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C. R. Pennell

IDEOLOGY AND PRACTICAL POLITICS: A CASE STUDY OF THE RIF WAR IN MOROCCO, 1921–1926

INTRODUCTION

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there were a number of armed attempts by people in the Arab world, and particularly in the Maghrib countries, to resist European penetration and colonialism. Historians have made considerable efforts to categorize these attempts as being either examples of 'primary' resistance or of 'modern nationalist' resistance, a distinction based largely on the presence or absence in the movement concerned of an ideological content making reference to the various Islamic reform movements or to European-style nationalism. Thus Edmund Burke can write of the rebellion in the Moroccan countryside around Fez in 1911, which finally ushered in the French and Spanish Protectorates: "One looks in vain, for example, for evidence of the influence of reformism, Pan-Islam or Islamic modernism upon the movement."¹

The presence or otherwise of such influences would seem almost to have become the historical touchstone against which resistance movements are measured. Writing about a considerably more durable effort at resistance, the Rif War in Morocco from 1921 to 1926—which forms the subject of this paper—a prominent Moroccan historian, Abdallah Laroui, has defined it as 'primary' resistance, describing as 'illusory' any attempt to relate the end of the Rif War in 1926 to the beginning of urban nationalist movements in Morocco in 1927. He continues:

For if we extend our perspective to the Maghrib as a whole, the war in the Rif recedes into the past and takes its place beside numerous rural and mountaineer revolts . . . whereas the political phenomena [i.e., in urban Morocco] relate to the overall nationalist movement in the Maghrib and the Orient. In reality initial resistance and political nationalism are separated by far more than the lapse of a year's time.²

So unimportant does Laroui consider this allegedly nonpolitical movement to be that he confines mention of it in his book *The History of the Maghrib* to a footnote. Other writers, however, notably the American David Hart in his important book on the largest tribe in the Rif (the Banu Waryaghal)³ and the Israeli historian Pessah Shinar,⁴ have taken a contrary view. They see the war precisely in the terms of Salafiya-inspired reformism, which Laroui rejects.

Clearly, then, the question of ideological orientation, if any, of the war is a matter of some dispute. What both sides in this argument seem to have done is to take elements of the Rifi movement's activity out of the context of the overall action of the war. The purpose of this paper is to propose another outlook: that

the actions of the Rifi leadership and of their followers during the war were dictated by political realities in the area, and that the policies which were adopted can also be seen to have partially fitted in with the concepts of the Islamic reform movements because those were the most suitable policies at the time. In fact, it is impossible to tease out the ideological content of those actions from the political circumstances which necessitated their adoption. It is therefore pointless to try to describe a movement of the complexity of the Rifis' resistance to the Spanish simply in terms either of 'primitive' resistance or reformist ideology. Equally, it will be seen that the term 'political' cannot simply be used, as Laroui uses it, in the sense of belonging only to the modern Moroccan nationalist movement. In order to show this, the paper examines the analytical bases of the 'ideological' viewpoint and then relate them to the political practicalities of the situation. Before embarking on this, however, it is necessary to give a brief outline of the course of the Rif War.

The Rif War

When the joint Franco-Spanish Protectorate was imposed on Morocco in 1912, resistance began in the northern part of the country, which had fallen to the lot of Spain. This resistance was very fragmented at first, confined to a few tribes at a time. One reason for this fragmentation was the general lack of urgency felt by the local people, the result of Spanish policy, which limited the activity of their troops during the period of World War I. In 1919, however, Spanish troops began to advance towards the edge of the Rif mountains, which make up the backbone of their former zone, and an anti-Spanish group emerged in the largest of the Rifi tribes, the Banu Waryaghal. This group was able to secure for itself a large measure of stability which enabled it to defeat the Spanish army as it advanced in the eastern Rif. This defeat in July 1921, known as the battle of Anual, led to the rout of all Spanish troops in the eastern part of the Protectorate. After this victory the anti-Spanish groups expanded into a general coalition of Rif tribes. Although the Spanish soon reoccupied the territory they had lost, the coalition, defending the Rif mountains themselves, in 1924 succeeded in expelling the Spanish from the western part of the zone—the districts known as the Jibāla and Ghumāra. In 1925 Rifi forces attacked the French zone to the south and approached the traditional Moroccan capital of Fez. They did not take the city, and the attack led to an alliance between the French and Spanish. In 1925 Spanish troops landed on the Rifi coast at Alhucemas Bay and began to advance inland. Although this landing was initially successful, and coordinated with a French thrust from the south, it soon stopped because of the severity of the winter. The final moves against the Rif did not come until late spring of the following year, after the failure of a peace conference. The war ended at the end of May 1926.

These events have been described many times,⁵ but with considerable differences in the interpretations that have been put upon them. The most important of these is over the nature of the Rifi coalition. Its leader throughout the five years of war, Muḥammad bin ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Khaṭṭābī, claimed that what at was at first a tribal coalition became an independent 'republic' (*jumhūrīya*),⁶ and

indeed this title appeared on the official papers on the Rif.⁷ Certainly there existed, as we shall see, an administrative structure in the area which the Rifis controlled, and bin ʿAbd al-Karīm was at the head of it, having been named *Amīr al-Muʿminīn* in a *bayʿa* which was given to him in 1923.⁸ Thus, there would appear to be reasonable grounds for his assertion. He went on to claim, however, that his state was an Islamic one, representing an attempt to protect Muslim territory from domination by the Europeans and to institute the rule of *sharīʿa* in the Rif.

