become connected to that of the Middle East and internationalized’.³⁷ The visit established Tetuan as a hub of anti-colonial activism, bridging the gap between the interior and the wider Mediterranean world.

It is important to emphasize, however, that the Moroccan activists did not remain mere passive recipients of foreign support but actively attracted attention to their demands by submitting notes of protest to the League of Nations, as well as by reaching out to the general public in both France and the Middle East. In Cairo, the small community of Moroccans contributed to the international campaign in numerous ways: Hassan Bouayad contacted

31 Katherine E. Hoffman, ‘Berber law by French means: customary courts in the Moroccan hinterlands, 1930–1956’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 52, 4, 2010, pp. 851–80.

32 Cleveland, *Islam against the West*, p. 97.

33 Halstead, *Rebirth of a nation*, p. 184; al-Qadiri, *Mudhakirati fi-l-haraka al-wataniyya al-maghribiyya*, p. 93.

34 Centre d’Histoire de Sciences-Po, Paris (henceforth CHSP), Archives Charles-André Julien, JU22, ‘Résident générale Noguès au Ministre des Affaires étrangères Yvon Delbos: report sur le nationalisme marocain’, 9 October 1937, p.2.

35 Cleveland, *Islam against the West*, pp. 94–5.

36 BFA, ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna File, letter from ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna to Tayeb Bennouna, 30 August 1930.

37 Tayeb Bennouna, quoted in Abdelmajid Benjelloun, *Le mouvement nationaliste marocain dans l’ex-Maroc khalifien (1930–56)*, Rabat, Morocco: al-Ma‘arif al-Jadida, 2011, p. 248.

Egyptian journalists and held a talk at the headquarters of the YMMA, drawing such a large crowd that ‘many were forced to stand outside the lecture hall to listen to [his] precious speech’;³⁸ Mekki Naciri published a lengthy report entitled ‘France and its Berber policy in Morocco’; and M’hamed Bennouna co-organized a patriotic tea party for North Africans making the *hajj* (pilgrimage) to Mecca, asking them to spread the latest news from Morocco among their co-religionists.³⁹ Apparently they succeeded, because the Egyptian prime minister, Nahas Pasha, transmitted his ‘best wishes to all of you and the unfortunate Moroccan nation’.⁴⁰

Meanwhile, the students in Paris commenced a campaign to present their grievances to the French public, supported by leftist intellectuals whom they had met through Arslan.⁴¹ Together with Daniel Guérin, they wrote a book entitled *Tempête sur le Maroc*, which criticized the ‘conspiracy of silence’ in the French press regarding the suffering of the Muslim population under the colonial yoke.⁴² Heeding Arslan’s advice, the nationalists worked hard to make inroads into the leading French newspapers, but quickly realized that they lacked the hard cash necessary to convince journalists to report about their campaign.⁴³ With the help of a few sympathetic socialist legislators, however, Balafrej and his friends eventually gained access to the French political elites.⁴⁴

More significant was the creation in July 1932 of the monthly journal *Maghreb*, which ‘address[ed] itself to enlightened public opinion and parliamentarians’ in order to reform the protectorate and improve the situation of the native population.⁴⁵ Whereas the cover page made it appear as if the French socialist Jean Longuet was the moving force behind the revue, in fact the Moroccans themselves were in charge.⁴⁶ Journalistically, the magazine was well written, presenting articles about the Moroccan educational system alongside reports on nationalism in Tunisia or the latest events in Syria. Spanish colonialism was compared favourably to that of France, the author claiming that Madrid had promised ‘the liberty and independence of the Moroccan people’.⁴⁷ Occasionally, famous French orientalist scholars such as Louis Massignon and Henri Laoust contributed articles, thereby adding legitimacy to the publication in the eyes of the French public.⁴⁸

Even with regard to these activities in France, the nationalists in Tetuan played a pivotal role. Although students in Paris produced *Maghreb*, ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna and his friends provided much of the capital necessary to execute this expensive operation.⁴⁹ Full of appreciation for the financial support they received from Bennouna, one of the journal’s editors wrote a heartfelt letter to ‘thank him from the bottom of [his] heart ... for [this] generosity and

38 Article in *al-Fath* newspaper quoted in al-Qadiri, *Mudhakirati fi-l-haraka al-wataniyya al-maghribiyya*, p. 88.

39 BFA, ‘Abdelkhaleq Torres File, letter from M’hamed Bennouna to ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna, 24 March 1931.

40 CHSP, Archives Charles-André Julien, JU22, ‘Résident générale Noguès au Ministre des Affaires étrangères Delbos: report sur le nationalisme marocain’, 5 November 1937, p. 4.

41 BFA, ‘Abdelkhaleq Torres File, diary entry, 17 December 1930.

42 Mouslim Barbari, *Tempête sur le Maroc: ou les erreurs d’une politique berbère*, Paris: Editions Rieder, 1931, p. 57.

43 BFA, ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna File, letter from Arslan to ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna, 31 October 1930.

44 RML, Arslan File, letter from Balafrej to Arslan, 1 December 1930.

45 ‘Pourquoi nous lançons Maghreb’, *Maghreb*, July 1932, p. 2.

46 Jamaa Baïda, ‘Qidaya shimal ifriqiyya min khilal majallat “Maghrib” al-barisiyya (1932–5) (The cases of North Africa in the Parisian magazine *Maghrib* (1932–5))’, *Majjalat Dar al-Niyaba (Revue Dar al-Niyaba)*, 5, 19–20, 1988, pp. 42–7.

47 ‘La collaboration hispano-marocaine’, *Maghreb*, September 1932, p. 29.

