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The Journal of African History, Vol. 21, No. 2. (1980), pp. 235-253.

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BŪ ḤIMĀRA'S EUROPEAN CONNEXION: THE COMMERCIAL RELATIONS OF A MOROCCAN WARLORD

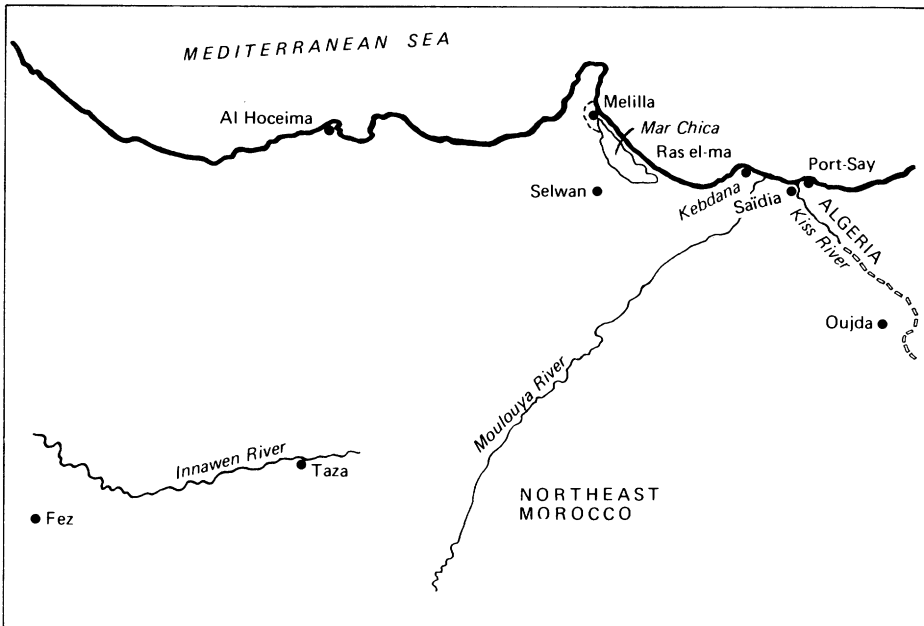
BY ROSS E. DUNN

DURING the course of the nineteenth century, the government of Morocco undertook to reform and modernize its central institutions in the face of growing political and economic pressures from the West. The most critical task facing the government, or makhzan, was to extend its range of control over the countryside and thereby more effectively tax the rural populations. The makhzan's drive toward military and administrative centralization, however, was frustrated not only by the tenacious resistance of political and religious elites in the country's heartland but also by the rise of regional strong men in peripheral areas who carved out what amounted to autonomous principalities. The most important of these figures in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were Madanī al Glawī, 'Abd al-Malik al-Mtuggī and Tayyib al-Gundafī in the High Atlas; Aḥmad al-Raysūnī in the mountains south of Tangier; and Bū Ḥimāra in the Northeast.

The emergence of these regional centres of power was in large measure a consequence of the sultan's inability to control or restrict the flow of firearms to the rural populations. The principal sources of guns in the countryside were a flourishing international contraband trade along remote stretches of the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts and an internal traffic carried on by corrupt officials and army personnel and even by the government itself, when the need to secure tribal alliances called for it. All the regional chieftains had steady access to supplies of modern rifles that were at least equal if not superior in quality to those in the makhzan arsenal. Moreover, these men were capable of exercising a tighter control over the distribution of arms in their areas than the sultan could in the country at large. Therefore, they were in a favourable position to undertake centralizing campaigns of their own in remote and mountainous areas beyond the reach of any but the most costly makhzan expeditions. The existence of these quasi-states within the Moroccan kingdom on the one hand tended to stabilize the political situation in particular areas of the country at a time of rapid social and economic change. On the other hand it severely undermined the centralizing mission of the makhzan and ultimately hastened the day of European occupation.

