

The Struggle for Land in Morocco: A Case Study of Amazigh

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Abstract

This paper addresses the issue of the conflict over land between the state and tribes in the Great Souss plain in Morocco. The focus of this study is on the Amazigh tribes. It explores the motives that contributed to the emergence of tribal protests, particularly their demands for land rights, following the civil reforms promised by the Arab Spring in 2011. Through a direct examination of the growing dissatisfaction among these communities, the study reveals that the political failure to democratize society, characterized by consistent confusion at the level of governmental and institutional frameworks and the law's failure to regulate spatial justice on the ground, have both played a role. This situation has prompted tribes, feeling a sense of historical oppression, to claim their rights to the land that the state has increasingly opened up for investment without considering the traditional rights of these indigenous groups.

Keywords: State, tribes, land, Amazigh, civil society, conflict over land.

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Introduction

In the Arab and Maghreb regions, particularly during the 1990s and the early 2000s, there was a noticeable rise in civil social movements. These movements gradually transitioned into working within civil organizations, having previously operated mainly through political parties with defined ideologies and agendas to bring about change and reform. This shift enabled these groups to develop a "new set of values" aimed at transforming the challenging situation, each according to its own perspective, project, and commitment. In this context, youth protests emerged in late 2010 as an expression of the aspirations of various social groups for equality, freedom, justice, and democracy.

What is noteworthy about these movements is their development of a distinct approach to protest, moving beyond the traditional frameworks. This shift introduced a new dynamism to political action that moved away from the established revolutionary party leaderships, which have long been characterized by deep ideological commitment, seasoned experience, and a profound political culture. Instead, this wave of protest embraced bold, youthful elements driven by a civic ethos and a broader humanistic vision, championing new values such as transparency, accountability, and social empowerment alongside a strong adherence to universal human rights conventions.¹

Of course, this approach did not achieve the full success it aimed for, largely due to the unexpected nature of the circumstances, the lack of experience among the youth, and the internal and external forces that conspired to undermine the momentum of these movements and their pluralistic ideals across various Arab countries. However,

¹ Ali Harb, *The Revolutions of Soft Power in the Arab World: From System to Network*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Arab Scientific Publishers, 2012), 15-19.

these setbacks do not diminish the significance of what took place; rather, they may help refine the path forward, which is far from having reached its conclusion. The major protests in Lebanon and Iraq in 2019,² Sudan in 2018,³ and Morocco's Rif and Jerada regions between 2016 and 2018⁴ are powerful evidence of people's ongoing commitment to transitioning toward democracy, social justice, equality, and unity. These events are part of what has been referred to as the second wave of the Arab Spring.

Consequently, it can be said that the outcomes of the Arab Spring transcended traditional forms of activism, which were rooted in class-based struggles, particularly within labor movements and political parties with clear ideological backgrounds. The new social movements (organized or otherwise)⁵ emerged outside these traditional spaces, attempting to address emerging public issues such as political, economic, cultural, and spatial nature problems. Classical movements that failed to institutionalize internal democracy, one of whose key components is leadership rotation and the acceptance of critique and self-criticism, had neglected these issues, such as justice, equality, and freedom.

The sudden wave of protests that shook Morocco in early 2011 significantly catalyzed the emergence of local

² Reema Majed, "Lebanon and Iraq in 2019: Revolutionary Uprisings Against Sectarian Neoliberalism," *Longreads.tni*, published October 27, 2021, accessed December 12, 2022, <https://longreads.tni.org/arab-uprisings-ar/10-ar>.

³ Mohamed Elaajjati et al., "Sudanese Professionals Association: Structure, Development, Roles, and Alliances - What Challenges and Future Prospects?," *Arab Reform Initiative*, published November 9, 2021, accessed December 12, 2022, <https://2h.ae/OMVG>.

⁴ Ilham Rachidi, "Morocco: An Unextinguished Flame of Protest," *Orient XXI*, published April 17, 2018, accessed December 14, 2022, <https://2h.ae/jTWm>.

⁵ Assef Bayat, *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East* (National Center for Translation, First Edition, 2014), 25.

coordination committees. These committees began advocating for tribal rights over the ownership and exploitation of lands historically regarded as vital to their existence—lands whose significance dates back to a time long before the establishment of the modern state, which was heavily influenced by European concepts of political modernity and took shape after Morocco's independence in 1956. Moreover, the constitutional reform initiated by the king, in response to the demands of these protests and simultaneously a reaction to them, further encouraged the rise of new actors with strong local and identity-driven orientations.

In fact, the preamble of the Moroccan Constitution clearly states that:

"The Kingdom of Morocco is a sovereign Muslim state, firmly attached to its national and territorial unity, and to preserving the cohesion and diversity of its national identity, unified through the fusion of all its components: Arab-Islamic, Amazigh, and Sahraoui-Hassani, enriched by its African, Andalusian, Hebrew, and Mediterranean influences. Moroccan identity is characterized by the primacy of Islam while remaining faithful to values of openness, moderation, tolerance, and dialogue, and to mutual understanding between different human cultures and civilizations."

Additionally, Article 5 of the Constitution asserts that:

"Arabic remains the official language of the state. The state works to protect, develop, and promote its use. Amazigh is also an official language of the state, as a common heritage for all Moroccans without exception. An organic law will define the stages for implementing the official status of Amazigh, and the ways in which it will be integrated into education and priority sectors of public life, so that it may fulfill its

role as an official language in the future. The state ensures the preservation of the Hassani language, an integral part of the unified Moroccan cultural identity, and protects the dialects and cultural expressions used in Morocco. It also ensures coherence in the national language and cultural policies, while promoting the learning and mastery of the most widely spoken foreign languages in the world, as a means of communication, integration into the knowledge society, and opening up to various cultures and contemporary civilization."⁶

This constitutional foundation, born from a wave of political protest, has not only established the legal framework but also the legitimacy upon which various civil and tribal actors in Morocco, be they organizations, initiatives, or individual activists, rely to voice their aspirations.

The purpose of this study is to shine a light on the tribal actors that are emerging in contemporary Morocco, particularly those coordination committees that advocate for what they call the "right" of tribes to their ancestral lands. These demands have grown more urgent in the wake of state-issued legislation aimed at organizing and opening up these lands for investment. As a result, vast tracts of land have been registered with the intention of leasing them to foreign investors or handing them over to certain "influential" businessmen.

In response, the tribes seek to block these measures by reasserting their historical ownership of these extensive territories, hoping to either exploit the land themselves, establish investment cooperatives, or lease the land for financial gain. Land, after all, has always been the foundation of existence in most societies—especially in

⁶The Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco, 2011.

traditional ones—serving as a source of both production and survival, whether through agriculture or livestock farming. At its core, land is an intensely political issue. It has long been a focal point for conflict between groups and tribal communities, both in the past and today. Now, the clash is between the tribes, longing for the restoration of their former glory, and the state, which portrays itself as the representative of the entire social body and, thus, the protector of the common good.