48 Halstead, *Rebirth of a nation*, p. 147.

49 BFA, ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna File, letter from ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna to Arslan, 5 December 1930.

munificence for the sake of our holy cause'.⁵⁰ In order to show their appreciation, the students in Paris gave him the honorary title of 'official representative of the AEMNA in Morocco'.⁵¹ Bennouna, who was completely aware of the preponderant role that donations from Tetuan had played in propagating the nationalist cause in the metropole, noted: 'the brothers in Paris opened the doors of the newspaper columns with a key made up of banknotes, which we have sent them ... despite the economic crisis'.⁵²

Just as important as Tetuan's role in providing funds was its position as a relay point for mail between the interior and the exterior.⁵³ Personal letters, wedding gifts, or copies of *Maghreb* – which the residency in Rabat had banned from its territory – were sent by activists in France and Egypt to Tetuan to be smuggled across the porous border to the 'interior' or simply to be forwarded via the British postal service, which remained beyond the reach of the French censors.⁵⁴ Even sympathetic Europeans helped to maintain the contact between the two zones, such as a French dentist from Fez who sometimes smuggled letters in his Fiat.⁵⁵ The students in Paris excitedly proclaimed that there is 'no censorship ... in Tetuan', while expressing their hope that Bennouna and his colleagues would distribute their materials 'across all corners of Morocco, so that the propaganda does not only reach Fez and Rabat but the entire country'.⁵⁶ From Cairo, Rashid Rida shipped copies of Arslan's seminal work *Limadha ta'akhkhara al-muslimun wa taqaddama ghayrubum* (*Why have Muslims fallen behind and others have progressed?*) to Tetuan to be sold across Morocco via mail order.⁵⁷ Without these contributions from Tetuan, the nascent Moroccan nationalist movement would have found it very difficult to establish itself at home and abroad.

It did not take long for the impact of this global anti-colonial propaganda campaign to become evident. In May 1932, protest letters from across the Middle East flooded the headquarters of the League of Nations. Numerous Arabs seized the occasion of the first anniversary of the Berber *dahir* to denounce France's colonial policies in Morocco: the local branch of the YMMA in Basra objected to the 'resolution to stamp out the Islamic faith and culture from North Africa'; the cell in Lydda denounced 'some of the most abominable forms of tyranny and despotism'; and the headquarters in Cairo protested against the 'oppression of the Moroccan nation'.⁵⁸ Even the inhabitants of the small Palestinian village of Tulkarm sent a letter to

50 Letter from Mohamed al-Fassi to 'Abdelsalam Bennouna, 6 January 1931, reprinted in Muhammad Ibn 'Azuz Hakim, *Ab al-haraka al-wataniyya al-maghribiyya al-hajj 'Abd al-Salam Banuna: biyatuhu wa nidaluhu* (*The father of the Moroccan nationalist movement Hajj 'Abdelsalam Bennouna: his life and struggle*), Rabat, Morocco: al-Hilal al-'arabiyya li-l-taba'a wa-l-nashr, 1987, vol. 2, p. 49.

51 BFA, 'Abdelsalam Bennouna File, diary entry, Torres, 3 February 1932.

52 BFA, 'Abdelsalam Bennouna File, letter from 'Abdelsalam Bennouna to Tayeb Bennouna, 1 January 1931.

53 Wyrzten, *Making Morocco*, p. 170.

54 Mohamed Daoud Library, Tetuan (henceforth MDL), Shakib Arslan collection, letter from Arslan to Mohamed Daoud, 25 March 1936; letter from Arslan to Daoud, 3 July 1936; and letter from Arslan to Daoud, 24 July 1938. Letter from Arslan to 'Abdelsalam Bennouna, 19 February 1931, reprinted in Tayib Banuna, *Nidaluna al-qawmi: fi risa'il al-mutabadila bayna al-amir Shakib Arslan wa-l-Hajj Abd al-Salam Banuna* (*Our national struggle: letters exchanged between the amir Shakib Arslan and Hajj Abd al-Salam Bennouna*), Tangier, Morocco: Matba'a Dar al-Amal, 1989, pp. 163–73. Letter from 'Allal al-Fassi to Daoud, 26 December 1934, reprinted in Hasna Dawud, *Al-Rasa'il al-mutabadila bayna 'Allal al-Fasi wa Muhammad Dawud* (*Letters exchanged between 'Allal al-Fassi and Muhammad Daoud*), Tetuan, Morocco: 2000, p. 90.

55 BFA, 'Abdelsalam Bennouna File, 'Bulletin de Renseignements: Tangier', 24 June 1931.

56 BFA, 'Abdelsalam Bennouna File, letter from Mohamed al-Fassi (Paris) to 'Abdelsalam Bennouna, 31 March 1931.

57 Letter from Arslan to A. Bennouna, 14 February 1931, and letter from Arslan to A. Bennouna, 10 March 1931, reprinted in Banuna, *Nidaluna al-qawmi*, pp. 161, 187.

58 CHSP, Archives Charles-André Julien, JU22, letter from the YMMA Basra to the League of Nations, 1932; letter from the YMMA Lydda to the League of Nations, 16 May 1932; and letter from the YMMA Cairo to

Geneva in order express their ‘anger and indignation’ about France’s behaviour.⁵⁹ Inspired by their evident successes abroad, the Moroccans now decided to appeal directly to the colonizers, and once again the ‘northerners’ took the lead.

From protests to petitions

In June 1931, a group of notables from Tetuan travelled to Madrid in order to submit a petition to the new Spanish government. Inspired by the establishment of the Second Republic just two months earlier, their one-page document did not contain any radical demands but merely appealed to the ‘heroes of Spain that had liberated their country’ to establish ‘local councils ... elected by the residents, ... a free press, ... and primary ... and secondary schools’ throughout the Moroccan protectorate.⁶⁰ In the weeks preceding this journey, activists had gathered signatures and donations across the Spanish zone in order to support the delegation travelling to the Iberian Peninsula.⁶¹ They had even convinced the *khalifa* to attach his seal to the document, a gesture that greatly infuriated General José Sanjurjo, who ruled Spain’s protectorate with an iron fist.⁶² But to the astonishment of even the Moroccans themselves, the government in Madrid chose to fulfil some of their demands by easing press censorship, replacing Sanjurjo with a seemingly more tolerant high commissioner, and – most importantly – organizing free elections for a newly established municipal council. Having received more votes than any other candidate, ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna wrote an enthusiastic letter to his son Tayeb in Palestine in which he celebrated this ‘memorable day ... for our beloved Morocco, which ... will be recorded in golden letters on the pages of history’.⁶³