There has been considerable disagreement with these views. The French sociologist Robert Montagne, who was serving in the French army during the Rif War, saw the Rifi movement in different terms, describing it as an attempt by one man to carve out an area of personal power for himself, akin to the states of the al-Murābiṭūn and al-Muwāḥidūn in the Moroccan Middle Ages.⁹ Abdallah Laroui dismissed even the idea of a state, likening the war to a traditional tribal revolt. On the other hand, Hart emphasises Islamic reformism in the Rifi movement, and, indeed, entitles his chapter on the war ‘The Reformer [i.e., bin ʿAbd al-Karīm] and the War on Two Fronts.’¹⁰ Neither he nor Shinar specifically deals with the question of ‘state,’ and in fact, the problem of terminology is only part of a wider one connected with the ideology of the Rifi movement.

It is this ideological problem with which this paper is concerned. The first step, therefore, is to examine the nature of the ideological direction which has been claimed for the movement.

PART ONE: THE IDEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

The “Al-Manār” Interview

The basis for the view that the Rifi movement was part of the overall movement for Islamic reform comes in the form of an ‘interview’ with bin ʿAbd al-Karīm which was reprinted in 1927 in the Egyptian journal *Al-Manār*.¹¹ This is in fact an account of bin ʿAbd al-Karīm’s objectives during the war and of what he considered to have been the reasons for his failure. Naturally, it is very partial in dealing with both aspects.

Partial or not, the *Al-Manār* interview is important as it provides a basis for discussing the ideological aspect of the Rif War. In it bin ʿAbd al-Karīm states what he says were the ultimate ends of the movement, which he identifies with his own intentions. These were to create a republic (*jumhūrīya*) “with a resolute government, firm sovereignty and a strong national organisation”¹² which was to be a modern state like France or Spain, but of course an Islamic one. In order to do this, he believed, the Rifi tribes would have to set aside their traditional independence from one another “to form a national unity from tribes with different inclinations and aspirations. In other words, I wanted my people to know that they had a nation as well as a religion” (*la-hum waṭanan kamā la-hum dīnan*).¹³ Such a concept, he said, was essential if they were to survive in the face of the Spanish attack, but he also considered this unity to be a permanent necessity, for, he declares, he had no intention of allowing the tribes to revert to complete freedom once the war was over and won, for that would have been a reversion to anarchy.

In attaining these objectives, he says, he was thwarted by two things. In the first place he faced the reluctance of the 'tribes' to cooperate in the formation of a permanent unity, and in the second he was opposed by the 'fanaticism' of the shaykhs of the *ṭarīqas* and the sharifs, who did not accept the idea of fighting for a *waṭan*, and told him that they would only fight in the 'cause of faith.' According to him, the shaykhs and sharifs therefore opposed him, with the one exception of a family of sharifs who had been friends of his father.

This was bin ^ʿAbd al-Karīm's personal statement, and it certainly seems to have been in line with the general ideas of the Islamic reform movement. In attacking the shaykhs he was at one with Rashīd Riḍā (the editor of *Al-Manār* at the time), who dismissed the *ṭarīqas* as making of their religion 'a joke and a plaything.'¹⁴ Bin ^ʿAbd al-Karīm even uses similar language, referring to the shaykhs as men who 'tinkered with the Book of God.'¹⁵

Apart from the shaykhs, the other main element in the *Al-Manār* interview is the need for unity in one state—the *waṭan*. Here the comparison must be made with al-Tahtawī, who originated the term *waṭanīya* in order to take account of Egypt's identity as a nation before the Islamic conquest and of its non-Muslim population.¹⁶ Neither of these considerations applied in the Rif, where there was virtually no history of statehood (apart from the short-lived kingdoms of Nakūr and Bādīs in the eighth century A.D.) and no non-Muslim population (apart from a few small and isolated Jewish villages). Other aspects of the *waṭanīya* which al-Tahtawī described, however, had direct relevance to the Rifi movement, particularly submission to the law and the unity within the state.¹⁷ The need for unity is a major theme in the *Al-Manār* interview, and that of submission to the law was emphasized in another important document of the Rifi state—the bay^ʿa of bin ^ʿAbd al-Karīm.

The Rule of the Sharī^ʿa and the Bay^ʿa of bin ^ʿAbd al-Karīm

From the very beginning of the war, bin ^ʿAbd al-Karīm and his supporters had stressed the necessity of unity backed by social order and the imposition of a single legal system over the entire Rif. There is no space here to go into the detailed development of this policy, the reasons for which will become apparent later. The rule of the sharī^ʿa, however, became an ideological issue of the greatest importance in one of the fundamental documents of the Rifi movement, which was written during the war: the bay^ʿa given to bin ^ʿAbd al-Karīm in January and February 1923, at the moment when the Rifi 'republic' formally came into being.¹⁸

