



İSLÂM TARİH, SANAT VE KùLTÜR ARAřTIRMA MERKEZİ

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“Young Turk Revolution” and Anti-Imperialist Resistance Movements in the Muslim Mediterranean

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This paper explores the influence of the Ottoman Constitution of 1908 in North Africa. My intention is to highlight the complex dynamics of exchanges, interactions and transformations between the Ottoman Empire and North Africa. Moreover, analysing these processes might provide an insight into the construction of modern and even contemporary nation-states. During the “long 19th century”, the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean was characterized by profound transformations, in which inter-Muslim relations played a crucial role.

This is a contribution to the study of the external component of resistance movements in North Africa. Morocco is viewed as a case study of the extent to which movements of resistance sought external allies as a way of compensating for their weaknesses.¹

During the period 1844-1912, a succession of Moroccan sultans worked to create a new military order (*asker nizami, nizam el-cedid*) modelled on the armed forces of Western Europe as experienced by the governments of the Ottoman Empire and Egypt.² They had recourse to a multiplicity of military experts not only from Western Europe (France, England, Spain, ...), but also from Muslim countries like the Ottoman Empire, Egypt and North Africa. Then, in the early 20th century, the Moroccan Sultan invited Ottoman military “experts” to reorganize the Army.

During the first period (1844-1860), the *Mahzan*, following on models established in Egypt, the Ottoman Empire and Tunisia, created a modern infantry army, supported by a re-armed artillery corps and the beginnings of a

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1 Burke, 1975, *Moroccan Resistance, Pan-Islam and German War Strategy, 1914-1918*, (Francia), 434.

2 Willfrid Rollman, 2004, in O. Moreau, A. El Moudden (ed.), “Réforme par le haut, réforme par le bas: la modernisation de l’armée aux 19^e et 20^e siècles”, *Quaderni di Oriente Moderno*, Rome, XXX n. s. (LXXXIV), 5-2004, 216.

military administration.³ The Moroccan Sultan Mawla Abdarraḥman (r. 1822-1859) reorganized his army after the battle of Isly (1844) where the Moroccan army was defeated by a French expeditionary corps.

In the second period, after 1860, following the disaster of the Hispano-Moroccan Wars (1859-1860), the Moroccan Sultan had recourse to European expertise. He was under the internal pressure of the effervescence of the tribes and external dynamics of pressure. The "New Order" infantry and field artillery corps became the Mahzan's principal fighting forces, although they were never a credible defence against the European armies of the time. They gave the Mahzan a technical advantage over its internal adversaries which enabled it to impose its political and fiscal authority more firmly over a wider territory than had been possible at any time previously in the 19th century.⁴

The third sequence appears in the early 20th century with the appeal to Ottoman "experts" after 1900. Mawla Abd al-Aziz emerged as Sultan and the armed forces entered a period of extreme crisis. The young Sultan found himself confronted with huge economic and diplomatic challenges. At the same time he lost the respect and loyalty of his people. The crisis was also provoked and sustained by the efforts of France in its goal of making Morocco a part of its colonial Empire in Africa. France exerted pressure on the Mahzan in order to obtain the monopoly on the management of its "New Army" to the exclusion of the other European military missions. The same year, Qaid Sir Harry Maclean retired from Moroccan service and led the way towards a greater French role in military affairs. After the signing of the Entente Cordiale between Great Britain and France in 1904 and until October 1910, when the French government took over the management of the new troops, one saw a fragmentation and diminution in its numbers. The diplomatic accords negotiated between France, Italy, Spain and England between 1900 and 1904 opened the way to the predominance of French influence in Morocco. In January 1905, Taillandier presented a reform program for Moroccan Affairs. But the civil war (1907-1908) that broke out in Morocco postponed its application.

In fact, in 1907-1908, the forces were divided by a civil war between Mawla Abd al-Aziz and Mawla Abd al-Hafiz his half-brother and viceroy to the Sultan. After Mawla Abd al-Aziz's abdication in 1908, many men and officers in the army supported the resistance to the French invading enemy (in the Shawiya

³ Willfrid Rollman, 2004, in O. Moreau, A. El Moudden (ed.), "Réforme par le haut, réforme par le bas: la modernisation de l'armée aux 19^e et 20^e siècles", *Quaderni di Oriente Moderno*, Rome, XXX n. s. (LXXXIV), 5-2004, 216.

⁴ Willfrid Rollman, 1983, *The "New Order" in a pre-Colonial Muslim Society: Military Reform in Morocco, 1844-1904*, Ann-Arbor, University of Michigan, unpublished Ph.D., 1983, 2 vols, 671.

and Oujda in 1907-9), which was one of the main goals of the movement. In fact, this resistance was led, not by the Moroccan army but by the leading urban and rural figures. The Kattaniya (Kattani cousins) played a leading role. They were represented by the *ulama* and asked for Muslim military advisors from the Middle East (the Ottoman Empire, Egypt and Tunisia) while threatening to instigate a revolt against the Sultan. The Kattaniya was an expression of the Moroccan trend to view the Middle East as a source of inspiration and assistance.