This paper aims to delve into the evolving relationship between the tribes and the state in the post-Arab Spring era, focusing on the land rights movements led by Amazigh coordinations in the expansive Souss plain, notably the "Akal"⁷ coordination. The Amazigh movements are unified in their fight to reclaim tribal rights over ancestral lands, standing in firm opposition to state policies of land registration and the subsequent transfer of these lands to external stakeholders.

Previous research on tribal land issues has predominantly explored the legal and historical aspects. Among the most recent scholarly contributions is one doctoral dissertation: *The New Legal Framework of Collective Lands* by Ahmed Sakhy (2020). Yet, a notable gap remains in recent field studies addressing the evolving landscape shaped by the Arab Spring. While not exhaustive, this study aims to bridge that gap by providing a novel analytical perspective on these contemporary developments and their broader implications.

⁷ "Akal" in the Amazigh language means "land."

This paper employs a multifaceted methodology,⁸ integrating case studies⁹ and biographical analysis,¹⁰ to examine the mobilization of key figures within the Amazigh tribes for land rights.¹¹ The case study method will isolate pivotal moments that fuel mobilization, while biographical insights into leaders' life paths, combined with descriptive analyses,¹² will contextualize the socio-political factors underlying these protest movements. Semi-structured interviews¹³ with coordination committee leaders from each group provide critical insights. The Amazigh sample includes leaders aged 26-60, representing diverse educational and employment backgrounds.

This research aims to dissect the factors behind the rise of these tribal protests, prompted by the civic ideals of the 2011 Arab Spring. Are these uprisings a reaction to persistent grievances imposed by governing authorities—issues that endure through contemporary state policies and territorial laws accelerating the transfer of tribal lands? Or, alternatively, do they represent the breakdown of cohesive national ideologies and the decline of a middle class once defined by economic stability, intellectual engagement, and active political participation, redirecting

⁸ Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, trans. Abdullah bin Hussein Al-Khalifa (Center for Administrative Research and Studies, 1999).

⁹ Ibrahim Abrash, *The Scientific Method and Its Applications in Social Sciences* (Amman: Dar Al Shorouk, First Arabic Edition, 2009), 162.

¹⁰ Cécile Pechu et al., *Dictionary of Social Movements*, trans. Omar El-Shafie, ed. and rev. Dina Khawaga (Egypt: Safsafa Publishing and Distribution, 1st ed., 2017), 16

¹¹ M. Grawitz, *Méthodes des sciences sociales* (Paris: Prudence Générale, Dalloz, 4th ed., 1979), 430.

¹² Ibrahim Abrash, *Social Research: Its Issues, Methods, and Procedures* (Marrakech: Publications of the Faculty of Legal, Economic, and Social Sciences, Book Series, Issue 10, 1994), 111.

¹³ Ibrahim Abrash, *Social Research*, 268.

the focus toward localized or tribal interests? Finally, the study examines the prospective evolution and trajectory of these movements.

To address these questions comprehensively, this study follows a two-part structure: the first part explores the land dispute between tribal traditions and the state's legal framework. This analysis includes examining tribal customs' religious and political legitimacy and evaluating collective land issues from a legal perspective. The second part focuses on the political tensions surrounding land ownership, examining the role of Amazigh coordination in defending land and wealth rights, and then addressing the case of the Aqal Coordination and its demands for land reclamation. This structure is designed to provide a nuanced examination of the topic's central issues.

The Land Dispute between Tribal Traditions and the Legal Framework of the State

Communal lands in Morocco represent one of the most enduring and complex land tenure systems, deeply rooted in ancient traditions. Their legal status is particularly challenging to define precisely, as they are shaped by a blend of historical sources extending far back into antiquity. This complexity has left them governed by a combination of customary and legal frameworks. Some scholars trace the origins of these lands to pre-Islamic times, where they were intrinsically tied to the collective ownership of production resources within tribes or clans.¹⁴ These early societies, particularly the Amazigh tribes, managed their lands according to customary law until the arrival of Islam, which absorbed and integrated many of these established traditions.

¹⁴ Ahmed Sakhy, *The New Legal Framework of Collective Lands, Part One* (Oukad New Printing Press, 2020), 42.

At its core, communal lands in Morocco are those that belong to specific tribal groups, including clans, sub-clans, and villages, all of which are considered legal entities under private law, with their management falling under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior. These lands are unique in that they cannot be subject to prescription, seizure, or sale, except to the state, local authorities, public institutions, or other recognized communal groups. Spanning a vast area of approximately 15 million hectares, these lands are predominantly rangelands, making up more than 85% of the total, and are collectively utilized by those entitled to them. The remaining portion is allocated to agricultural activities. The use of communal agricultural lands is regulated by an assembly of delegates or representatives, who allocate rights of use in accordance with local customs and the supervisory authority's directives.¹⁵

Tribal Custom between Religious and Political Legitimacy

Throughout history, the custom has served as the cornerstone for regulating the lives of ancient civilizations. Scholars have long affirmed that societies such as those of India, China, Greece, and Rome governed their affairs and social interactions through deeply entrenched customs and traditions. The Arabs were no exception, with their social fabric woven from numerous traditions and customs, many of which persist to this day.¹⁶

In contemporary times, we still witness the dominance of certain customs within social interactions,

¹⁵ Ibrahim Abrash, *Social Research*, 97.

¹⁶ Ibrahim Abrash, *Social Research*, 43.

particularly in Amazigh.¹⁷ These customs continue to govern family dynamics, from marriage and divorce to inheritance and commerce. The endurance of such practices is grounded in the political and historical legitimacy of these customs, especially given that several Moroccan sultans recognized and affirmed their validity, provided they did not contravene Islamic law.

A notable example of this recognition can be found in a letter Sultan Moulay Slimane addressed to the notables of Fez in 1820, in which he declared:

"... Take heed of this counsel, and beware, for religion is founded on advice. O Lord, bear witness. If you seek safety for yourselves, O people of Fez, then ally yourselves with the Amazighs, for they possess laws and a code of honor that shields them from injustice, and they are content with simplicity".¹⁸

Similarly, in 1885, Sultan Moulay Hassan I journeyed to Tiznit,¹⁹ where he scrutinized several sets of Amazigh tribal customs in the Souss region. Upon confirming that none of these customs conflicted with the

¹⁷ Mohamed Cheikh Banane and Souad Ahmad Ezzerouali, "The Stereotypical Phenomenon in the Imaging of the Arab Marxists," *The International and Political Journal* 58 (2024).

¹⁸ Abdelhakim El-Zawi, "Moulay Suleiman: The Final Moments of Caution," *Al-Ittihad Al-Ishtiraki Newspaper*, published on January 6, 2023, accessed July 20, 2023, <https://cutt.us/wg0VF>.