The way in which the bay^ʿa was given is of fundamental importance in understanding it. In theory, the principle of the bay^ʿa is that it represents the idea of the election of the caliph.¹⁹ In fact, most Moroccan bay^ʿas were formalities, a recognition of the already existing power of the individual who claimed the Sultanate. Many of these bay^ʿas were fairly short.²⁰ But in certain circumstances, a bay^ʿa could lay down the policy which a claimant to the Sultanate ought to follow if the support of an influential group of ^ʿ*ulamā*^ʿ was to be obtained. Thus, when ^ʿAbd al-Ḥafīẓ rebelled against his brother, the Sultan Mulay ^ʿAbd al-^ʿAzīz, in 1907, the Fāsī ^ʿ*ulamā*^ʿ laid down a number of

conditions in their bay^ʿa. They included stipulations that he should end European interference in Morocco and that he should impose the shari^ʿa correctly.²¹ Bin ʿAbd al-Karīm's bay^ʿa was again different, for it was given not at the beginning of the war, but nearly two years later, when his authority, while not unchallenged, was already secure. The initial bay^ʿa, moreover, was signed by men who were already occupying positions close to bin ʿAbd al-Karīm, and took up important posts in the government organisation which was to follow it. Two of them, the *faqīhs* ʿAlī Bū Laḥya and al-Shargī, who are mentioned below, were the men chiefly responsible for the imposition of the shari^ʿa in the Rif, while others, including ʿAbd al-Karīm's brother-in-law, were to become ministers or important officials.²² These were men who were already involved in the political machinery of the movement, and so were in a different position from the Fāsi ʿulamā^ʿ who were trying to lay down a policy that ʿAbd al-Ḥafīz ought, in their opinion, to follow.

The text of this first bay^ʿa, which was given on 18 January 1923, has not survived. However, from the account given by one of the participants,²³ it appears to have been very similar to one given on 2 February, which has survived.²⁴ It is clear from this text that the bay^ʿa was neither a formality nor a detailed guide for future policy, but a political and ideological justification for the authority of the ruling group, and in particular its leader, bin ʿAbd al-Karīm. The bay^ʿa begins with an assertion of the benefits of the caliphate, which guarantees just government, morality, righteousness and the rule of the shari^ʿa. It was a normal opening to such a document, but unlike the shorter and more formal bay^ʿas mentioned above, this one emphasizes the point at some length. Without the caliphate, it says, anarchy would result, bringing tyranny and disorder in its wake. All men, therefore, should obey their *amīr*, whoever that might be—this last point is also emphasized. It goes on to name the *amīr* in the Rif and Jibāla as Muḥammad bin ʿAbd al-Karīm al Khaṭṭābī, who had brought about unity and social order in the Rif, imposed the shari^ʿa, and led the defence of the waṭan.²⁵ It is easy to see how the outlook expressed by this bay^ʿa might be seen to be in line with the general traditions of reformism both in Morocco and in the Arab world as a whole. Present is the call to defend the waṭan against the Spanish, and above all the emphasis on the importance of the shari^ʿa. The bay^ʿa given to ʿAbd al-Ḥafīz had similarly joined the demand for an end to European domination with one requiring the implementation of the shari^ʿa. This had also been the concern of reformers like Khayr al-Dīn of Tunis who looked back to a time when the Islamic state was strong and civilized, and who accounted for its strength by its supposed adherence to the law.²⁶ Most reformers, however, insisted that adherence would have to be accompanied by changes in the institutions of Islamic society, particularly those of government and education.²⁷ The movement led by bin ʿAbd al-Karīm did indeed carry out such reforms in the Rif, and it is to them that we must briefly turn.

The Reforms of Government

The reforms carried out in the government of the Rif fall into three main areas—military, administrative, and authoritarian. The military aspects are quickly dealt with. They involved the organization of a regular army with a chain of command, monthly pay, uniforms, and the use of modern weapons.

This regular army was designed to replace the previous system in which those Rifis who had fought the Spanish before the war had joined irregular groups, *ḥarakas*, of a temporary nature. Nonetheless, the new army was never large enough to exist alone, and continued to be supported by irregular groups.²⁸ In fact, the formation of a regular army had had a prominent position in the history of Moroccan reformism in the nineteenth century,²⁹ and although these efforts were singularly unsuccessful, the very idea of *nizām* came, as Laroui puts it, to have an almost magical significance.³⁰

The organisation of the army was paralleled by the setting up of an administrative system. Paid officials (*qāʿids*) were appointed to administer the various tribes, along with others (*qāḍīs*) to administer the law. There were also officers who dealt with the markets (*muḥtasibs*), and others who organised the building of roads and took care of the rapidly expanding bureaucracy.³¹ The bureaucracy came to have great importance, as it controlled movement around the Rif and attempted to carry out administrative control of the population.³² Again, the organisation of an efficient bureaucracy had been one of the major concerns of nineteenth-century Moroccan sultans.³³

The third aspect of these changes is more complicated, for it involved a change in the nature of authority in the Rif. Before the Protectorate, local administration had been left by the sultans largely in the hands of local people. Administration and the maintenance of order were the responsibility of councils made up of the *ʿayān* of the tribes, the clans, or of the local communities. These councils settled disputes and punished violence by means of fines, which they shared out amongst their members.³⁴ There were two disadvantages in this system. First, it could easily break down if the fines were not collected, which would lead to feuding. Indeed, Spanish policy before the Rif War was to encourage this, thereby weakening any movement to fight them.³⁵ In the second place, it made the organisation of any kind of permanent unity very difficult, since each division acted independently. Bin ʿAbd al-Karīm tried to avoid this situation by appointing officials to carry out administration and the maintenance of order. This further centralised power in his hands. Classical Islamic administrative theory, however, held that a ruler should in some way consult the leaders of the community—a process known as *mushawara*—and be advised by them. On the other hand, as Hourani has pointed out, “There was no clear idea *who* exactly should be consulted . . . and how far the ruler should be bound by what they said.”³⁶ In fact, the reform movement in Morocco did set some store by the idea of consultation, and in the years after independence, used it as the basis for calling for a parliamentary democratic system.³⁷ The existence in the Rif of a body known as the *majlis al-umma* has led one of the modern leaders of this movement in Morocco, ʿAllāl al-Fāsī, to claim that the Rifi government was one ‘based on popular sovereignty,’³⁸ although the role of the *majlis al-umma* was never of much importance during the Rif War.³⁹