The regional paramouncy of Bū Ḥimāra, whom one European observer described as 'the most weakening of all the ulcer-like complications in Morocco',¹ lasted from 1903 to 1909, spanning one of the most critical periods in the country's long drift into colonial dependency. Of all the regional chieftains of the time, Bū Ḥimāra, who controlled stretches of the Mediterranean coast as well as territory adjoining the Spanish Presidio of Melilla, had the most direct access to contraband firearms and to other forms of potential external support. Something of a cloud of mystery has surrounded his connexions with foreigners, especially regarding the question

¹ FO 174/270, Macleod to Gray, 5 Aug. 1909, no. 28.



of clandestine European aid. Did Bū Ḥimāra's political dominion have its base in the popular support of the tribes, or was it sustained by outsiders with imperialist aims of their own? This article will examine Bū Ḥimāra's links with foreign trade and with European commercial interests and assess their role in prolonging his seven years of dissidence.²

The career of Jilālī ibn Idrīs al-Zarhūnī al-Yūsufī, alias Bū Ḥimāra, or al-Rūgī (the pretender), has been described by several writers in the context of the rural rebellion which erupted in northeastern Morocco in the fall of 1902.³ This rising, which centred among the pastoral tribes around Taza, a provincial town located 120 kilometres east of the imperial city of Fez, was the first in a succession of tumultuous political and economic crises which marked Morocco's final decade of freedom from formal European control. It was also the most violent expression of popular opposition to the

² This paper is based largely on research in four principal archival collections: Archives du Ministère de la Guerre, Section d'Afrique et d'Outre-Mer, Vincennes (hereafter AMG); Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Maroc Nouvelle Série, Paris (hereafter AMAE, n.s.); Archives Nationales, Section Outre-Mer, Gouvernement Général de l'Algérie, Aix-en-Provence (hereafter AGGA); Public Record Office, Foreign Office Political Correspondence, London (hereafter FO). This research was supported by grants from the Social Science Research Council in 1971–2 and from San Diego State University Foundation in 1974–5. All translations from French are mine unless otherwise noted.

³ The principal narrative accounts of Bū Ḥimāra's career are: Edoardo Maldonado, *El Rogui* (Tetouan, 1952); A. Maitrot de la Motte-Capron, 'Le Roghi', *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie d'Alger* (1929), 514–76; Luis Jiminez Benhamu, 'Bu-Hamara', *Conferencias Desarrolladas en la Academia de Interventores durante el Curso de 1948* (Tetouan, 1949), 157–215. Also see Louis Arnaud, *Au Temps des Mehallas ou le Maroc de 1860 à 1912* (Casablanca, 1952); Eugène Aubin, *Le Maroc d'aujourd'hui*, 8th ed. (Paris, 1912); 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Zaydān, *Ithāf a'lām al-nās bi jamāl akhbār hāqirat mikhās* (Rabat, 1930).

government's first major reform plan, a programme to reorganize radically the country's fiscal and tax-gathering system. Although the rebellion never came within shooting distance of the walls of Fez, Sultan Mawlay 'Abd al-'Azīz (1894–1908) was obliged to expend large sums to undertake a military counter-offensive, which dragged on for several months without conclusive victory. By the spring of 1903 it was evident that the insurrection had severely damaged the sultan's prestige, wrecked the fiscal reform plan, and drained the makhzan treasury. Moreover, the government's manifest inability to establish law and order in an area but a few days' march from Fez served to encourage potential rebels in other parts of the country and to confirm the opinion of the European powers, notably France, that Morocco was incapable of seeing to its own administrative and military reformation.⁴

Bū Ḥimāra was a native of an Arabic-speaking clan of the Jabal Zarhun region north of the city of Meknes. Emerging from an obscure background as a minor makhzan official and a sometime visitor to French Algeria, he falsely declared himself to be Mawlay Muḥammad, older brother of 'Abd al-'Azīz and rightful claimant to the Sharifian throne. Though the rebel leader's true identity was no secret to his principal followers for long, the rhetoric of pretendership, stressing the reigning sultan's failure to defend the community of believers against foreign encroachments and innovations, proved to be an effective ideological principle for rallying popular support. Between November 1902 and March 1903, Bū Ḥimāra successfully organized a coalition of both Arab and Berber tribes, which routed a sizable makhzan army (22 December), incited panic in Fez, and drew applause from other parts of the country. During its first six months the rising had the character of a mass popular protest, following a pattern of rural resistance to government interference having deep roots in Moroccan history.⁵