¹⁹ TIZNIT is a town in the west coast of the Moroccan region of Souss-Massa, founded in 1881 by the Sultan Hassan I. It is the capital of Tiznit Province and recorded a population of 74,699 in the 2014 Moroccan census. The province of Tiznit is in the western side of the Anti-Atlas. Tiznit, some 80 km south of Agadir, is a place full of Imazighn (isoussin). Tiznit was the starting point of the famous dynasty of Almoravides. The history of the city is also linked to the particular importance the Alawite Sultans granted to the city. Sultan Moulay Hassan I visited Tiznit twice, the first time in 1882 and the second time in 1886.

principles of the Quran, he officially sanctioned their use,²⁰ thus granting them formal recognition and approval.

There is also the “Zahīr”²¹ issued by Sultan Moulay Youssef on September 11, 1914, which stated that "the organization and governance of Berber²² customary tribes shall remain as they are, according to their traditions and laws, under the supervision of the authorities."²³

Legal scholars have long defined custom as "that which is established in the hearts and minds by way of reason, and which is naturally accepted by sound temperaments, provided it does not contradict a religious text." In Islamic jurisprudence, custom is categorized in several ways. From its comprehensiveness perspective, it can be general or specific.²⁴ The general custom is one observed by the entire population of a state, both its common and elite members—though this is rare. More frequently, we find specific customs that are adhered to by the people of a particular city, region, or rural area or by members of a particular profession, such as commercial,

²⁰ Tayeb Boutbkalte, "Amazigh Identity and French Colonialism (16): The decree (Dahir) of September 11, 1914," *Hespress*, published on June 1, 2018, accessed July 18, 2023, <https://cutt.us/MJemr>.

²¹ "Dahir" is an official royal decree or edict issued by the monarch in Morocco. The term originates from Arabic and is used in various contexts, especially in legal and administrative matters. A dahir holds significant legal authority and is often used to enact laws, promulgate regulations, or confer rights and privileges. Historically, dahirs have been used by Moroccan sultans and kings to address various issues, including the organization of land ownership, tribal matters, and other governance-related decisions. These decrees are a fundamental part of Moroccan legal and political history, symbolizing the sovereign power of the monarch over legislative matters.

²² Berber means Amazigh.

²³ Boutbkalte, "Amazigh Identity and French Colonialism," *Hespress*, published on June 1, 2018, accessed July 18, 2023, <https://cutt.us/MJemr>.

²⁴ Sayid Mustafa ibn Sayid Muhammad al-Kawz al-Hassari, *Munafih al-Daqaiq Sharh Majami' al-Haqaiq* (Damascus, n.d.), 325.

professional, or agricultural customs like those governing expertise, sharecropping, and partnership agreements²⁵ (*khammass*²⁶ and *Ruba'a*).²⁷

As for its legitimacy, custom can be either valid or corrupt. A valid custom is one that people practice in their daily lives without contradicting any religious text found in the Qur'an, the Sunnah, scholarly consensus, or sound analogical reasoning. Such a custom does not permit the forbidden things or forbid the permissible things, as seen in certain cooperative structures that have emerged in some rural areas of Morocco. A corrupt custom, on the other hand, contradicts the principles of Islamic law, such as depriving women of tribal rights to benefit from collective lands or the financial returns resulting from transactions involving these lands, whether through sale, lease, or other means.²⁸

Custom has been a recognized source of Islamic law, especially in the Maliki and Hanafi schools of thought. The Malikis particularly emphasize the importance of custom. Imam Al-Qarafi, in "Al-Furuq," stated: "Consider what is customary, and disregard what is not. Don't adhere rigidly to written texts for your entire life. If someone from a

²⁵ Sakhy, *The New Legal Framework of Collective Lands*, 42.

²⁶ Khammass is a traditional agricultural partnership system in which the farmer (known as the khomas) receives one-fifth of the crop yield from the land he works on, while the landowner takes the remaining four-fifths. The farmer provides the labor, and the landowner supplies the land, seeds, and necessary tools. The produce is divided according to this agreed ratio, reflecting a form of cooperation between the farmer and the landowner.

²⁷ Ruba'a, on the other hand, is a similar partnership system, but with a different distribution of the harvest. In this case, the farmer (called the ruba'a) receives one-quarter of the crop yield, while the landowner retains the rest. As with the khomas system, the farmer contributes labor, while the landowner provides the land and other necessary inputs. The division of the harvest, in this case, is based on the agreed-upon one-quarter share for the farmer..

²⁸ Sakhy, *The New Legal Framework of Collective Lands*, 42.

different region seeks a ruling, apply their customs, not yours or what is written in your books. This is the clear truth. Rigid adherence to texts leads to straying in religion and ignorance of the objectives of Muslim scholars."²⁹

The Hanafis also placed great emphasis on custom. Ibn Nujaym remarked, "The consideration of custom and tradition is relied upon in many issues of jurisprudence, to the extent that it has become a foundational principle." Similarly, Ibn Abidin expressed this idea poetically: "Custom in the law holds great regard, and many rulings are based upon it."³⁰

The Shafi'i school, too, recognized the importance of custom in numerous instances. Imam Al-Suyuti, in his work *Al-Ashbah wa Al-Nazā'ir*, elaborated on how custom is considered a valid principle within the Shafi'i tradition, affirming its relevance in shaping legal judgments.³¹

The absence of conflict between custom and Islamic jurisprudence is notably emphasized by Jacques Berque, who argued that no inherent war exists between Sharia and custom, even though customary practices can sometimes appear to contradict the explicit terms of Islamic law.³² This, Berque suggests, is due to the adaptive techniques developed by Islamic jurisprudence over centuries, such as analogy (*qiyās*), and consensus (*ijma*). Scholars have observed public interest (*maṣlahah*), and necessity (*darurah*). Customary norms have indeed found a way to

²⁹ Sakhy, *The New Legal Framework of Collective Lands*, 42.

³⁰ Jamal Al-Banna, *Qadiyat al-Fiqh al-Jadid (The Issue of New Jurisprudence)* (Kotobarabia, 2007), 333, accessed October 22, 2024, <https://urls.fr/QURIEM>.

³¹ Jalal al-Din Abd al-Rahman al-Suyuti, *Al-Ashbah wa al-Naza'ir fi Qawa'id wa Furu' Fiqh al-Shafi'i*, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1403 AH / 1983 CE), 90-95.