In addition to constitutional changes such as these, the Rifi government carried out other social reforms, particularly in the realm of education. A *madrassa* was set up in Ajḍīr, the Rifi capital, with a curriculum which included mathematics, science and ‘military science.’ Other institutions were set up elsewhere, and the faqīhs who taught in the village mosques were instructed to

confine themselves to education and to stop making their pupils sew garments in order to supplement their stipends.⁴⁰

Thus the general line of the policies adopted by the Rifi leadership may be seen. Taken together with the ideological positions put forward by bin ʿAbd al-Karīm in the *Al-Manār* article and those of his principal supporters as expressed in the bayʿa, it might appear that a modernist reformist regime was in control in the Rif. This impression is further strengthened by some writers' presentation of bin ʿAbd al-Karīm as a Salafīya-inspired thinker.

Was bin ʿAbd al-Karīm a Salafī?

The teachings of the Salafīya movement seem to have reached Morocco in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as Moroccan religious teachers who had been to Egypt to study, or who had passed through on their way to Mecca, began to return home. Gradually these men, inspired by the teachings of ʿAbduh and others, began to take up posts in the Qarawiyyin mosque in Fez. In 1908 ʿAbd al-Ḥafīz, the new Sultan, helped them to restructure the teaching syllabus there and joined in their attack on the ṭarīqas, whose leaders were opposed to him and the new ideas.⁴¹

These developments occurred early in bin ʿAbd al-Karīm's life. One of his uncles was a teacher at the Qarawiyyin⁴² when, in 1903, accompanied by another uncle of much the same age as himself (ʿAbd al-Salām al-Khaṭṭābī), he went there to study.⁴³ Hart has suggested, however, that it was not until he left the Qarawiyyin and later became a *qāḍī* in the Spanish-occupied city of Melilla, that he developed an interest in the ideas of the Salafīya movement.⁴⁴ Meanwhile his younger brother, Maḥammad, had gone to Madrid to study engineering in the Mining Institute there, at the expense of the Spanish government. While in Madrid, Maḥammad also became interested in Arab nationalism himself and never finished his course.⁴⁵ Both brothers returned to the Rif in 1919, when their father was forced to drop his contacts with the Spanish as a result of growing anti-Spanish pressure.⁴⁶ One a technician, the other a *qāḍī* interested in reformist ideas, the two brothers united modernist religious theory and modernist techniques.

The elder brother, at least, was not entirely alone. There was a small group, including the faqīhs al-Shargī and Bū Laḥya, who were determined to see that the sharīʿa was properly imposed in the Rif. These two men, mainly responsible for putting the policy of 'sharīʿatisation' into practical effect, interestingly came from a background different from that of the other members of the Rifi government. Most of the important ministers were members of bin ʿAbd al-Karīm's own family by marriage or descent.⁴⁷ Bū Laḥya and al-Shargī were not, and indeed came from another Rifi tribe, the Banu Tuzin. Yet they were responsible for the most ideologically inspired part of the government's policy. They carried the operation of the sharīʿa into spheres which had previously been matters of private concern, enforcing a 'moral society' in the Rif. On their orders people were imprisoned for "for reasons of the beloved sharīʿ," and for other specified offences such as wife-beating, scandalous talk, and for promising to marry a woman "without it being valid in the sharīʿ."⁴⁸ The implications are

clear—'order' meant not only that people should keep the peace, but also that they should behave in a moral manner. In addition, strict instructions were issued that religious duties were to be carried out properly—both men and women were threatened with punishment if they did not pray five times a day.⁴⁹

This concern with moral probity and with the strict enforcement of the sharīʿa, is the basis for describing bin ʿAbd al-Karīm and his closest supporters as being inspired by the Salafīya movement. Taken with his pronouncements in *Al-Manār*, the bayʿa, and the administrative reforms which were put into effect, it is easy to see why writers like Hart and Shinar, and above all ʿAllāl al-Fāsī, have categorised him as such. As the introduction to this paper suggests, however, that view is by no means entirely valid for by concentrating on the ideological aspects of the war, those writers have largely played down the considerations of practical politics which played so great a part in determining the political choices made by the Rif leadership, as of course they must in any conflict of this nature. It remains, in the second part of this paper, to set the political realities side by side with the ideology, and explain how the two interacted.

PART TWO: POLITICS IN CONDITIONS OF WAR

It may appear odd to emphasize the fact that the political options of the Rifi movement were determined by conditions of war, when the movement was formed to fight a war of resistance against the Spanish. Yet it is necessary, for the previous discussion which has centred on the ideological aspects of the movement has tended to play down this consideration. Indeed, what is remarkable about both the *Al-Manār* interview and the bayʿa is the very small amount of attention given to the war against the Spanish, compared with the importance of unity and the treachery of the shaykhs in one, and the necessity of the sharīʿa in the other. There is a reason why the war was taken for granted in this way—there was a large measure of agreement about the need to fight the Spanish, but considerably less over the methods which were used. There is also a reason why such attention was given to unity and the sharīʿa—they were not only ideologically desirable but also immediate political necessities.