The dissidence of Bū Ḥimāra and his partisans continued for another six years, until the pretender's capture and execution at the hands of Sultan Mawlay 'Abd al-Ḥafīz (1908–12) in the summer of 1909. But during these years, the movement had a character quite distinct from the first explosive months. By March 1903 the revolutionary zeal of the Taza rising was sputtering out, and the military struggle dissipating in a succession of desultory skirmishes between government forces and tribal bands. Bū Ḥimāra left Taza that month and in April established a base at Selwan, a small fort in the Eastern Rif a few miles south of the Melilla Presidio. Although Taza remained free of makhzan military occupation except for a few months in 1903 (July through November) and at least theoretically under Bū Ḥimāra's control until the end of his career, the tribal coalition of the first months never formed up again and virtually no fighting took place in the region after 1903. Bū Ḥimāra startled the government in June 1903 by seizing the important Algero-Moroccan frontier town of Oujda. But the occupation lasted only

⁴ The general significance of the revolt in Morocco's political history is discussed in Edmund Burke III, *Prelude to Protectorate in Morocco: Precolonial Protest and Resistance, 1860–1912* (Chicago, 1976), 62–5; Pierre Guillen, *L'Allemagne et le Maroc de 1870 à 1905* (Paris, 1967), 619–21; and Abdallah Laroui, *Les Origines sociales et culturelles du nationalisme marocain* (Paris, 1977), 354–67.

⁵ I have discussed the causes of the revolt and the significance of its early phase in another article, 'The Bu Himara Rebellion in Northeast Morocco: Phase I', forthcoming in *Middle Eastern Studies*.

through the summer, and it threatened 'Abd al-'Azīz far less than the events around Taza.

From then until 1909 the Rūgī's confrontations with the government took the form of sporadic, usually small-scale, and decidedly defensive clashes in the vicinity of Oujda, along the banks of the lower Moulouya River and, to a lesser extent, in the area south of Melilla. At the same time he established a petty state apparatus whose capital from the autumn of 1905 was Selwan. The territorial frontiers of this principality expanded and shrank with recurring shifts in the balance of force exercised by the Rūgī's partisans, the makhzan, and the several Arab and Berber tribes of the region, who fell in first with one side, then with the other. Thus, Bū Ḥimāra *qua* Mawlay Muḥammad, the fearsome and quasimessianic leader of the Taza rising, settled quickly into the role of regional strong man. The ideological foundation of his leadership required that he play the Mawlay Muḥammad charade and maintain the forms and ceremonies of a rival makhzan court to the end of his career.⁶ But though his claim to the throne and his defiance of government columns obliged the government to persist in its efforts to eliminate him, he never again posed a serious threat to Fez.

The long run of the Bū Ḥimāra episode, then, may be viewed as an example of turn-of-the-century political adventurism as well as an expression of traditional rural protest. Bū Ḥimāra, al-Raysūnī, and the High Atlas chieftains may be distinguished from ordinary tribal *shaykhs* and the leaders of ad hoc alliances and resistance movements in rural Morocco in terms of their efforts to create and defend a rudimentary state and tax-gathering structure in defiance of the central government. The essential difference between Bū Ḥimāra and the other regional strong men was in his political relationship to the makhzan. As long as he upheld the standard of pretendership the government could not compromise with him the way it did with al-Raysūnī, al-Glawī, and the others. 'Abd al-'Azīz, following the practice of his father, Mawlay al-Ḥasan I (1873–94), distributed arms and awarded official titles and special tax-gathering privileges to the Atlas lords in return for political and military services. Mawlay 'Abd al-Ḥafīz brought al-Glawī and al-Mtuggī into his central administration and gave al-Raysūnī guns and a provincial governorship in return for a promise to collect taxes in the Northwest. Bū Ḥimāra, however, was an embarrassment to the dynasty, an ideological sore thumb which exposed the debilities of the makhzan before the European powers as no other problem did.

Regional warlords were more likely to succeed in building power and wealth in marginal areas of the country because they were effectively beyond the reach of the army yet had the same access as it did to the new weapons technology of the later nineteenth century. This power was nonetheless precarious, since it rested, not on formally sanctioned political institutions, but on the leader's capacity to command a personal following. In Moroccan tribal politics, where institutions of central authority were usually lacking, the exercise of leadership was extremely fluid and unstable and depended largely on the individual's ability to advance the interests of his followers from one day to the next. A man could be expected to maintain his power only in so far as he could control substantial resources – money, guns, food, livestock, fighting men – and distribute them judiciously among his clients.