³² Najib Bouderbala, *Law Between Tribe, Nation, and State: The Dialectic of Legislation, Custom, Sharia, and Law*, trans. Mohammed Zarnine (Casablanca: Afrique Orient, 2015), 52.

integrate into formal legal frameworks, but always through a particular jurisprudential lens.³³

In tribal consciousness, the imagined link between custom and land is profound. For them, to abandon the land is to forsake honor, and in the past, losing land often meant descending into the status of a *khammass*,³⁴ a position of servitude and exploitation. This symbolic connection, deeply embedded in the collective memory where myth blends with cultural narratives, is precisely what tribal elites in the present seek to harness in their subtle opposition to state authority, as will be explored further. Historically, the customary restrictions surrounding land ownership served as barriers against expanding the class of landholders. However, these barriers have not withstood the pressures of extraordinary circumstances: social upheavals, political crises, times of strife, and famines have all contributed to the erosion of familial land holdings and the transfer of property to outsiders.³⁵

Custom is recognized as a source of legislation in several Arab countries, including Iraq, Kuwait, Egypt, and Morocco. In Moroccan law, custom plays a significant role in various instances. For example, Article 475 of the Code of Obligations and Contracts specifies that custom cannot contradict explicit law. This law implicitly acknowledges that custom holds a secondary, yet important, position relative to formal legislation.³⁶

³³ Bouderbala, *Law Between Tribe, Nation, and State: The Dialectic of Legislation, Custom, Sharia, and Law*, 52.

³⁴ Salem Ouakari, *The Construction of Belonging: A Study of Land Ownership in Saharan Society (Ait Oussa 1600-1956)* (Beirut: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 1st ed., 2023), 75.

³⁵ Ouakari, *The Construction of Belonging*, pp. 67-68.

³⁶ Sakhy, *The New Legal Framework of Collective Lands*, 43.

The relegation of custom to a subordinate status likely stems from the Moroccan legislator's awareness of the country's complex tribal social structure, historically marked by instability due to conflicts between tribes and ruling dynasties. The legal framework governing land ownership has long been influenced by power dynamics and political alliances. Many tribes came under state control, either voluntarily or through coercion, but later rebelled against the central authority. This has resulted in an unstable land tenure system with persistent legal uncertainty.³⁷

Additionally, several tribes were relocated to distant areas, with land redistributed among their members, while others were forcibly expelled. In the pre-colonial era, tribes were the backbone of Moroccan society, playing a crucial role in its formation. With the establishment of the modern state, the land tenure system has become increasingly complex, requiring legal clarity and differentiation between various types of land ownership, such as collective tribal lands, state public lands, municipal lands, forested areas, religious endowments, military properties, and undivided co-owned lands.

Collective Lands from a Legal Perspective

Collective lands have developed a poor reputation due to their association with tribal anarchy and regional fragmentation, which hinder national unification and legislative unity.³⁸ They are also seen as barriers to investment, lacking guarantees of ownership rights or long-term stability, and the continual shrinking of these plots further deters potential investors.

³⁷ Sakhy, *The New Legal Framework of Collective Lands*, 51.

³⁸ Bouderbala, *Law Between Tribe, Nation, and State*, 254.

Najib Bouderbala rightly notes that, despite various criticisms, communal lands are consistently viewed negatively. Surprisingly, no official abolition proposal emerged in the first decade after independence. This hesitation may stem from stronger reasons: communal lands, under the Ministry of the Interior's control, are crucial for political intervention in rural areas and serve as refuges for small farmers, preventing uncontrolled rural migration.³⁹

Historically, communal lands were managed with solidarity, cooperation, and social cohesion, with each tribe member having access to arable land and shared grazing lands. However, French colonial rule in Morocco caused widespread chaos, negatively affecting these communal properties' material and legal status.⁴⁰ France intervened to control land management while tribal leaders sought individual ownership deeds, complicating the legal landscape. To regulate these lands, France enacted various laws in two key phases.

First phase (1912-1937):

During this period, the Protectorate authorities intervened by issuing a series of legal measures, which are summarized as follows: A decree by the Grand Vizier dated November 11, 1912,⁴¹ addressed to pashas, caids, and judges, which delineated properties that could not be sold or divided, including those exploited collectively by tribes. It mandated that these properties remain governed by local customs and traditions.

³⁹ Bouderbala, *Law Between Tribe, Nation, and State*, 255.

⁴⁰ Sakhy, *The New Legal Framework of Collective Lands*, 54.

⁴¹ Published in the *Official Gazette*, Issue No. 1, on December 23, 1913, corresponding to February 1, 1913, 3. Its provisions applied to all regions of Morocco, including the area under Spanish control and the Tangier International Zone. For further reference, see Ahmed Sakhy, *The New Legal Framework of Collective Lands*, 57.

- A royal decree (Zahīr) on July 7, 1914, concerning the regulation of native judiciary and the alienation of real property, reaffirming the inalienability of collectively-owned tribal lands and prohibiting the notaries from executing sales or property deeds without certification from authorities confirming that the land in question was not communal.
- A royal decree dated November 21, 1916⁴², establishing representative groups for tribes, which outlined the process for forming these groups and granted them the responsibility of managing communal lands under the supervision of the administration.⁴³
- A royal decree dated April 27, 1919⁴⁴, organizing administrative oversight over tribes and the management and alienation of communal lands, reinforcing the role of ancient customs and traditions in the administration of these lands.
- A royal decree from February 18, 1924⁴⁵, later amended by a decree in 1933, establishing a special registry for defining the boundaries of lands shared among tribes, aimed to clarify communal property's material status.⁴⁶

From this, it becomes clear that the objective behind regulating collective tribal lands was to place them under state oversight (that of the Protectorate authorities) while

⁴² Published in the *Official Gazette*, Issue No. 190, on Safar 22, 1335, corresponding to December 18, 1916, 958.

⁴³ Sakhy, *The New Legal Framework of Collective Lands*, 57.

⁴⁴ Published in the *Official Gazette*, Issue No. 329, on August 18, 1919, 410.

⁴⁵ Published in the *Official Gazette*, Issues No. 569-570, dated 19th and 26th Sha'ban 1342, corresponding to March 25 and April 1, 1924, 413.

⁴⁶ Sakhy, *The New Legal Framework of Collective Lands*, 58-59.

simultaneously preserving a degree of tribal sovereignty by recognizing relevant customs and traditions. This approach served to quell rising tensions against the colonial regime while laying the groundwork for the exploitation of these lands by French settlers and their Moroccan collaborators, as will be further discussed.

Second Phase (1938-1951):

During this period, communal lands' legal and material status underwent significant changes. Notably, it became permissible for these lands to be transferred to the state and for the perpetual usufruct rights attached to these properties to be granted to third parties.

Additionally, long-term lease agreements became possible.⁴⁷ These shifts necessitated the introduction of a series of legal and regulatory measures, including the following:

- The (Zahīr) of May 28, 1938⁴⁸, which authorized the transfer of communal lands to the state and municipalities. It also permitted the division of these lands among the members of the tribal community, allowing for their transfer after a period of thirty years of use—or, in exceptional cases, after ten years.
- The (Zahīr) of December 13, 1941⁴⁹, regulating the long-term leasing of communal properties between tribal groups and the granting of perpetual usufruct rights over these lands. This decree allowed for long-term leasing of communal lands and the

⁴⁷ Sakhy, *The New Legal Framework of Collective Lands, Part One* (Oukad New Printing Press, 2020), 59.