Unity and Order

These two political necessities were closely linked. As we have seen, the Spanish authorities, in the period before the war, had tried to prevent any united opposition to them by destroying the system of fines and thereby encouraging feuding. When the Spanish began their advance towards the eastern Rif in 1919, these fines were gradually reimposed by the anti-Spanish groups. Nevertheless the system of fines was always fairly shaky, and after it had broken down twice in 1920, the leadership of the anti-Spanish group—which did not yet include bin ʿAbd al-Karīm—began to look for a more permanent system.⁵⁰ When bin ʿAbd al-Karīm did finally assume leadership in the beginning of 1921, he immediately announced that he and his officials would be responsible for

maintaining order.⁵¹ A single leadership meant that the movement was much more stable, and the imposition of the shariʿa ensured that permanent order was maintained, which prevented feuding and allowed the Rifis to concentrate their energies in the battle against the Spanish.

The imposition of the shariʿa had another effect as well. The efforts of al-Shargī and Bū Laḥya to create a ‘moral society’ in the Rif also strengthened the authority of the government. Now even matters which had previously been the concern only of individuals, men’s treatment of their wives, for example, became the concern of the authorities. In this way government control over individuals was further extended.

Not everyone liked the increasing authority of the new leadership, for it limited their own power. This was particularly true of powerful local leaders, both secular and religious, including the shaykhs of the ṭarīqas and some influential sharifs.

The Shaykhs and the Sharifs

Bin ʿAbd al-Karīm claimed in the *Al-Manār* interview that he was opposed by the shaykhs and sharifs for ideological reasons. It is clear, however, that this was not true, for some shaykhs certainly became officials of his administration, and others helped to spread his movement outside the Rif.⁵² Nevertheless, some very important members of the old religious aristocracy did oppose him, an opposition that emerged, as bin ʿAbd al-Karīm himself said in *Al-Manār*, when he tried to take over the ḥabūs property (*awqāf*) in order to provide money for the war effort. This is an indication that not ideology, but money and power were at stake.

An example of this conflict over the ḥabūs is the case of the Darqāwīya ṭarīqa, which had its headquarters in the Banū Zarwāl tribe, at Amjuṭṭ, on the southwestern edge of the Rif, just over the boundary in the French zone. This ṭarīqa had considerable power in the Rif, and bin ʿAbd al-Karīm was worried lest this power be used against him. In September 1923 he sent two representatives to the Banū Zarwāl to try to persuade the tribe to join the Rifis. When they refused, troops were sent against them. Meanwhile the Rifī qāʿid in the nearby Maṛnīsa tribe was busy confiscating ḥabūs property there, and when a rebellion against bin ʿAbd al-Karīm started, the head of the Darqāwīya, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Darqāwī, who was worried about the fate of his ḥabūs properties, gave it support.⁵³ The rebellion was put down, but ʿAbd al-Raḥmān used the opportunity afforded by serious economic difficulties among the Ghumāra tribes to the north to support another rebellion there, which was so serious that the campaign against him was called off.⁵⁴ As a result, during the attack on the French zone, local troops under Rifī leadership took Amjuṭṭ, and the zawiya was burned.

A second example of the conflict over power was the case of a sharīf from the Jabāla, Mūlāy Aḥmad al-Raisūlī, who was also a descendant of Mūlāy ʿAbd al-Salām bin Mishīsh, one of the central figures in the history of Moroccan Islam, whose tomb in the Banū ʿArūs, al-Raisūlī’s own tribe, is a point of pilgrimage. The enormous religious prestige of al-Raisūlī’s family does not alone explain his importance, for by his own reckoning he was only one of 15,000 descendants of

Mūlāy ʿAbd al-Salām.⁵⁵ His real power came from his past successes as a virtual bandit in the countryside of northwestern Morocco before the Protectorate, successes which had obliged various sultans to appoint him to local governorships.⁵⁶ This power was at stake in his conflict with bin ʿAbd al-Karīm, although it was not his only concern. Al-Raisūlī also had an ideological commitment to the traditional political system in which sharīfs were the natural leaders of society, and in return—at least in theory—fulfilled some sort of responsibility to the ordinary people. As he told his biographer, Rosita Forbes, “It is our duty to protect the people, for they honour us as holy.”⁵⁷ Thus there were three grounds for conflict with the Rifis: the threat that was posed to his personal position, the entirely different conception of the nature of an Islamic society (the traditional order with local rule by sharīfs, as opposed to a united waṭan held together by a central government through the medium of the sharīʿa), and the greatly inferior origin of bin ʿAbd al-Karīm, who was neither sharīf nor *murābiṭ*, but the son of a minor qāḍī.⁵⁸ Such considerations did not bother bin ʿAbd al-Karīm overmuch, for he asked al-Raisūlī for help on several occasions.⁵⁹ The help was refused, and actual conflict began when, at the end of 1924, Rif troops occupied the Jibāla in the wake of the retreating Spanish. They immediately nominated their own qāḍids, mainly people known for their dislike of al-Raisūlī, and began to confiscate ḥabūs property. Al-Raisūlī refused to submit, but before he could be captured a rebellion started in the largest Jibālan tribe, the Akhmās. Al-Raisūlī immediately supplied the Akhmāsīs with arms. The Rifis put the rising down fairly quickly (and with much ferocity) and turned on al-Raisūlī. In the final days before his defeat, there was a last bitter exchange of letters between him and bin ʿAbd al-Karīm, in which both took up overtly ideological positions. Al-Raisūlī accused bin ʿAbd al-Karīm of behaving with scant regard for the law, and of violating ḥabūs property. This was the conservative voice, claiming that the defence of Islam required that the old social order and religious leadership must be maintained, and that this, not political independence, was the most important consideration. Bin ʿAbd al-Karīm replied that it was al-Raisūlī who had gone against the sharīʿa, for he had cooperated with Christians in order to maintain his power.⁶⁰ The argument, therefore, centered on two completely different visions of the nature of Islamic society. For bin ʿAbd al-Karīm the important thing was independence from the Christians, for al-Raisūlī it was the preservation of the traditional order of society, with the idea of mutual responsibility for sharīfs and people.