Clearly, Bennouna and his friends had good reason to be proud of their achievements, which had established them at the centre of the anti-colonial struggle. Yet it is important to note that the ‘demands of the Moroccan people’ had been a collaborative project, planned and executed in close cooperation with activists from French Morocco as well as the wider Mediterranean world.⁶⁴ Immediately following the end of the Spanish monarchy on 14 April 1931, ‘Omar Benabdeljalil wrote from Fez to point out the political transition as ‘a great opportunity for Morocco’, while his colleague ‘Allal al-Fassi urged the Tetuanis ‘to go to Madrid in order to congratulate the new government and present a petition to the president’.⁶⁵ A more sceptical letter arrived from the young student M’hamed Bennouna in Cairo, who feared that a Spanish decision to ‘forsake its colonial efforts’ would allow France to occupy northern Morocco as well.⁶⁶ In order to avoid this fate, Shakib Arslan intervened in the debate from his home in Switzerland, counselling the Moroccans to postpone any requests for complete independence and instead ‘demand from the new republic the autonomy of the Rif with a

the League of Nations, 9 May 1934, all reprinted in María Rosa de Madariaga, ‘Les documents des archives de la société des nations relatifs au dahir berbère’, *Journées d’études du G.E.R.M.*, 1976, appendix.

59 CHSP, Archives Charles-André Julien, JU22, letter from the inhabitants of Tulkarm to the League of Nation, 16 May 1932, reprinted in de Madariaga, ‘Documents des archives’, appendix.

60 BFA, ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna File, List of demands of the Moroccan people, 1 May 1931.

61 BFA, ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna File, letter from ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna to Tayeb Bennouna, 15 May 1931.

62 BFA, ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna File, Report from the French consulate in Tetuan, 30 May 1931.

63 BFA, ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna File, letter from ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna to Tayeb Bennouna, 27 September 1931.

64 Hakim, *Ab al-haraka al-wataniyya al-maghribiyya*, vol. 2, pp. 423–39.

65 BFA, ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna File, letter from ‘Omar Benabdeljalil to ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna, 16 April 1931, and letter from ‘Allal al-Fassi to ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna, 15 April 1931, reprinted in Banuna, *Nidaluna al-qawmi*, pp. 206–7.

66 BFA, M’hamed Bennouna File, letter from M’hamed Bennouna to ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna, 15 April 1931.

parliament and responsible government under the rule of the *khalifa*.⁶⁷ Seeking to help his compatriots formulate their demands, Ahmed Balafrej secretly travelled from Paris to northern Morocco, where, according to ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna, his contributions ‘greatly excited ... and benefited’ the Tetuanis.⁶⁸

The increasing international attention towards Morocco convinced Hajj Amin al-Hussayni, the grand mufti of Jerusalem, to invite ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna to the General Islamic Congress, which took place from 7 to 17 December 1931.⁶⁹ Unable to embark on this long journey himself, Bennouna assured the mufti that ‘our hearts are with you and that we support with all our strength whatever you decide to improve our religion and our *umma* [community of believers]’.⁷⁰ Instead, M’hamed Bennouna and Mekki Naciri made the trip from Cairo to the Holy City, where they not only distributed Arabic-language translations of *Tempête sur le Maroc* among the attendees but also co-signed the final conference declaration demanding the ‘complete unity of the Arab countries ... and their complete independence’.⁷¹ Despite the congress’s primary focus on the question of Palestine, the Moroccans were able to bring their case to the attention of the gathered delegates and establish the legitimacy of their movement among their co-religionists.⁷² Mufti Hajj Amin al-Husayni also submitted a ‘strong protest’ about the situation in the Maghrib to the League of Nations, condemning ‘the aggressive propaganda undertaken by the ... [Christian missionaries] in order to turn the Muslim Berber children away from their religion’.⁷³

Emboldened by this international wave of support, as well as by the successful mission to Madrid the year before, numerous Moroccans joined the Jama’iyya Isbaniyya Islamiyya (Asociación Hispano-Musulmana, AHI) in the summer of 1932, which had as its goal the ‘renewing, between the Spanish people and its Muslim friends ..., of a powerful current of spirituality’.⁷⁴ This association aimed at highlighting the historical and cultural links between Moroccans and Spaniards in order to create a public atmosphere sympathetic to reformist demands.⁷⁵ Although the nationalists ‘did not see the aid and assistance’ this project might provide, they remained cautiously optimistic of somehow benefitting from its members’ ‘great standing in Spanish political circles’.⁷⁶ However, despite receiving several invitations to speak on Hispano-Moroccan relations in Madrid, as well as visits to Tetuan by influential socialist politicians, the AHI failed to transform Spanish colonial policy.⁷⁷

67 BFA, ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna File, letter from Arslan to ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna, 6 May 1931.

68 BFA, ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna File, letter from ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna to Arslan, 2 May 1931.

69 Letter from Amin al-Hussayni to ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna, 21 October 1931, reprinted in Banuna, *Nidaluna al-qawmi*, pp. 274–5.

70 Letter from ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna to Amin al-Hussayni, 24 November 1931, reprinted in Banuna, *Nidaluna al-qawmi*, pp. 282–4.

71 Banuna, *Nidaluna al-qawmi*, p. 281; Halstead, *Rebirth of a nation*, p.185; Benjelloun, *Mouvement nationaliste marocain*, p. 252.

72 For analyses of the General Islamic Conference, see Weldon C. Matthews, ‘Pan-Islam or Arab nationalism? The meaning of the 1931 Jerusalem Islamic Congress reconsidered’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 35, 2003, pp. 1–22; Thomas Mayer, ‘Egypt and the General Islamic Conference of Jerusalem in 1931’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 18, 3, 1982, pp. 311–22; Martin Kramer, *Islam assembled: the advent of the Muslim congresses*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, pp. 123–41.

73 CHSP, Archives Charles-André Julien, JU22, letter sent by the pan-Islamic congress to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations, 17 December 1931, reprinted in de Madariaga, ‘Documents des archives’.

74 As quoted in Benjelloun, *Mouvement nationaliste marocain*, p. 266.

75 Halstead, *Rebirth of a nation*, pp. 198, 201–3.

76 BFA, ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna File, letters from ‘Abdelsalam Bennouna to Tayeb Bennouna, 23 March and 11 February 1933.

77 Mourad Zarrouk, ‘L’Association hispano-islamique: réformisme républicain, aventure intellectuelle ou intérêts économiques?’, *Hespéris-Tamuda*, 39, 2, 2011, pp. 133–45.