⁴⁸ Published in the *Official Gazette*, Issue No. 1344, dated 30 Jumada al-Awwal 1357, corresponding to July 29, 1938, 1226.

⁴⁹ Published in the *Official Gazette*, Issue No. 1526, dated 6 Muharram 1361, corresponding to January 23, 1942, 122.

transfer of perpetual usufruct rights to third parties.

- The Decree of March 19, 1951⁵⁰, which established the rules governing the management and transfer of communal lands. Under this decree, the management of communal lands was clarified, and it became possible to transfer communal lands located within or near urban centers and their peripheries to the state and rural municipalities. Additionally, agricultural lands suitable for development could be transferred through negotiated terms under specified conditions or via public auction.

The Protectorate's measures aimed to enable French settlers and tribal leaders to acquire portions of the lands. Despite this, the legal measures also offered benefits such as prohibiting acquisition through adverse possession and protecting the lands from seizure or alienation. These provisions continued to serve the interests of the collective groups even after Morocco gained independence in 1956⁵¹ when the Moroccan legislator enacted several laws related to collective lands, including:

- The Royal Decree (Zahīr) of July 28, 1956⁵², concerning administrative guardianship over collective groups. This decree introduced fundamental changes to the composition of the Guardianship Council, aligning it with the new conditions of post-independence Morocco, unlike the system in place during the Protectorate era. The

⁵⁰ Published in the *Official Gazette*, Issue No. 2006, dated 28 Jumada II 1370, corresponding to April 6, 1951, 654.

⁵¹ Sakhy, *The New Legal Framework of Collective Lands, Part One*, 60-61.

⁵² Published in the *Official Gazette*, Issue No. 2286, dated 17 August 1956, 1393.

Minister of the Interior was entrusted with guardianship over the groups, with the authority to consult the Guardianship Council.

- The Royal Decree (Zahīr) of October 3, 1970⁵³, concerning the transfer of collective lands to certain Moroccan nationals. This decree exempted transfer contracts issued under the Zahīr of March 19, 1951, which were registered or unregistered in the property registry, from the provisions of the Zahīr of June 30, 1960, which stipulated that such contracts were considered null and void by operation of law. This exemption was with respect to the established principles regarding land registration.⁵⁴
- Law No. 63.17 on the administrative delimitation of collective lands, which aimed to simplify the administrative delimitation process by requiring public notice to focus solely on the decree setting the date for the commencement of administrative delimitation procedures, without necessitating a request for delimitation. It also shortened the deadline for submitting objections to administrative delimitation from six months to three months, in line with the deadline for objections set in Article 5 of the Royal Zahīr of January 3, 1916, concerning the administrative delimitation of state lands. Furthermore, the law introduced new rules regarding the actions of the property registrar in handling objections to administrative delimitation and the adjudication of such objections by the judiciary. Additionally, it allowed for the partial application of

⁵³ Published in the *Official Gazette*, Issue No. 3023, dated 5 Shaaban 1390 (7 October 1970), 2454.

⁵⁴ Sakhy, *The New Legal Framework of Collective Lands, Part One* (Oukad New Printing Press, 2020), 69.

the delimitation process when objections pertained only to a portion of the property, permitting approval of the uncontested portion while awaiting a decision on the remaining objections. The burden of proof was placed on the objector to the administrative delimitation.⁵⁵

- Decree No. 2.19.973⁵⁶, implementing the provisions of Law No. 62.17 concerning administrative guardianship over collective groups and the management of their properties, issued on January 9, 2020. This decree repealed all conflicting provisions, particularly the Ministerial Decision of December 26, 1920, concerning the regulation of funds derived from the expropriation, leasing, or permanent transfer of collective lands, and the Ministerial Decision of August 14, 1945, regulating the management of collective properties that had been divided for permanent use.⁵⁷

The Moroccan legislator introduced legal provisions to regulate collective lands and open them to investment, aiming to stimulate economic development. However, against the backdrop of historical and politically-charged narratives, these laws have led to conflicts between the state and tribes, and among tribes themselves. The law has introduced new processes that have gradually fragmented

⁵⁵ *Report of the Committee on the Interior, Territorial Communities, Housing, and City Policy on Bill No. 63.17 Related to the Administrative Delimitation of Collective Lands*, April 1919 session, Third Legislative Year 2018-2019, Tenth Legislative Term 2016-2021, 4, unpublished. For further reference, see Ahmed Sakhy, *The New Legal Framework of Collective Lands*, 70-72.

⁵⁶ Published in the *Official Gazette*, Issue No. 6849, on 24 Jumada I, corresponding to 20 January 2020, 321.

⁵⁷ Ahmed Sakhy, *The New Legal Framework of Collective Lands*, 70-72.

collective ownership and undermined communal ethos, revealing deep fractures within tribal unity that can no longer withstand the pressures.⁵⁸ A stark illustration of the significance of land in the tribal psyche can be found in the words of a sheikh of the Ouled Rashash⁵⁹ in Algeria, spoken in defiance to a representative of the French colonial authorities: "The French have defeated us and imposed a war tax upon us (...) all wounds heal, but establishing individual ownership and allowing each man to sell the land he receives after division is akin to sentencing the tribe to death. Within twenty years of these measures, the Ouled Rashash will have ceased to exist."⁶⁰

The Underlying Political Tensions Surrounding Land Ownership between the State and Amazigh.

Collectively-owned lands, or "communal lands," belong to tribal or clan groups bound by ethnic, familial, social, or religious ties and are shared among all members with distributable usage rights. Amazigh local coordination committees have recently emerged, demanding historical tribal rights to these lands. These committees, which can be called a "coordination," "network," "union," or

⁵⁸ Ouakari, *The Construction of Belonging: A Study of Land Ownership in Saharan Society*, 125.

⁵⁹ Ouled Rashash or Zoui, a municipality in the Algerian state of Khenchela. It is one of the oldest cities in this state and even in eastern Algeria. It emerged as a municipality in 1957 and was promoted to a district in 1990. It is 24 km east of the state capital. The municipality is located in a border area between Khenchela and Tebessa. It has its weight on the national map in the struggle against French colonialism. It is considered one of the most important cities in preserving the Amazigh language compared to the state capital, where the Chaoui language is widely spoken in all aspects of daily life.

⁶⁰ Salem Ouakari, *The Construction of Belonging: A Study of Land Ownership in Saharan Society* (Beirut: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 1st ed., 2023), 125.