⁶ 'Abd al-'Azīz had the real Mawlay Muḥammad under detention in Meknes, a fact well known to most Moroccans.

The warlords of the Moroccan periphery were all men who succeeded in organizing relatively larger and more efficient patrimonial systems than could chiefs and notables in the heartland, who were more vulnerable to the interventions of the government.

The Rūgī's specifically internal resources consisted of taxes levied on submitted tribes, local market fees, fines imposed on criminals and recalcitrant tribal groups, ransoms, voluntary contributions and contingents of warriors, and booty taken in raids and battles. It is unlikely, however, that these revenues were sufficient to satisfy the material demands of his 'makhzan' and his chief tribal partisans, to maintain a 'royal household' up to creditable standards, and to arm and outfit the small regular army that stood behind him when tribal bands had gone home to tend their lands and flocks.⁷ The Northeast was the poorest region of the country north of the Atlas, and it was after all to escape the threat of government taxation that most were attracted to the Rūgī's cause in the first place. There is furthermore little indication that he ever succeeded in founding a truly effective, stable system of local administration and tax collection beyond the immediate area of Selwan. In this respect his organization may be contrasted with that of the chieftains of the High Atlas, who destroyed local power centres over wide areas, constructed networks of fortresses, and installed a hierarchy of officials throughout their domain to collect taxes from the population.⁸ Bū Ḥimāra did not build subsidiary forts (though he occupied a few minor makhzan posts), he did not create an extensive local administration of *qā'ids* and *khalīfas*, and the populations under his direct influence shifted frequently. After he abandoned attacks on makhzan forces around Oujda in mid-1905 and settled more or less definitively at Selwan, the flow of booty and voluntary tribal contributions in men and money began to decline. Perhaps in direct response to this he began early in 1906 to send out armed tax-gathering expeditions, particularly to the south and west of Selwan, where there was little risk of makhzan intervention.⁹ But these expeditions were only sporadically carried out and were not followed up by the installation of permanent administration. They almost certainly cost Bū Ḥimāra more in popular support and sympathy than they gained him in revenue. It was indeed the disastrous military defeat of one of these columns at the hands of the Aith Waryaghar in the central Rif in September 1908 that precipitated his rapid descent from power.¹⁰

⁷ Maitrot de la Motte-Capron ('Le Roghi', 560, 567) supports this point.

⁸ See Robert Montagne, *Les Berbères et le Makhzen dans le sud du Maroc* (Paris, 1930), 341-347.

⁹ Two 1904 reports from European observers suggest that at that time Bū Ḥimāra did not levy taxes at all but was dependent on fines, ransoms, gifts, booty, and customs duties. FO 174/265, James Macleod (British Consul at Fez) to White, 17 July 1904, no. 32; and AMG, C16, Rappports du Commandant Labry, 18 Feb. 1904 (This is a report second hand from Dr Gieurre, a French Algerian physician who went to the Rūgī's camp to tend a shoulder wound he had received in a skirmish.) In 1906 Macleod reported that Bū Ḥimāra was attempting for the first time to raise large sums of money by taxing the tribes under his sway. FO 174/267, Macleod to Lowther, 30 April 1906, no. 12; and 10 May 1906, no. 17. A French report the same year noted that numerous people were taking ship at Melilla for Algeria to escape the Rūgī's tax exactions. AMG, C16, Fariau (French military mission in Morocco) to Min. of War, 10 Feb. 1906, no. 144.

¹⁰ This battle is recounted in detail from the Aith Waryaghar point of view in David Montgomery Hart, *The Aith Waryaghar of the Moroccan Rif* (Tucson, Arizona, 1976), 361-8.

The creation of a rudimentary government and a regular army numbering at different times from 400 to 1500 men is not alone sufficient to explain Bū Ḥimāra's endurance as a regional power for more than six years. Rather the enterprise was viable only because of a number of external resources upon which the Rūgī appears to have become increasingly dependent as popular interest in the 'Mawlay Muḥammad' cause withered, especially after 1905. These additional sources of wealth and power will be considered in turn: taxation of foreign trade (which was in a sense both an internal and an external resource), importation of firearms, commercial dealings with Europeans, and mining concessions.¹¹