As we have seen, bin ʿAbd al-Karīm could set ideological considerations aside, and even asked al-Raisūlī to join him. The point at issue was not that al-Raisūlī was a sharīf, but that he was a sharīf who opposed bin ʿAbd al-Karīm. The conflict, therefore, was over power, and it was a conflict over power as well which brought bin ʿAbd al-Karīm into battles with secular leaders, such as ʿAmr bin Ḥamīdu of the Marnīsa tribe. From the beginning bin Ḥamīdu, who had considerable influence amongst the smaller tribes of the southern Rif, had refused to put himself under bin ʿAbd al-Karīm’s authority. In 1924 he started a major rebellion in the southern Rif, which considerably hindered bin ʿAbd al-Karīm’s efforts to deal with ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Darqāwī. He was not finally defeated until August 1924, when he fled to the French zone.⁶¹ Here the conflict was clearly one over power rather than ideology.

Thus it may be seen that, contrary to the opinions which bin ʿAbd al-Karīm expressed in *Al-Manār*, the major conflict he faced from individual leaders, both shaykh-ly and secular, was a conflict over power and money. It is not enough to analyse this opposition in terms only of individual leaders, however, since it ignores the high level of popular opposition to bin ʿAbd al-Karīm and the Rifi government as a whole.

The Opposition to bin ʿAbd al-Karīm from the Base

The motives of ordinary people who rebelled against the Rifi government are of fundamental importance. It is significant that both ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Darqāwī and al-Raisūlī were at their most dangerous for the Rifis when they combined with ordinary people who were beginning rebellions in areas nearby. These were movements which resulted not from a concern with the nature of an Islamic state, but from immediate political and economic concerns.

In 1924 a rebellion in the Ghumāra resulted from the terrible economic conditions in the region. The Rifis had banned all commerce with the Spanish posts on the coast, there was a very heavy taxation, salt supplies ran out, and conscription was announced. In March 1924 some tribes rebelled and were put down. When bin ʿAbd al-Karīm announced that all the tribes were to be disarmed they rose again. This was the rebellion to which ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Darqāwī gave his support.⁶²

Similar motives led to the rising of the Akhmās late in 1924. The Akhmās had fought hard to expel the Spanish, so this point was not at issue. The Rifis imposed taxation on the tribes, the market in Tetuan was closed, and Rifis began to confiscate ḥabūs property. The final straw came when Rifi authorities tried to disarm the local people. Again al-Raisūlī joined the rebellion once it had begun.⁶³

From these two examples it may be seen that the opposition from the base had mainly economic origins. Nevertheless it is significant that in both cases it was the attempt to disarm the tribes which finally led to rebellion, for this was a symbol of the political subjugation of the Akhmasis and Ghumaris to the Rifis, and indeed the Ghumaris saw the Rifi expansion into their tribes as the coming of an army of occupation, and referred to the Rifi command posts not as *maḥakamas* but as *fissīnas*, a word derived from the Spanish 'Oficina,' the title of the Spanish command posts in the territory which they occupied.⁶⁴

All this may have given the impression that bin ʿAbd al-Karīm and his supporters were externally beset with opposition. In fact they enjoyed a wide measure of popular support, and it is to the nature of this support which we now turn.

The Basis of Support for the Rifi Movement

The nature of the popular support also illustrates the different political and ideological currents that flowed through the Rif during the war. It had two bases. The first was the grudging support given by small-scale local leaders, who cooperated with bin ʿAbd al-Karīm in order to preserve their position.⁶⁵ The

second, and much more important, was the support of the majority of people who did not wish to see the Spanish governing their lands.

It will have become clear by now that these ordinary people often did not share the ideological conceptions of their leadership. Yet they were prepared to support bin ʿAbd al-Karīm and his colleagues in order to fight the Spanish, as indeed they had been doing before the Rif War itself. There was a deeply rooted dislike of the Spanish as Christians, which was well expressed by a minor local qaʿid who, in a moment of megalomaniac exaggeration, told a visiting American journalist that when the Spanish had been defeated, the Rifis would go on to clear the French from the rest of north Africa, and then proceed to liberate the old Islamic territories in the Iberian Peninsula.⁶⁶ This was not meant to be taken seriously, but it did show the enthusiasm he felt for fighting Christians. In fact, there seems to have been a widespread feeling in favour of a generalised jihād, not only against the Spanish but also against the French. It was this feeling which pushed bin ʿAbd al-Karīm into an unwilling approval of a general attack on the French zone.⁶⁷ But he had assured the French a short while before that he was opposed to the idea of a general jihād, adding “We no longer live in the Middle Ages, nor at the time of the Crusades.”⁶⁸ Nevertheless the attack, when it came, was preceded by a speech from a faqīh who called for jihād.⁶⁹ Indeed, a good while before this, when he had been presented with his bayʿa, bin ʿAbd al-Karīm had publicly stated that “There is no doubt that jihād is a duty for us.”⁷⁰