"federation," represent a coalition of associations with shared goals and a governing body. They are regulated under the *Ḍahīr* of November 18, 1958, amended by Law No. 07.09 in 2009, which allows associations to form federations or unions."⁶¹ These federations or unions are subject to the same regulations as associations.

The coordination committees often operate outside legal legitimacy, as the state typically refuses to grant them official recognition. This is especially true for Amazigh coordinations, which have emerged as expressions of the Amazigh movement. Cultural organizations have helped form these committees in Amazigh regions, demanding land rights. The ideological alignment between the Amazigh Cultural Movement and committees like Akal (land) and Adrar (mountain) is notable, with significant parallels in their statements and positions.

Following the Arab Spring and the February 20 Movement in 2011, land defense coordination committees gained visibility, partly due to the expanded freedoms from the 2011 constitutional reform. The first significant coordination, "Adrar Coordination for Land Defense," was established on August 26, 2012, to halt forest land demarcation and defend land rights. Initially focused on Adrar in Chtouka Aït Baha, it expanded by 2014 to the larger Souss region, becoming "Adrar Souss Massa Coordination for the Defense of the People's Right to Land and Resources."

Its structure included a General Assembly with representatives from civil society associations, cooperatives, individuals, and elected officials, and an Executive Board with a president, vice presidents, a

⁶¹ *Decree (Dahir) on the Right to Establish Associations*, Ministry of Justice, Directorate of Legislation, *Official Gazette* No. 5712, February 26, 2009, updated October 24, 2011.

secretary and deputy, a treasurer and deputy, and advisors with specific tasks.

Despite initially appearing as a cohesive organizational entity, Adrar Coordination encountered significant internal and external challenges. Among the most severe issues was the emergence of political, partisan, and territorial conflicts within the coordination, culminating in a major split in 2017. This faction went on to establish the "Akal Coordination" for the defense of local land and resources rights, a movement born during the wave of protests in the Rif and Jerada regions, referred to as the second wave of the Arab Spring. Akal Coordination became one of the most prominent new social movements advocating for land rights, primarily grounded in local Amazigh and tribal identities. It was composed largely of Amazigh civil and human rights activists and organizations operating mainly in the Souss region (Greater Agadir) Haha (Essaouira).

The Context of the Emergence and Development of Akal Coordination

Akal Coordination is seen as a continuation of the civil society associations in the Souss Massa region, which gained prominence after 2011. However, Akal was specifically established to defend the rights of the local Amazigh population to their land and resources, particularly in response to increasing issues such as overgrazing by nomadic Arab herders in local areas, the proliferation of wild boars, and the state's seizure of lands—claimed by the local population as their own—under the pretext that these were forest lands, administered by the High Commission for Water and Forests.

Akal Coordination organized widespread protests, including a national march held on November 25, 2018, in Casablanca. This march led to the formal establishment of the coordination, with local branches being formed, and the declaration that the movement was not affiliated with any political party nor guided by any specific ideological stance. This distancing was, in essence, a response to the original Adrar Coordination, some of whose leaders had participated in the 2016 parliamentary elections. Akal maintained the same core demands as Adrar but adopted a more "radical" stance, openly condemning the colonial French *Zahirs* (decrees) that had dispossessed the Amazigh population of their lands. Akal argued that the legal texts passed by the Moroccan state post-independence were merely an extension of these colonial laws, designed to transfer communal tribal lands into individual ownership or state-managed forest lands.

Additionally, the enactment of Law 113.13, which pertains to pastoralism, grazing land management, and the organization of grazing spaces, became a significant catalyst for the escalation of protests. Akal Coordination denounced this law as part of a broader scheme to expropriate land through the pretense of collective land registration.⁶²

The Akal Coordination organized numerous protests across Morocco and in some European capitals. Among the most significant were the demonstrations on January 13, 2019, in front of various provincial and prefectural offices, the February 17, 2019, march in Rabat, and the August 18, 2019, protest in Essaouira. However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the enforcement of lockdown

⁶² M.J., prominent leader of the Akal Coordination, interview conducted in Agadir, July 17, 2023.

measures brought the increasing momentum of the coordination's protests to a halt.

After a two-year hiatus, tensions resurfaced surrounding the issue of nomadic herders in the territory of the Arbaa Sahel commune in the predominantly Amazigh region of Tiznit. A portion of the local population staged a protest in front of the leadership headquarters, condemning what they described as the "continuous attacks by nomadic herders on their agricultural properties." Supported by the Akal Coordination, the demonstrators chanted slogans calling for action against what they referred to as the "organized grazing mafia," urging authorities to intervene and enforce the law against violators to prevent a repeat of the 2019 incidents. These previous clashes between the Amazigh population and Arab nomads had escalated to the point where authorities were compelled to intervene to stop them.

The Akal Coordination and the Demand for Land Reclamation

The Akal Coordination has developed a comprehensive set of demands and is actively advocating for their realization through various channels. These include grassroots mobilization, legal advocacy, and strategic alliances with sympathetic figures within the government and parliament. The key points of their demands are as follows:⁶³

- Reclaiming ownership of land that has been expropriated from local communities;
- Abolishing colonial-era decrees (Zahīrs);

⁶³ M.J., prominent leader of the Akal Coordination, interview conducted in Agadir, July 17, 2023.

- Halting the enforcement of Law 113.13, concerning pastoral transhumance and the regulation of pastoral lands;
- Curbing the proliferation of wild boars in the region;
- Promoting the rational exploitation of natural mineral resources and ensuring that local communities benefit from these resources.

Additionally, the Akal Coordination is fighting against the encroachment of the High Commission for Water and Forests, a government entity, on tribal lands without any dialogue or involvement of the local population and stakeholders. They are also calling for the repeal of the May 24, 1922 *Zahīr*, which is now being used by the High Commission for Water and Forests and the Land Registry Office to seize and register local land in favor of the state, despite the legal expiration of its mandate.

This tension reflects a historical conflict between the "Makhzen tribes,"⁶⁴ which aligned with the central authority, and the "Siba tribes,"⁶⁵ a term coined by the Makhzen (central authority) to undermine their status symbolically. These tribes operated outside the state's control at times, while they were under its protection at other times, particularly before the French protectorate. The Akal Coordination seeks to rekindle this historical

⁶⁴ Makhzen tribes refers to the Moroccan tribes loyal to the central authority, historically supporting the sultan in exchange for privileges such as land and influence. They played a key role in maintaining state control, contrasting with Siba tribes, who resisted central authority.

⁶⁵ Siba refers to regions or tribes in Moroccan history that were outside the control of the central authority, known as the Makhzen. Before the colonial period, these areas operated under local laws and customs, often in opposition to the central government. The term reflects historical tensions between the central state and peripheral tribes, particularly regarding land control and the imposition of authority.

struggle, albeit more subtly, by challenging the state's control over these lands in the regions historically associated with the Siba tribes.