Customs Revenue

As soon as Bū Ḥimāra's forces occupied the Selwan area in April 1903, they began to collect customs duties at a post near the Melilla frontier just as makhzan officials had been doing before being chased away. It is conceivable, in fact, that Bū Ḥimāra deliberately established a base at Selwan before carrying his revolt from Taza to Oujda in order to tax trade moving in and out of Morocco through the Presidio. His customs appears to have operated steadily from 1903 to the end of 1908. Sometime after 1903 a second post was set up at another border crossing-point. Each was under the supervision of an *amīn* appointed by the Rūgī.¹² The makhzan had previously collected a 10 per cent *ad valorem* duty at its station.¹³ Bū Ḥimāra's men continued this practice, though perhaps erratically. The French journalist Reginald Kahn, who was with Bū Ḥimāra in the summer of 1903, estimated revenue from customs to be 10,000 francs a month.¹⁴ Maitrot de la Motte-Capron has suggested 15,000.¹⁵ These figures, if near to being accurate, would represent an annual revenue far inferior to what was being collected in the major Atlantic ports of Morocco during the same period. Nonetheless, a number of contemporary observers affirmed that the Melilla customs constituted, at least until 1906, the Rūgī's principal source of income.¹⁶

In seizing control of Melilla's landward gateways, Bū Ḥimāra was without doubt aware of the considerable commercial importance of the Presidio and the trade routes converging on it. During the later nineteenth century, Melilla had become the most active point of entry for European imports sold in northeastern Morocco, far surpassing either Fez in the west or Oujda near the Algerian frontier. In earlier times the main commercial artery through the region had been the route connecting Fez with Algeria by way of Taza and Oujda. But long-distance traffic on that route declined in the later

¹¹ The history of Bū Ḥimāra's political contacts with the governments of France and Spain are the subject of a separate article.

¹² AMAE, n.s. 168, Prefect of Oran to Gov. Gen., 12 Dec. 1905. FO 174/267, Macleod to White, 31 Oct. 1906, no. 53.

¹³ Camille Fidel, 'Notes sur l'influence espagnole au Maroc', *Renseignements Coloniaux* (hereafter *Ren. Col.*), no. 11, 1904, p. 297. Augustin Bernard, *Les Confins algéro-marocains* (Paris, 1911), 321.

¹⁴ R. Clensault [Reginald Kahn], 'L'Armée du Prétendant marocain', *Le Figaro*, 2 Oct. 1903.

¹⁵ Maitrot de la Motte-Capron, 'Le Roghi', 522, 566.

¹⁶ AMG, C16, Rapports du Com. de Labry, 18 Feb. 1904. FO 174/267, Macleod to White, 31 Oct. 1906, no. 53. Clensault, 'L'Armée du Prétendant'. Also Maldonado, *El Rogui*, 163.

nineteenth century. One reason was the consistently high price of European wares entering the region through either Fez or the Algerian border. High import duties and port taxes were imposed in Oran which raised the price of goods far above those current in the Atlantic ports or the Spanish presidios. At Fez the price of European merchandise was inflated by heavy transport costs from the coast. Moreover, in 1884 Spain began permitting a variety of wares to enter Morocco duty free at Melilla. In response, merchants and caravaners, not only from the Northeast but from all eastern Morocco as far south as the Sahara, travelled to Melilla in much greater numbers to buy tea, sugar, coffee, textiles, candles, flour, and other European imports.¹⁷ Trade volume through the presidio increased from less than 1 million pesetas in 1880 to 11 million in 1903.¹⁸

Melilla's leading position remained essentially unchanged during the first decade of the twentieth century, permitting Bū Ḥimāra to derive an income from the flow of trade that was relatively steady if by no means sufficient to meet the needs of his army and administration. Between 1903 and 1907 the total value of Melilla's trade declined slightly each year owing to a series of bad harvests and the general state of turbulence in the region.¹⁹ But it still remained high relative to import trade through Fez or Oujda. Because of the continuing dissidence of the tribes around Taza, commerce between Fez and the Northeast was cut off almost entirely until as late as 1915.²⁰ The Taza-Melilla route, on the other hand, remained open and relatively tranquil under Bū Ḥimāra's protection.²¹ The market at Oujda, where imports arriving from Algeria were exchanged, remained in the doldrums owing to the protracted skirmishing in the area, in addition to bad harvests and the unfavourable price situation relative to Melilla. Even after the French army occupied the city in March 1907, bringing political stability and improved communications between there and the frontier, the value of import trade increased only very slowly in subsequent years, again because of the Spanish price advantage.²² Oujda, as well as the garrison and market town of Marnia on the Algerian side of the border, profited from local Moroccan export trade, predominantly in sheep and cattle, far more than did Melilla, where export traffic was minor. But the value of exports from the region was not nearly great enough to offset Melilla's domination of import trade.²³