The anti-colonial propaganda campaign in the wake of the Berber *dahir* not only established the Moroccan anti-colonial movement domestically and internationally, but also gave unprecedented prominence to the Tetuani activists. The strict passport controls and postal censorship in French Morocco had failed to inhibit the activities of the young nationalists, who built up a network of contacts to the small group of like-minded individuals in Tetuan to maintain direct links between the 'interior' and the wider Mediterranean world.⁷⁸ At the same time, the relative lack of restrictions on activities inside the Spanish zone provided inspiration for the young students in Paris, Rabat, and Fez, who followed the developments in Tetuan closely.⁷⁹ In particular, the partial success of the 'demands of the Moroccan people' in 1931 provided valuable lessons for the authors of the famous *Plan de réformes*, submitted by the nationalists from the French zone to the government in Paris three years later.⁸⁰

The importance of Tetuan lay not only in its geographical location but also in the attitude of the Spanish authorities towards their Moroccan subjects. Although fully committed to preserving Spain's rule, the governments of the Second Republic partially liberalized the colonial regime in the northern zone while repressing political activities deemed too subversive.⁸¹ A desire to paint a positive image of the new regime abroad, as well as a continued ideological commitment to the ideal of Hispano-Islamic friendship, led to a more tolerant atmosphere than was the case in the French zone. A good example can be found in the permission granted to the nationalists to participate in the Islamic Conference in Jerusalem 'on the condition that they do not talk about politics', despite strong protests by the French resident general.⁸² Moreover, in October 1933, the Spanish president, Niceto Alcalá-Zamora, personally visited Tetuan and 'gave a brilliant speech ... in which he praised the extent to which Muslims and Arabs have contributed civilization to mankind'.⁸³ Afterwards, his Moroccan hosts politely resubmitted the list of demands they had presented two years earlier in Madrid. While certainly aimed at charming the Moroccan population, these gestures highlight how Spanish colonial rule differed quite substantially from the much more patronizing attitude of the French authorities.

In addition to benefiting from this unique political situation, the capital of the north quickly emerged as an important hub connecting the interior to the exterior, owing to the unrelenting efforts of 'Abdesalam Bennouna. Apparently French officials shared this assessment of the man whom they deemed the 'leader of the nationalist and xenophobic movement in Morocco'.⁸⁴ When Bennouna came to Casablanca in the summer of 1933 on a business trip, they quickly moved to deport him.⁸⁵ Furthermore, they banned his son Tayeb from entering Lebanon, where he had planned to study at the American University in Beirut after graduating from al-Najah in Nablus, thus demonstrating the efficiency of colonial administrative policing that reached from North Africa to the Middle East and beyond.⁸⁶ Additional proof of 'Abdelsalam Bennouna's prominence came in January 1935, a few weeks after his premature death while

78 RML, Shakib Arslan File, letter from Balafrej to Arslan, no. 12, undated.

79 RML, Shakib Arslan File, letter from 'Omar Benabdeljalil to Arslan, 15 October 1932.

80 Miller, *History of modern Morocco*, p. 129.

81 Julio Gil Pecharromán, *Historia de la Segunda República española (1931-1936)*, Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2002, p. 123.

82 BFA, 'Abdelsalam Bennouna File, letter from 'Abdelsalam Bennouna to Arslan, 21 November 1931.

83 BFA, 'Abdelsalam Bennouna File, letter from 'Abdelsalam Bennouna to Tayeb Bennouna, 3 November 1933.

84 BFA, 'Abdelsalam Bennouna File, 'Note au sujet d'el Hadj Abdeslem Bennouna', undated.

85 Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (henceforth CADN), 1MA/282/56, 'Expulsion de Bennouna de Casablanca', 18 April 1933.

86 Banuna, *Nidaluna al-qawmi*, p. 268.

visiting the Spanish city of Ronda. A crowd of over 15,000 followed the funeral procession in complete silence, the organizers of a memorial service read condolence letters that arrived from across the Arab world, and Mekki Naciri recited a poem by 'Allal al-Fassi dedicated to 'the spirit of the one whose death is mourned by the *umma*'.⁸⁷ Even the Spanish colonial press lamented the passing of this 'prestigious figure'.⁸⁸ A French official coldly concluded that 'his death is a loss for the nationalists', because of his unique 'ease' when interacting with Europeans and his willingness to 'squander' his personal financial resources in the service of the movement.⁸⁹

For a moment, it seemed as if the passing of Bennouna could derail the international activities of the Moroccan nationalists, but such fears quickly turned out to be unfounded. Almost immediately, a new generation of activists took over from the 'father of Moroccan nationalism'. His brother M'hamed, Mohamed Daoud, and other Tetuani activists continued to smuggle important publications and correspondence from abroad past the increasingly vigilant censors into French Morocco.⁹⁰ More important, however, was the rise to leadership of the Cairo-educated 'Abdelkhaleq Torres, who represented the younger generation of modern Tetuani men who had grown up in the world of international politics. Passionate and extroverted, he constituted the antithesis to Bennouna's reserved personality. Whereas Bennouna wore traditional garments and maintained an aura of dignity in all situations, Torres preferred to wear European suits or Fascist-inspired uniforms and make fiery speeches in front of large crowds. But it was exactly these character traits that allowed him to successfully lead the anti-colonial movement in Spanish Morocco amid the political turbulences that suddenly engulfed the Spanish protectorate in the mid 1930s.

Hizb al-Islah and Bayt al-Maghrib

On 17 July 1936, military units under the leadership of General Francisco Franco commenced an insurgency in Morocco, which led to the fall of the Second Republic by March 1939 and reoriented Madrid's policies towards its Maghribi territory. Amid this radical political rupture, the complicated nexus of local and transnational dynamics and its influence on Moroccan nationalism took a new turn. The Fascist rebels had a unique relationship with the inhabitants of the protectorate, since they had begun their rebellion in North Africa and their 'nationalist' army had relied on tens of thousands of Moroccan soldiers who served with distinction in the war's most gruesome battles.⁹¹ Partially inspired by the propaganda coup landed by Benito Mussolini during his visit to the Italian colony of Libya in March 1937, where the Duce had declared himself the protector of Islam, Franco became convinced that he could also come to an understanding with the native population. As a consequence – and following in the footsteps of

87 CADN, 1MA/200/56, 'Bulletin de renseignements No 194/17'; BFA, 'Abdelsalam Bennouna File, poem by 'Allal al-Fassi recited by Mekki Naciri, undated.