Three principal phases in the development of the Moroccan resistance can be distinguished. Increasingly broader segments of the Moroccan elite became involved in the resistance from one phase to another. In the first phase, that of military reforms and internal improvements, it was essentially government officials who were concerned with French expansionism.

As French intentions became clearer, a second phase of development can be distinguished (1905-1911) during which first the religious scholars of the cities, the *ulama*, and then the urban bourgeoisie and provincial notables, emerge as champions of resistance. On December 17th 1904 Mawla Abd al-Aziz responded to this ultimatum by demanding the dismissal of all European military experts. This “bras de fer”, wrist wrestling match, caused a break in diplomatic relations between France and Morocco in December 1904. On the other hand, although German intervention slowed down the French process of control it proved unable to prevent it.

The resistance to French control increased after 1905 and turned into a revolt in 1907. In response to French intervention at Casablanca (1907), a broadly based but fragile coalition was formed which brought about the deposition of Sultan Abd al-Aziz and the proclamation of his more militant brother, Abd al-Hafiz (1908-1912), as Sultan, who was acclaimed “Sultan of the jihad”⁵ with the support of the anti-French coalition. Mawla Abd al-Hafiz carried out a policy of resistance against colonialism aiming at the “restoration” of the central authority.

Morocco provides a good example of Pan-Islam in action, as, under the pressure of French penetration, Moroccan officials began to turn toward the Near East for assistance.⁶

In 1909, the Moroccan Sultan moved against the rebellion Bu Himarah,

⁵ Willfrid Rollman, 1983, *The “New Order” in a pre-Colonial Muslim Society: Military Reform in Morocco, 1844-1904*, Ann-Arbor, University of Michigan, unpublished Ph.D, 1983, 2 vols, 834.

⁶ Edmund Burke, 1972, “Pan-Islam and Moroccan Resistance to French Colonial Penetration, 1900-1912”, *Journal of North African History*, 13, nr. 1, p. 97.

who was killed. Later that year, the Sultan invited Muslim military advisors to replace the French military mission. Turkish Military officers arrived in November 1909, but had to withdraw in 1910 under the French government pressure. Mawla Abd al-Hafiz's efforts to reject the Moroccan debt and to build a New Army had ended in failure. In 1912 he had no choice but to sign the Protectorate Treaty. Then, on April 17, 1912, the outbreak of a mutiny among the Moroccan troops against their French officers at Fez, was the signal for the beginning of a third phase of resistance: an attempt at a general uprising.⁷

I will examine the case study of an "experiment" wherein the Moroccan government sought to employ "Arab-Ottoman" officers and military reform experts to assist in efforts to create a modern army. The presence of these Muslim officers and experts immediately produced a strong reaction from European governments, who had already established military advisory missions in Morocco and hoped to monopolize this area of expertise. It also produced a whole range of reactions from Moroccans who saw in the possibility of having Muslim advisors from the "Ottoman government" an opportunity to reduce foreign influence in Morocco. But they also realized that the Ottoman training mission, its protocols, uniforms, and commitment to bringing into existence a New Army on the European model, posed new problems for local Islamic elites and the Moroccan government.

I would like to underline the complexity of the bilateral relations between Morocco and the Ottoman Empire. A long-standing dispute between Ottoman and Moroccan sultans had prevented the creation of official relations between the two states with the Moroccan refusal to accredit Ottoman diplomatic representatives. That meant that all negotiations had to take place on a non-official basis, involving informal networks and Muslim "solidarity movements" in Muslim countries.⁸ In that respect, personal relations assumed greater importance in that framework with Egypt playing a non-official and eventually secret role as mediator between the Ottoman Empire and Morocco.⁹

However, despite these impediments, from 1909 onwards the Ottomans had entered upon an intervention in support of the "Moroccan Resistance". At the same time, the Ottoman Empire was the scene of much agitation after the

⁷ Edmund Burke III, 1975, *Moroccan Resistance, Pan-Islam and German War Strategy, 1914-1918*, (Francia), 437.

⁸ Edmund Burke III, "Pan-Islam and Moroccan Resistance to French Colonial Penetration, 1900-1912", *Journal of North African History* 13, nr. 1, 102.

⁹ Jacob Landau, 1990, rééd. 1992, *The Politics of Pan-Islam, Ideology and Organization*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 138-139.

“Young Turk Revolution” of 1908. At that time the Ottoman Empire enjoyed great prestige among the “Oriental population”.