As Michel Foucault famously said, "Where there is power, there is resistance," and this resistance, in his view, takes many forms, including protest.⁶⁶ This concept applies to the Akal Coordination, as it is part of a broader movement advocating for land and resource rights. However, this raises a paradox: while the Coordination's demands reflect a Marxist logic, focusing on the struggle over means of production and material wealth, the conflict is not purely class-based. Rather, it is a struggle between local communities defending their rights to land and resources and the state, along with its perceived allies (nomadic Arab herders) and government institutions, particularly the High Commission for Water and Forests and the Ministry of Agriculture.

This understanding is inferred from the statements of various actors we interviewed, who employed telling phrases in their remarks, suggesting that there is collusion between the Makhzen⁶⁷ (the central state) and what they

⁶⁶ Oblouch Mohamed, "Procedural Democracy and Protest Action in Morocco," *Ittijahat Siyasiyya (Political Trends) Journal*, no. 5 (August 2018): 147, Arab Democratic Center, Berlin, Germany, <https://cutt.us/gbEX0>.

⁶⁷ The period spanning the 16th to the 19th century witnessed intense conflict between certain Amazigh tribes, particularly the Ait Atta tribe, and the central authority, or Makhzen, in Morocco. At the height of the tribes' territorial expansion, the Alawite sultans, the reigning dynasty today, launched numerous military campaigns in the Tafilalet and Draa regions. According to the French historian Georges Spillmann, the unique nature of the Amazigh identity often clashed with the aspirations of the sultans. Spillmann notes that this "resentment" towards the tribes became a contributing factor to the cultural favoritism shown by the ruling authority towards Arab populations, at the expense of the Amazigh tribes. As Spillmann elaborates in his book *Ait Atta of the Desert and the Pacification of*

referred to as the "Arab nomadic gangs" or "Ajakane,"⁶⁸ aimed at dispossessing Amazigh lands. Such discourse indicates that we are dealing with a movement that consciously or subconsciously perceives the conflict through the lens of a "segmentary tribal logic" marked by ethnic and cultural expressions. Consequently, this coordination committee remains resolutely committed to its demand for the suspension of Law No. 113.13, concerning transhumance and the development of pastoral areas and rangelands.

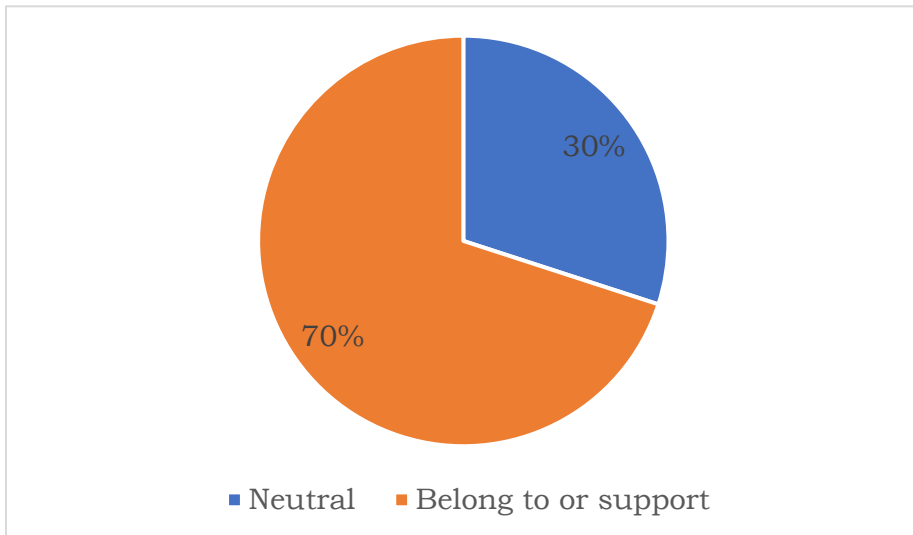
This phenomenon can also be explained by the pervasive and influential ideology of the Amazigh cultural movement within the Akal Coordination Committee. Our research revealed that 70% of the committee's members either belong to or express sympathy with this movement, according to the interviews we conducted with a sample of 10 male leaders from the coordination committee.⁶⁹

Afla N (which refers to Central Draa), this dynamic played a significant role in shaping the region's history. *ibid.*, p. 37.

⁶⁸ A derogatory term in the local Amazigh dialect of the Souss region, typically used to refer to Arab nomads, particularly Sahraouis. In turn, the nomads often use pejorative terms such as "Chleuh" or "Hammala" to describe the Amazigh people. These expressions carry similarly negative connotations.

⁶⁹ They requested that their identities remain undisclosed due to personal reasons.

Figur 1: The ideological background of the activists in the coordination committee.



Graphical chart created by the authors

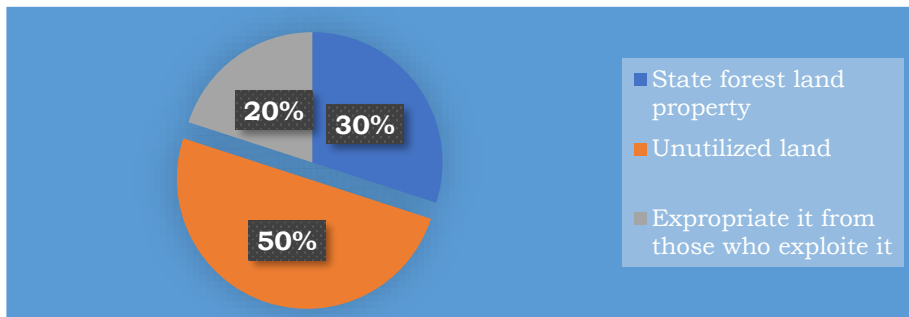
Figure 01 shows an ideological connection between the Akal Coordination activists and the Amazigh cultural movement, as reflected in the term "land detainees." This highlights the cultural significance of land, encompassing both ethnic and tribal identities.

Members of the Coordination view current land laws, which allow the transfer of collective lands to private individuals or the state, as continuations of colonial-era legal frameworks established by the French protectorate. They argue that these laws aimed to control lands through settlers and colonial collaborators, leading to their demand to abolish colonial decrees, which still influenced Morocco's property system.

However, interviews reveal a lack of consensus among Akal Coordination members on proposed legal alternatives. While they agree on reclaiming lands taken

from Amazigh tribes, the practicality of such reclamation is questionable due to challenges in identifying historical ownership and potential social unrest. This reclamation rhetoric is often linked to right-wing factions of the Amazigh cultural movement, advocating for concepts like a unified Amazigh land (Tamazgha) and the rejection of Arabic communication. Some Coordination members view land reclamation as placing unutilized lands under tribal control through state-supported cooperatives.