88 BFA, 'Abdelsalam Bennouna File, 'Ayer tarde recibí sepultura en la mezquita Yenui el cadaver de Sidi Hach Bennouna', *La Gaceta de Africa*, 11 January 1935.

89 CADN, 1MA/200/56, 'Le consul de France à Tetouan au Résident général de la République française au Maroc', 16 January 1935.

90 RML, Shakib Arslan File, letter from Hassan Bouayad to Arslan, 26 May 1935; MDL, Shakib Arslan Collection, letters from Arslan to Daoud, 8 April and 22 May 1936.

91 Mustapha el Merroun, *Las tropas marroquíes en la guerra civil española, 1936–1939*, Madrid: Almena, 2003, pp. 216–21; María Rosa de Madariaga, *Los moros que trajo Franco: la intervención de tropas coloniales en la guerra civil española*, Barcelona: Ediciones Martínez Roca, 2002, p. 172.

the first government of the Second Republic five years earlier – the new authorities liberalized the colonial regime somewhat and permitted the Moroccan nationalists to found the first two independent political parties.

Another factor influencing the new regime's attitude towards the native population was a renewed interest in the concept of *africanismo*, which dominated among the military establishment.⁹² When combined with the imperialist longings of the Falange and the aggressive attempts by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy to establish a new global order, it quickly took on a completely new role with the ascendance of the Spanish 'nationalists' to power, first inside Morocco and then on the Iberian Peninsula itself.⁹³ The *generalísimo* himself repeatedly explained that Spain was able to cooperate with Muslims, because their affection for the Spanish nationalist cause had deep and profound roots.⁹⁴ Even the usually clearheaded colonial official Tomás García Figueras proclaimed Spain to be the country 'best suited to feel, understand and love the Moroccans', adding that it hoped to achieve 'the rebirth of Hispano-Arabic culture ... for the welfare of humanity'.⁹⁵ Yet the new rulers sought to bolster their standing not only in the eyes of their own colonial subjects but in the Arab world in general. One Spanish intellectual enthusiastically explained that they wanted 'the Moroccan masses to regard Spain as the European champion of the Islamic movement in general' so that 'the impact of this friendship reaches all the way to the Orient'.⁹⁶

In order to implement his new strategy in Morocco, Franco selected Lieutenant Colonel Juan Luis Beigbeder as his point man, whose profound first-hand knowledge of the Arab world made him the logical choice for the job.⁹⁷ To secure the natives' support at a time when the focus still remained on defeating the republican forces on the Iberian peninsula, Beigbeder struck a secret deal with the new anti-colonial leader in the Spanish zone, his 'good friend' 'Abdelkhaleq Torres: in return for his support of Franco's rebellion, the high commissioner made Torres Wazir al-Ahbas (Minister of Islamic Endowments), provided funding for his educational activities, and gave official recognition to his recently founded Hizb al-Islah al-Watani (Party of National Reform, PNR) in December 1936.⁹⁸ Seeking to counterbalance Torres' rapidly rising popularity, Beigbeder also provided Mekki Naciri with the funding to start his own movement, Hizb al-Wahda al-Maghribiyya (Moroccan Unity Party, MUP), in February 1937, thereby creating a rivalry between the two Moroccan nationalist organizations in the northern zone that was to last for years to come.⁹⁹ This policy of appeasement contrasted

92 David Parra Monserrat, 'La narrativa del africanismo franquista: génesis y prácticas socio-educativas', PhD thesis, Universidad de Valencia, 2012, p. 127.

93 Gustau Nerín and Alfred Bosch, *El imperio que nunca existió: la aventura colonial discutida en Hendaya*, Barcelona: Plaza Janés, 2001, pp. 35–40.

94 María Rosa de Madariaga, *Marruecos, ese gran desconocido: breve historia del protectorado español*, Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2013, p. 298.

95 Tomás García Figueras, *Marruecos: la acción de España en el norte de África*, Madrid: Ediciones Fe, 1939, p. 290.

96 J. Cordero Torres, *La misión Africana de España*, Madrid: Ediciones de la vicesecretaría de educación popular, 1941, p. 89.

97 Jesús Albert, 'Beigbeder: iniciador de la política española hacia el mundo árabe', in Bernabé López García and Miguel Hernando de Larramendi, eds., *España, el mediterráneo y el mundo arabo-musulmán: diplomacia e historia*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2010; Charles R. Halstead, 'A "somewhat Machiavellian" face: Colonel Juan Beigbeder as high commissioner in Spanish Morocco, 1937–1939', *Historian*, 37, 1, 1974, pp. 46–66.

98 Jean Wolf, *Les secrets du Maroc espagnol: l'épopée d'Abd-el-Khaleq Torrès*, Paris: EDDIF, 1994, pp. 206–8; Rézette, *Partis politiques marocains*, pp. 113–27; BFA, 'Abdelkhaleq Torres File, letter from 'Abdelkhaleq Torres to Juan Luis Beigbeder, 22 September 1936. The quotation is taken from BFA, 'Abdelkhaleq Torres File, letter from Beigbeder to Torres, 28 November 1936.

99 De Madariaga, *Marruecos*, p. 294. See also RML, Shakib Arslan File, letter from Mekki Naciri to Arslan, 3 September 1937.

sharply with parallel developments in the French zone, where the authorities arrested and exiled the leadership of the anti-colonial movement in November 1937.¹⁰⁰ The fact that Naciri himself was a refugee from French Morocco further underlines the divergence between the two protectorates.

Another Spanish attempt to obtain the goodwill of the native population was Bayt al-Maghrib, or Casa de Marruecos, which provided room and board for Moroccans studying in Cairo.¹⁰¹ On 29 July 1938, the *khalifa* issued a *dahir* proclaiming the establishment of an institution in the Egyptian capital 'to strengthen the historical ties that unite Morocco with the brother kingdom of Egypt' by facilitating the cultural and academic exchange between the two countries.¹⁰² Together with Naciri, the high commissioner chose a group of students who travelled to Cairo in September 1938 to study at the traditional al-Azhar and the modern Fu'ad University. Once in Egypt, the students from northern Morocco would meet their counterparts from the French zone, just as had been the case a decade earlier.