It would be easy to explain these inconsistencies as duplicity or cynicism. To do so, however, would be to fail to understand the way in which ideological considerations and political realities intertwined. In the first place, although it may have been true that he found the idea of a generalised jihād anachronistic, the deciding factor in bin ʿAbd al-Karīm’s mind appears to have been its sheer impracticability, for war against the French would involve his forces on all the boundaries of the Rif. On the other hand, both he and most of the Rifis shared a desire to stop the Spanish, and in an effort to mobilise these ordinary people bin ʿAbd al-Karīm was obliged to use the very effective propaganda of jihād, as he himself admitted in *Al-Manār*.⁷¹ He was, in fact, responding to political realities in the Rif, and the most important political reality was the same for him as it was for all the other Rifis: that if they did not resist, then the Spanish would take over. The differences lay in the methods by which the Spanish threat would be met, and above all in the question of the permanence of the changes which had been carried out in order to meet it.

CONCLUSION: THE LINK BETWEEN IDEOLOGY AND PRACTICAL POLITICS

It is above all the question of permanence which is central to this discussion. It is, however, an unanswerable question. Bin ʿAbd al-Karīm claimed in the *Al-Manār* interview that he had difficulty convincing people that when the war was over, and won, they could not be allowed to return to conditions of anarchy. Certainly, after the Spanish withdrawal from the Jibala, the nub of the Akhmāsīs’ complaints was that the Rifis would not let them revert to their old political and social forms. But the question of the long term stability of the new system, and the ideological direction which it might have taken, is a moot point, for the Rifis did not win the war, and the system collapsed. The only way to discuss the

ideological aspects of the Rif War is to look at the policies adopted by the Rifi leadership, together with their pronouncements.

As this paper has tried to show, such a course is fraught with difficulties, for a serious problem of analysis faces the historian. Is he or she to pay attention more to the ideological pronouncements of the Rifi leadership—which always had an element of propoganda—or to the social, political and economic circumstances which shaped their policy? Furthermore, what is to be made of the opposition within the Rif if a purely ideological approach is adopted? In fact, as this paper has tried to show, it is quite impossible to distinguish between the ideological and the practical aspects of the policy both of the Rifi leadership and of their opponents. It is not enough to take up a position in which bin ^ʿAbd al-Karīm is presented as a Salafī-inspired reformist simply because he said certain things and undertook policies which appear to be based in the Salafiya movement, for as we have seen, both were largely determined by the necessities of the moment. On the other hand, it is equally untrue, in the light of these policies, to state that the Rifi movement was no more than a rural revolt, with no historical significance. In fact the Rif War raises important questions about the practicalities of Islamic resistance to colonialism, which throw considerable light on the ideas of the reform movement as a whole. For if the policies, which were obviously those which were necessary for the survival of the Rif as an area free from European domination, were also the policies of thinkers within the reform movement, this throws considerable light on the way in which those ideas developed, and their relevance to the political situation of the time.

SCHOOL OF PEACE STUDIES

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NOTES

¹Edmund Burke, "Rural Resistance and Popular Protest in Morocco: A Study of the Tribal Rebellion of 1911," *Revue de l'Occident Musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 13–14 (1973), 193–206, at p. 205.

²Abdallah Laroui, *The History of the Maghrib: An Interpretive Essay*, trans. R. Mannheim (Princeton, 1971), p. 350.

³David M. Hart, *The Aith Waryaghar of the Moroccan Rif: An Ethnology and History* (Tucson, 1976).

⁴Pessah Shinar, "ʿAbd al-Qadir and ʿAbd al-Krim: Religious Influences on Their Thought and Action," *Asian and African Studies* (Israel), 1 (1965), 139–174.

⁵E.g., David S. Woolman, *Rebels in the Rif: Abd el Krim and the Rif Rebellion* (London and Stanford, 1969), and Carlos Martínez de Campos, *España bélica el siglo XX Marruecos* (Madrid, 1969).

⁶In an unsigned article entitled "Jahl al-zu^ʿamā al-muslimīn wa-mafāsīd ahl al ṭuruq wal-shurafā wa kawnum sababan li-fashl za^ʿīm al-Rif al-Maghrabī," *Al-Manar*, 8, 27 (1344–45/1925–27), 630–634.

⁷Andrés Sánchez Pérez, *La acción decisiva contra Abd el-Krim* (Toledo, 1930), p. 126.

⁸The bay^ʿa is preserved in the Archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAEF), Paris, in file Maroc (NS) 517, p. 180. It is reproduced in C. R. Pennell, "The Opposition of the Rifi Confederation Led by Muḥammad bin ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Khaṭṭābī to Spanish Colonial Expansion 1920–1926," unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Leeds, 1979, pp. 514–518 (English trans.) and pp. 912–915 (Arabic version).

⁹Robert Montagne, *Révolution au Maroc* (Paris, 1953), p. 119.