Five revolutions and counter-revolutions took place in the central Ottoman Empire in the very short space of five years. The Ottoman Army consolidated its power in the political arena until it finally attained dominance in 1913. In Morocco, the “Young Turk Revolution” of 1908 produced a wave of sympathy and one of the manifestations of this sympathy was the resurgence of ancient projects aiming at neutralizing the heavy dependence on the military experts in general and the French in particular. In 1909, Sultan Abd al-Hafid invited an “Ottoman military mission” to replace the French military mission. These Ottoman officers served as advisers and instructors in Morocco between 1909 and 1910.

It was not the first time that Ottoman military officers had come to serve in Morocco. In the past, a few Ottoman military officers had come as individuals, but in 1909 they were acting as a “Military Mission”. In spite of all the problems around the denomination, they presented themselves and were conscious of being and acting as a “Military Mission”. In fact, Morocco was a land of opportunity for Ottoman officers. They viewed Morocco as an Eldorado, a very convenient Muslim country, where they were highly respected.

Some of them later moved around the Mediterranean, assisting reform movements as they travelled from one place to another. However, due to their experience in military reform in the region, they were considered competent military advisors and their advice was much sought after. This case study explores individuals and translocal connections in the Muslim Mediterranean, especially anti-imperialist resistance movements and Ottoman/Egyptian networking in North Africa. Through a cross regional case study my project looks closely at dynamic interactions in the early 20th Century Muslim Mediterranean. My study highlights how individuals, ideas and communities revolving around Islam transcended established boundaries, penetrating into different cultural and political milieus while themselves being transformed as they moved through the Southern Mediterranean.

In fact after 1908, anti-imperialist ideas were one of the leitmotifs of the CUP. In practice, an Ottoman network was involved in anti-imperialist resistance throughout the Muslim Mediterranean, including North Africa.

It seems that the Ottoman officers who had been exiled to Egypt at that time arrived at the invitation of Muhammad Pasha el-Shereii, of the “entourage” of the Egyptian Khedive Abbas Hilmi Pasha.¹⁰ He was the president of the secret

10 Jean Deny, 1928. Translation and commentary of an article written by a former officer of the

pan-islamic Jamiyyat al-Ittihad al-Maghrabi ['Maghrabeen Union'] aiming at the unification of the North African States (Algeria, Tunis, Morocco and Tripoli).¹¹ The secret society al-Ittihad al-Maghrabi envisaged a Maghrabeen Union and the restoration of a large Muslim Empire in North Africa under the aegis of Germany. Al-Ittihad al-Maghrabi was founded in Cairo by Muhammad Shereii Pasha, a man of Moroccan origin, with the collaboration of the Khedive Abbas Hilmi Pasha.

Ahmed Bedevi (Kuran) writes in his memoirs that the Khedive Abbas Hilmi Pasha suggested that they should join the Moroccan army and arranged everything with the Moroccan Ambassador in Paris, al-Muqri. A group of officers exiled in Egypt, decided to go to Morocco with Abbas Hilmi Pasha paying all the travel expenses.¹² A first group led by Aref Taher, director of the operations, went to Morocco in 1909. Upon their arrival in Morocco, they presented themselves as adventurers looking for employment. In Fez, the Turkish officers were received by al-Muqri and presented at the court of the Sultan. However, the mission was the cause of much discontent. In response to the protests of the French Military Mission they were attached to the Mahzan army as advisors and soon began accompanying the troops on manoeuvres against dissident tribes to the North of Fez. They continued their operations until March 1910 but on that date they were compelled to leave as a result of French diplomatic pressure.

A translocal network within the Muslim Mediterranean based in Cairo involving Ottoman/Egyptian networking in North Africa was very active and Morocco presented a bulwark against imperialism. The Ittihad al-Maghrabi project to unite the North African States (Algeria, Tunis, Morocco and Tripoli) failed after the signing of the French-German Treaty (September 4th 1911). Despite this agreement, the mutiny in Fez and the proclamation of the French Protectorate in 1912 provoked several activities of the Ittihad al-Maghrabi network. Then, during World War I, German-Ottoman cooperation created a new framework for the organization of uprisings.

Ottoman Military Mission published in the newspaper *Vakit* in 1926 in Istanbul. "Instructeurs militaires turcs au Maroc sous Mawlay Hafidh", in *Mémorial Henri Basset. Nouvelles études nord-africaines et orientales, Paris*, Institut des hautes études marocaines, Paul Geuthner, 219-227.

11 Cf. F. O. (British Foreign Office), Kitchener Papers, 30/57, vol. 36, 'Egyptian Secret Societies', 1911, 603-623.

12 Ahmed Bedevi Kuran, 1945, *İnkılap Tarihimiz ve Jön Türkler*, 2nd ed., (Istanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 285).