Bayt al-Maghrib consisted of two parts: a modern villa in Giza that served as a dormitory for the students, and a 'Centre for Cultural Exchange' in downtown Cairo that hosted several public conferences each year, usually attended by North African and Egyptian students, along with other leading Arab intellectuals.¹⁰³ In an act consistent with his policy of both encouraging and dividing the Moroccans, Beigbeder authorized the PNR to organize a separate 'free mission' of eleven students, who would travel to Cairo one year later but had to arrange their own housing, thus hoping to fuel the rivalry between them and the MUP-led delegation residing in the Spanish-financed residence.¹⁰⁴ With these projects, the high commissioner sought to create a well-trained Hispanophile elite, fluent in Arabic and Spanish, and ready to work for the protectorate authorities upon their return.¹⁰⁵ The secretary-general of the PNR promised Beigbeder that 'this project will indeed work to raise the reputation of Spain in the Islamic world and ... might lead to the renaissance of our country'.¹⁰⁶

The educational missions to Egypt quickly encountered several problems. First, many of the students did not progress with their studies and thus did not obtain any academic degree.¹⁰⁷ Second, the Spanish authorities often failed to pay the rent for Bayt al-Maghrib or to disburse the living stipends; even when money was paid out, it usually did not suffice to cover the high cost of living and most students struggled to survive on their meagre allowances.¹⁰⁸ Third, the Naciri brothers turned out to be completely inept at running the affairs of the

100 Halstead, *Rebirth of a nation*, pp. 243–52.

101 Irene González González and Barbara Azaola Piazza, 'Becarios marroquíes en El Cairo (1937–1956): una visión de la política cultural del protectorado español en Marruecos', *Awraq*, 35, 2008, p. 160. With regard to Franco's development of close relationships with the Arab world to counter Spain's diplomatic isolation, see María Dolores Algora Weber, *Las relaciones hispano-árabes durante el régimen de Franco: la ruptura del aislamiento internacional (1946–1950)*, Madrid: Ministerio de asuntos exteriores, 1995.

102 Archivo General de la Administración, Alcalá de Henares (henceforth AGA), 10 (119.04), Box 55/27193, 'Dahir organizando la Bayt al-Maghrib', 27 July 1938.

103 Benaboud, 'Missions culturelles', pp. 64–5; Toumader Khatib, *Culture et politique dans le mouvement nationaliste marocain au Machreq*, Tetuan, Morocco: Association Tetouan-Asmir, 1996, p. 28.

104 AGA, 10 (119.04), Box 55/27193, 'Informe sobre la situación de la Bayt al-Maghrib', 13 February 1950.

105 United States National Archives, College Park, MD, RG59/881.00/1-245, Legation in Tangier to Department of State, 2 January 1945.

106 BFA, Tayeb Bennouna File, Tayeb Bennouna, 'Bayt al-ba'atha al-maghribiyya project in Egypt', undated; letter from Tayeb Bennouna to Beigbeder, 23 June 1938.

107 AGA, 10 (119.04), Box 55/27193, 'Dahir reorganizado la Casa de Marruecos en Egipto (23 Septiembre 1942)', *Boletín Oficial de la Zona de Protectorado Español en Marruecos*, 33, 30 November 1942, p. 1169.

108 AGA, 10 (119.04), Box 55/27193, 'Mission del Instituto Libre de Tetuán, en el Cairo a Don Carlos de Miranda', 4 October 1941.

institution, causing the students to repeatedly petition the Spanish authorities to replace their incompetent directors.¹⁰⁹ Finally, and this was the biggest ‘problem’ in the eyes of the Spaniards, many students in Cairo did not develop a strong attachment towards their colonial masters, but rather became ardent nationalists passionately opposed to the European presence in their home country. One example of the increasing politicization of the student body was the Moroccans’ participation in the ‘Arabic-Islamic Parliamentary Conference for the Defence of Palestine’ that took place in Cairo in 1938, which allowed them to meet key Middle Eastern politicians and to associate their own case with the most important Arab anti-colonial struggle of their time.¹¹⁰

Another example of the rapid politicization of the Moroccan student community in Cairo occurred in 1939, when Shakib Arslan visited Bayt al-Maghrib. Attended by a large crowd, the welcome ceremony for Arslan was – in the words of a French diplomat – characterized by ‘an aggressive political character’.¹¹¹ The students received the *amir* with great excitement and showered him with eulogies and poetry; afterwards, they invited their guest of honour to a private tea party in a room decorated ‘on one side with the black–white nationalist flag [of the PNR] as well as pictures of Torres and ... the *khalifa*, a picture of ‘Allal al-Fassi on the other side, and a red Moroccan flag as well as a picture of ... Sultan Mohamed ben Yousef on the [third] wall’.¹¹² Clearly enjoying the display of adulation and Moroccan unity, the famous pan-Islamist revelled in his success, expressing his appreciation of ‘the sympathy, which ... everyone, without exception, displayed towards me’.¹¹³

Meanwhile, the students in Cairo organized a patriotic club to coordinate an outreach campaign that would persuade Egyptian journalists to pay more attention to events in North Africa.¹¹⁴ Following the arrest of the anti-colonial leadership in the French zone in 1937, the members of the self-proclaimed Committee for the Defence of Morocco in the Middle East wrote ‘protest letters’ to political parties across the Islamic world and France, while vowing to remain in ‘permanent contact with the PNR in Tetuan’.¹¹⁵ In March 1943, *al-Abram* newspaper proclaimed that a group of Moroccan students had delivered petitions to the embassies of Great Britain, the United States, and several Arab states, in support of the most recent demands made by the leadership of the PNR back home in Tetuan.¹¹⁶ Thus, contrary to the intentions of the high commissioner, the student missions to Cairo gave added impetus to the anti-colonial movement.

Furious, the Spanish authorities sought to uncover the masterminds behind these bold acts of insubordination, but they failed. The ‘rebellious’ students simply refused to leave Bayt al-Maghrib, instead ‘converting it into a centre of the political activities of the Moroccan nationalists’.¹¹⁷ Dismayed by the evident fiasco of their education policy, the Spanish

109 AGA, 10 (119.04), Box 55/27193, ‘Nota del alto comisario’, 25 October 1943.

110 BFA, Mehdi Bennouna File, photo of the Moroccan delegation at the Arabic-Islamic Parliamentary Conference for the Defence of Palestine during a visit to the headquarters of the Misr al-Fatat Party, 28 September 1938.