¹⁰Hart, *Aith Waryaghar*, pp. 369–403.

¹¹In fact, according to the preamble to the interview printed in *Al-Manar* (“Jahl al-zu^ʿamā”), the article originally appeared in the Egyptian weekly *Al-Shūrā*. According to Shinar, “‘Abd al-Qadir,” p. 173n, it was also reprinted in *al-Minhaj*. The *Al-Manar* version is the best known and most accessible.

¹²*Al-Manar*, “Jahl al-Zu^ʿamā.”

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1789–1939* (London, 1970), p. 225.

¹⁵*Al-Manar*, “Jahl al-zu^ʿamā.”

¹⁶Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, pp. 78–80.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸See n. 8, above. The differences in dates is caused by the method in which a bay^ʿa was given by one group and then by another.

¹⁹Mohamed Lahbabi, *Le Gouvernement marocain à l'aube du vingtième siècle* (Casablanca, 1975), pp. 22–30.

²⁰See, e.g., the bay^ʿa given by the Banū Masāra tribe to Mawlāy Ḥassan in 1873/4, reproduced in *Al-Wathaiq*, III, 1977. I am indebted to Mr. George Joffé for this reference.

²¹Abdallah Laroui, *Les origines sociales et culturelles du nationalisme marocain* (Paris, 1977), p. 373.

²²Pennell, “Opposition,” pp. 522–524.

²³Ahmad Skīraj, “Al-zall al-warīf fi muḥābarat al-Rīf ʿām 1443(sic)–1924,” MS in National Archives, Rabat (the memoirs of Muḥammad Azarqān, Rifi ‘foreign minister’, as dictated to Skīraj), pp. 80–83.

²⁴The bay^ʿa referred to in nn. 8 and 18, above.

²⁵*Ibid.*

²⁶Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 89.

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 151.

²⁸Pennell, “Opposition,” pp. 539–556.

²⁹Muḥammad al-Mannūnī, *Mazāhir yaqẓat al-Maghrib al-ḥadīth*, pt. 1 (Rabat, 1392/1973), pp. 263–273.

³⁰Laroui, *Origines*, p. 284.

³¹Pennell, “Opposition,” pp. 529–531 and 588.

³²*Ibid.*, pp. 727–733.

³³Lahbabi, *Gouvernement*, pp. 135–137.

³⁴Hart, *Aith Waryaghar*, pp. 283–284.

³⁵Pennell, “Opposition,” pp. 177–180.

³⁶Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, p. 6.

³⁷This is the central idea of Lahbabi, *Gouvernement*.

³⁸Allāl al-Fāsī, *Al-ḥarakāt al-istiqlālīya fī-l-maghrib al-ʿarabī* (Tangier, n.d.), pp. 121–122.

³⁹Pennell, “Opposition,” p. 529.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 563–564.

⁴¹Jamil Abun-Nasr, “The Salafiyya Movement in Morocco: The Religious Bases of the Moroccan Nationalist Movement” in Albert Hourani, ed., *St. Antony's Papers No 16 Middle Eastern Affairs No. 3* (London, 1963), pp. 92–98.

⁴²Skīraj, “Al-zall al-warīf,” p. 86.

⁴³Hart, *Aith Waryaghar*, p. 371.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵Comisión de Responsabilidades, *Documentos relacionados con la información instruida por la llamada ‘Comisión de Responsabilidades’ acerca del desastre de Anual* (Madrid, n.d.), p. 45.

⁴⁶Pennell, “Opposition,” pp. 223–229.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 534.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 575–582.

⁴⁹Hart, *Aith Waryaghar*, p. 389.

⁵⁰Pennell, “Opposition,” pp. 280–281.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 299.

⁵²*Ibid.*, p. 713.

⁵³Ibid., pp.651–652.

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 659–673.

⁵⁵Rosita Forbes, *El Raisuni, Sultan of the Mountains* (London, 1924), p. 40.

⁵⁶See the biography of the Sharif given in Forbes, *El Raisuni*.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 40.

⁵⁸Pennell, "Opposition," p. 144.

⁵⁹Amīn Sa'īd, *Thawrāt al-ʿarab fī-l-qarn al-ʿashrīn* (Cairo, n.d.), pp. 193–196.

⁶⁰Pennell, "Opposition," pp. 705–708.

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 656–658.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 661–672.

⁶³Ibid., p. 702.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 709.

⁶⁵An example is Muḥammad Bū Qaddur of the Timsamān tribe in the Eastern Rif. His career is described in C. R. Pennell, "'I Want To Live Peacefully in My House': A Moroccan Qaid and His Reaction to Colonialism," *Maghreb Review*, 6, 3–4 (1981), 49–54.

⁶⁶Vincent Sheean, *Adventures among the Riffi* (London, 1926), p. 47.

⁶⁷Pennell, "Opposition," pp. 762–766.

⁶⁸Léon Gabrielli, *Abd-el-Krim at les événements du Rif 1924–1926: notes et souvenirs recueillis et présentés par Roger Coindreau* (Casablanca, 1953), p. 85.

⁶⁹Aḥmad al-Bū ʿAyyāshī, *Ḥarb al-Rīf al-tahrīrīya wa-marāhil al-niḍāl*, 2 vols. (Tangier, 1974), II, 361–362.

⁷⁰Skīraj, "Al-zall al-warīf," p. 83.

⁷¹*Al-Manar* "Jahl al-Zuʿamā."