Figure 2: The concept of land reclamation as envisioned by some leaders of the coordination



Graphical chart created by the authors

Figure 02 shows that 50% of participants interpret "reclaiming the taken lands" as referring to currently unused lands, while 30% see it as state-owned forest lands. These participants believe these lands could aid local development if used for tribal cooperatives or opened to investors who contribute to regional development. However, 20% view "taken lands" as those historically transferred to Arab-speaking tribes, advocating their return to perceived original Amazigh owners. This group aligns with right-wing Amazigh nationalist ideology, which fosters exclusionary and divisive attitudes, as described by Amin Maalouf in "In the Name of Identity." Such views

promote fanaticism and discord by prioritizing specific identities over common civic belonging.⁷⁰

This inclination is particularly noticeable within certain factions of the Amazigh cultural movement in Moroccan universities, where there exists a relative margin of freedom. However, as one moves towards observing these groups within political parties or civil society organizations, their fervor tends to wane, either due to the majority's rejection of such extreme ethnic stances or the potential for those who openly express them to face suppression or imprisonment. Some interviewees disclosed that these radical positions are not publicly proclaimed primarily due to the subjective and objective conditions of these factions, which necessitate working covertly to instill such awareness among the grassroots, as expressed by certain research participants.⁷¹

Based on the above, it can be argued that the Akal Land Coordination Committee, which we have studied and which operates in the Greater Souss Plain, is largely influenced by the discourse of the Amazigh cultural movement, which asserts a narrative of Amazigh victimization. The Amazigh cultural movement gained prominence after the political, nationalist, leftist, and even Islamist ideologies failed to develop an inclusive democratic approach. Consequently, some Amazigh elites found their identity rooted in advocating for the cultural and linguistic rights of the Amazigh people during the 1970s and 1980s, a time when authoritarianism dominated the political sphere. This provided these elites with a margin of freedom to conduct their activities and solidify their message, as they were shielded from direct oversight until the 1990s

⁷⁰ *Trainer's Guide to Active Citizenship and Embracing Diversity*, supervised by Nayla Tabbara (Adyan Foundation, 2019), 11.

⁷¹ Interview with activist I. A., in the city of Agadir on July 20, 2023.

and the early 2000s when the space for new political values and ideals expanded.⁷² During this period, they began to link cultural advocacy with material demands, particularly the right to land.

Cultural organizations were instrumental in establishing coordination committees in Amazigh regions, with land rights becoming a central issue. The ideological alignment between the Amazigh movement and the Akal Coordination, as well as the Adrar Coordination (among others, which serve as examples in this study), highlights this connection. Through examining the positions of these coordination committees and the statements of Amazigh cultural organizations and associations, we observed significant ideological similarities. The Amazigh movement consistently frames itself as defending what it calls "the right to land and its resources." Thus, these coordination committees can be seen as both an objective and qualitative extension of the Amazigh cultural movement, particularly its right-wing factions.

In contrast, most members of the "Akal" coordination are conscious that the current phase necessitates a focus on realistic and actionable demands, particularly the right to benefit from unused lands, state-owned forest lands, and a share of underground resources. By pursuing these goals, they aim to win the support of the majority of the Amazigh tribes, especially as they stand to benefit from the development of these lands tangibly. Strategically, this approach could help shape a unified vision for the broader land issue.

However, despite the enthusiasm and even the fervor displayed by the leaders and grassroots of the "Akal"

⁷² James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: How the Subaltern Whispers Behind the Back of the Ruler*, trans. Ibrahim Al-Aris and Mikhael Khoury (Lebanon: Dar Al Saqi, n.d.), 10.

coordination, it faces several challenges. One notable issue is its inability to form a cohesive network with other Amazigh coordinations that also advocate for the right to exploit the land. These divisions stem from political conflicts and leadership rivalries, which have negatively impacted the coordination's overall effectiveness.

Observers of these movements can easily detect the extent of the rifts between "Akal" and other groups such as the "Adrar Coordination" and the "Azaghar Coordination," despite the shared focus on land rights and common demands. These differences are evident in their approaches, strategies, and unspoken objectives. For instance, the "Adrar Coordination" called for a protest on Saturday, August 17, 2019, in Agadir without coordinating with "Akal," which not only declined to participate but also organized its own demonstration the following day in Essaouira.

According to a portion of the research participants, the conflict between the two coordinations stems from conflicting interests among their leaders. Seventy percent of the respondents confirmed that the aspirations and agendas of the elites within these movements differ significantly, even clash at times. This prompted a deeper inquiry into the matter, revealing that around 80% of the coordination's leadership is employed in the public sector—teachers, professors, and municipal employees—while 10% are investors, and another 10% are unemployed university graduates.

This leadership core has influenced the stances of the coordination. The majority of public sector workers advocated for cooperating with official political parties and entering negotiations with a reformist, conciliatory tone, which they considered a form of resistance through strategy. However, it became evident that some of these

individuals had benefited from positions of authority or employment within ministerial offices. On the other hand, after aligning themselves with the state's discourse, a portion of the 10% who are freelancers also received certain privileges. Meanwhile, among the 10% of university graduates, some joined official party narratives and secured employment or state-backed support through income-generating projects, while others withdrew after finding themselves part of a minority that was increasingly sidelined by the majority, especially as the current political environment has not been favorable to their ambitions, according to some respondents.

Morocco's administrative parties, notably the National Rally of Independents (RNI) led by Prime Minister Aziz Akhannouch, have successfully curtailed the influence of the Akal coordination. They achieved this by guiding the coordination towards re-establishing itself as a formal organization within legal parameters, thus gaining greater control. The strained state-coordination relationship, marked by arrests and prosecutions, has reinforced this control. Simultaneously, the state has empowered loyal local organizations, positioning them as civil society representatives and partnering with them to transfer land ownership to the state or private actors. This strategy has effectively isolated the coordination, hindering its ability to mobilize local communities.

Conclusion

The study reveals that land conflicts between the state and tribes in Morocco, though subtle, highlight the significant role of Amazigh coordination committees. These committees blend traditional tribal values and modern activism, profoundly influencing the collective consciousness through socialization and state actions post-independence. However, the state's governance and

political failures have strengthened tribal identities and created tension, particularly around land ownership.

Additionally, these movements have shifted focus from broad human rights issues to everyday citizen concerns, addressing contemporary issues like gender, environment, values, and cultural identity. They advocate for collective tribal ownership of land, challenging state policies that classify traditional tribal lands as public forest domains.

To address these issues, the state should officially acknowledge past harms to tribal groups and promote reconciliation, develop comprehensive legal frameworks recognizing tribal rights, foster inclusive policy-making processes, implement sustainable development policies, and increase public awareness and understanding of tribal histories and rights. These steps can help bridge the gap between modern state policies and traditional tribal rights, fostering a more just and inclusive society in Morocco.

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