111 CADN, IMA/200/338, ‘Ambassade de France au Caire au Résident général Noguès’, 26 June 1939.

112 BFA, Mehdi Bennouna File, letter from Mehdi Bennouna to Tayeb Bennouna, 10 March 1939.

113 MDL, Shakib Arslan Collection, letter from Arslan to Daoud, 26 August 1939.

114 BFA, Mehdi Bennouna File, Letters from Mehdi Bennouna to Tayeb Bennouna, 28 December 1938 & 19 January 1939.

115 BFA, ‘Abdelkhaleq Torres File, Letter Committee for the Defence of Morocco in the Middle East to ‘Abdelkhaleq Torres, 30 November 1937.

116 AGA, 15 (13.01), Box 81/1902, La cuestión de Marruecos, 24 March 1943, *Al-Abram*.

117 AGA, 10 (119.04), Box 55/27193, Informe sobre la situación de la Casa de Marruecos en el Cairo: delegación de educación y cultura en Tetuán, 13 Febrero 1950.

ambassador in Cairo concluded that ‘the only fruit of these missions is to spur on Moroccan nationalism’, and he thus argued for their ‘gradual reduction ... until their complete extinction’.¹¹⁸ However, the Egyptian police refused to intervene in the internal affairs of Bayt al-Maghrib, forcing the Spaniards to look on helplessly as their erstwhile showcase project was taken over by the very anti-colonial forces they had intended to undermine. The collapse of the educational missions signified the end of Spain’s policy of detente towards its colonial subjects – at least for the time being.

In order to fully understand these developments, we must situate them within the context of global events, specifically the outbreak of the Second World War. Spain’s occupation of the international city of Tangier on 14 June 1940 – the very same day that German troops entered Paris – symbolized Franco’s desire to establish a new empire in Africa, which his alliance with Germany and Italy was supposed to guarantee.¹¹⁹ The moment finally seemed right to deal a serious blow to France, whose regional dominance had for so long upset generations of Spanish politicians and military officers.¹²⁰ A high-ranking British politician reported, ‘You cannot imagine what Morocco means to the ... present Spanish leaders ... Is there any chance of the French Empire continuing in Morocco? I am very doubtful.’¹²¹ Yet these dreams died just two years later, when the US-led Operation Torch liberated North Africa from Vichy French rule, thereby putting an end to Madrid’s imperial fantasies. From that point on, Spain’s foreign policy shifted towards improving its relations with the United States, which ultimately culminated in the Pact of Madrid in 1953.¹²²

The war years also had a significant impact inside northern Morocco, which experienced an increasingly repressive atmosphere that forced the nationalists to reduce their activities, especially following the appointment of Luis Orgaz Yoldi as the new high commissioner in May 1941. Yet when the Islamic activist and Nazi-propagandist Taqi al-Din al-Hilali returned to his native Morocco during the war years on a secret mission from his fellow Hitler-sympathizer Hajj Amin al-Hussayni, he nonetheless encountered a PNR that was still actively enlisting rural tribes for the nationalist cause.¹²³ Moreover, with German agents openly seeking to recruit local notables as well as the leadership of the PNR, the limits of Spanish authority even with regard to its close ally became all too apparent.¹²⁴ Disappointed by the broken promises by Fascist officials and inspired by these wartime experiences, particularly the American occupation of most of North Africa, the members of Hizb al-Islah and Hizb al-Wahda would eventually publish the first Moroccan independence manifesto. On 14 February 1943, the two parties conjointly submitted their document not only to the Spanish high commissioner and the *khalifa* but also to the American and British legations

118 AGA, 15 (13.01), Box 81/1902, Ministro de España en el Cairo al Alto Comisario en Tetuán, 29 March 1943.

119 Stanley G. Payne, *Franco and Hitler: Spain, Germany, and World War II*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008, pp. 44–56; William A. Hoisington, *The Casablanca connection: French colonial policy, 1936–1943*, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984, pp. 136–58.

120 Nerín and Bosch, *El imperio que nunca existió*, pp. 25–8.

121 Sir Samuel Hoare quoted in Denis Smyth, *Diplomacy and strategy of survival: British policy and Franco’s Spain, 1940–41*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 46.

122 Rafael García Pérez, ‘España y la Segunda Guerra Mundial’, in Javier Tusell, Juan Avilés, and Rosa Pardo, eds., *La política exterior de España en el siglo XX*, Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2000, p. 320.

123 Henri Lauzière, *The evolution of the Salafiyya in the twentieth century through the life and thought of Taqi al-Din al-Hilali*, PhD thesis, Georgetown University, 2008, pp. 264–9.

124 Norman J. W. Goda, ‘Franco’s bid for empire: Spain, Germany, and the western Mediterranean in World War II’, *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 13, 1–2, pp. 171–2; Julien, *Afrique du nord*, pp. 140–1.

in Tangier; one year later, their colleagues in Rabat followed suit and published their own independence manifesto.¹²⁵ With all hopes for a Spanish–Moroccan kingdom of brotherhood shattered once and for all, the history of anti-colonial nationalism entered a new phase that would last until Morocco’s independence in March 1956.

The impact of the anti-colonial protest movement

Although the Moroccan nationalist movement emerged about one decade later than its Algerian and Tunisian counterparts, it quickly reached a high level of sophistication. Operating transnationally, the young activists successfully established their movement both at home and abroad; the efforts of the students in Paris and Cairo had an impact on the emergence of nationalism that was as significant as developments in the interior. Beginning with the global echo on the anniversaries of the Berber *dahir* in May 1931, the demands of the Moroccans had become part of the anti-colonial discourse across the Middle East and parts of Europe. Even Messali Hajj, the legendary founder of the Algerian nationalist Étoile Nord-Africaine, showed himself extremely impressed by their activities. According to a report filed by a French informer in 1934, Hajj had singled them out as worthy of praise: ‘the Moroccans are altruistic, dignified, intelligent, convinced, and active – the true country of nationalism in North Africa is certainly Morocco’.¹²⁶ This compliment from a pioneer of Maghribi nationalism demonstrates how effectively the young activists from north-western Africa had established their movement by carrying their message abroad.

Central to this success was the support that the Moroccans received from Shakib Arslan, whose links to Nazi Germany during the war years would later harm his reputation.¹²⁷ The Lebanese militant introduced the Moroccans to the world of publicity and propaganda, teaching them how to reach out to the elites of Europe, while simultaneously using his own newspapers to bring their case to the attention of the wider Arab world.¹²⁸ This is not to ignore the fact that diverging tactical preferences sometimes led to bitter disputes between Arslan and some of his younger Moroccan disciples.¹²⁹ But nothing ever really undermined the importance of ‘the first adviser of the nationalist movement’ in the eyes of the activists in Tetuan and beyond.¹³⁰ In 1935, ‘Abdelkhaleq Torres explained that ‘the *amir* is connected to Morocco and Morocco is attached to him, and between [them] there is affection and devotion [He is] the man of the hour in the Islamic world, acknowledged for his services to Arabism ... and esteemed for his sacrifices on behalf of Islamic causes.’¹³¹ Arslan’s mentorship during the 1930s made him a key figure in the development of Moroccan nationalism.

125 Amina Ihrari-Aouchar, ‘La presse nationaliste et le régime de Protectorat au Maroc dans l’entre-deux-guerres’, *Revue de l’Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 34, 1982, pp. 100–1.

126 SHAT, Série 3H, Box 250, ‘Réflexions de Messali Hajj au cours de conversation à bâtons rompus: par personne interposée’, 1 February 1934.

127 Martin Kramer, *Arab awakening and Islamic revival: the politics of ideas in the Middle East*, New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1996, p. 131.

128 Cleveland, *Islam against the West*, p. 144.

129 Umar Ryad, ‘New episodes in Moroccan nationalism under colonial rule: reconsideration of Shakib Arslan’s centrality in light of unpublished materials’, *Journal of North African Studies*, 16, 1, 2011, pp. 130–2.

130 Ghallab, *Tarikh al-baraka al-wataniyya*, vol. 1, p. 198.

131 ‘Abd al-Khaliq al-Turays, ‘al-Amir Shakib Arslan’, *al-Haya*, 2 June 1935, reproduced in Muhammad Ibn ‘Azzuz Hakim, *Watha’iq sirriyya hawla ziyarat al-amir Shakib Arslan li-l-maghrrib: asbabuha, abdafuha, nata’ijuba* (*Secret documents on the visit of amir Shakib Arslan to Morocco: motives, goals, and results*), Tetuan, Morocco: Mu’assasat ‘Abd al-Khaliq al-Turays li-l-thaqafa wa-l-fikr, 1980, p. 7.

Finally, Tetuan emerged as a pivotal centre of anti-colonial activism in Morocco. Although historians have traditionally overemphasized the importance of Fez and Rabat, because most politicians dominating post-independence politics hailed from these two cities, the capital of the Spanish protectorate played a critical role because of its strategic location – both geographically and within the Moroccan propaganda network. In the words of Tomás García Figueras, ‘Tetuan was the distributing centre of all kinds of pamphlets, books, newspapers and Arab journals sent from Cairo via London, Lausanne, Manchester or Gibraltar ... to Casablanca, Salé, Kenitra, Meknes and Fez, and occasionally even ... Marrakesh, ... where [they] were bought in mosques or Muslim meeting places.’¹³² Specifically, the house of the Bennouna family became a ‘hectic headquarters, where ... nationalist leaders held meetings until dawn in order to manage the distribution of propaganda’, while ‘M’hamed Bennouna, during his stay in Cairo, served as the link to the nationalist circles of the Egyptian capital and the French zone.’¹³³ Benefiting from the tacit consent of the Spanish authorities, the activists in the northern zone enjoyed a freedom of action that enabled them to rise to prominence among their compatriots during the 1930s, and which would guarantee them key roles during the re-emergence of the Moroccan nationalist movement following the end of the Second World War.

Conclusion

The internationalization of Moroccan nationalism during the 1930s constituted a pivotal step in the establishment of the anti-colonial protest movement both at home and abroad. Despite the activists’ moderate public demands for reform, their private correspondence reveals that from the beginning their true goal had been to obtain Morocco’s complete independence. Without the support acquired on the exterior, however, in Europe as well as the Middle East, the activists on the interior would have found it even more difficult to challenge the political status quo. By meeting with foreign journalists and politicians, the Moroccans drew attention to their demands and thereby pressured France and Spain to reform their colonial policies. Following the end of the Second World War, they would embark on a much more sophisticated and truly global propaganda campaign in places as far away as New York and Rio de Janeiro, which ultimately contributed to the end of the two protectorates in March 1956.¹³⁴

In addition to adding an important new perspective to the historiography of Moroccan nationalism, this article enables us to better comprehend the dynamics within the movement itself. Suddenly, the formerly ignored city of Tetuan occupies a place of great importance, thereby challenging the previously held assumptions about Fez and Rabat as the only centres of anti-colonial agitation. Although it has been marginalized from the historical record until today, a re-evaluation of the emergence of the nationalist movement allows the country’s northern region to move from the sidelines to the centre-stage of Moroccan colonial history. Benefiting from its geographical location, its tightly woven web of elite families, its global outlook, and the unique character of Spanish colonial rule, two generations of anti-colonial activists came to occupy central roles in the emerging nationalist movement, especially with regard to activities abroad. Therefore, by broadening our framework of analysis, these

132 AGA, 15 (13.01) Box 81/2382, ‘Informe Figueras’, undated, p. 97.

133 *Ibid.*, p. 98.

134 David Stenner, ‘Networking for independence: the Moroccan nationalist movement and its global campaign against French colonialism’, *Journal of North African Studies*, 17, 4, 2012, pp. 1–22.

seemingly peripheral spaces and actors, formerly marginalized for their alleged irrelevance, take on completely new roles of importance as they are integrated into the very core of the narrative and on equal footing with previously privileged locations and individuals.

David Stenner is Assistant Professor of History at Christopher Newport University. His research interests include transnational anti-colonial activism, social network analysis, and the Cold War in the Third World.