¹⁷ Jean-Louis Miège, *Le Maroc et l'Europe*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1961-3), III, 69-73, IV, 222, 223. Edouard Déchaud, *Le Commerce algéro-marocain* (Algiers, 1906), 14-26. Bernard, *Confins*, 278-282, 316-326.

¹⁸ Bernard, *Confins*, 318.

¹⁹ AGGA, 30H. 58, French Consul at Malaga to Min. of For. Af., April 1909, no. 45. The Consul also noted that some of Melilla's trade was being diverted to the smaller Spanish enclaves on the Rifian coast (Alhucemas, Peñon de la Gomera, and the Zaffarine Islands) where Moroccan buyers could avoid all fees and duties, Spanish or Moroccan. Also Bernard, *Confins*, 318.

²⁰ AMG, D5, Min. of For. Aff. to Min. of War, 7 Sept. 1909, no. 928. Charles-René Leclerc, 'Le commerce et l'industrie à Fes', *Ren. Col.*, no. 7, July 1905 p. 231. Commercial activity between Fez and the Algerian frontier remained largely blocked until the French occupied Taza in 1915.

²¹ FO 174/264, Macleod to Nicolson, 13 Mar. 1903, no. 34; 12 April 1903, no. 42; 15 Aug. 1903; 174/267, Macleod to White, 20 Sept. 1906, no. 45. AMG, C16, Rapports du Com. de Labry, 18 Feb. 1904.

²² Lt. Mougín, 'La crise commerciale des marchés franco-marocains', *Ren. Col.*, no. 9, 1908, p. 190. Bernard, *Confins*, 284, 291-7.

²³ Even on the frontier livestock trade declined considerably during the rebellion, picking up again only in 1908. Camille Fidel, 'Le Commerce du Maroc oriental', *Ren.*

IMPORTATION OF FIREARMS

During the second half of the nineteenth century, Europe achieved a rapid series of advances in firearms technology. As new firing systems and weapon designs were introduced to European armies, surplus obsolete models were dumped on non-Western markets. On result was that weapons technology improved in African and Asian states during this period, but it remained one or two steps behind European capability. During the period of the New Imperialism, many African states were well armed with modern breech-loaders, but they seldom had repeating rifles in quantity or any of the machine guns and portable artillery that won so many battles for European forces in the 1890s and 1900s.²⁴ The nineteenth-century Moroccan historian Aḥmad al-Nāṣirī al-Salāwī understood this 'technology gap' very well:

Our weapons are but firewood in their [the Europeans'] eyes. The proof of this is that they sell us various kinds of military weapons whose excellence and perfection astonish us. Yet we are told that they sell us only those things for which they have no use, for they have gone beyond them, invented things even more excellent and valuable. . . They have now reached an unimagined extent of power.²⁵

Morocco's purchases of European surplus and trade guns, which ran into the tens of thousands of rifles in the later nineteenth century, might have served the makhzan's centralizing policies were it not that the same types of guns were readily accessible to the tribes and to aspiring regional lords. Owing largely to coastal contraband trade, which intensified as European factories churned out guns for the non-Western market, the makhzan was not able to achieve technological superiority in armaments over potentially dissident elements of its own population. In the later nineteenth century, illicit arms traffic was most active along remote stretches of the Rifian coast where no makhzan garrisons or customs agents were present to interfere. Europeans of various nationalities took part in gunrunning, often, it was widely reported, in collaboration with military authorities in Melilla or the smaller Spanish enclaves along the coast.²⁶ The Rifian tribes had first pick of these weapons, but the trade was of such proportions toward the end of the century that quantities of guns were traded inland, even to the fringes of the Sahara.²⁷

Col., no. 7, 1904, 178, 179. Fidel, 'Notes sur l'influence espagnol', 297. Dechaud, *Le Commerce algéro-marocain*, 30, 90, 91. Bernard, *Confins*, 288, 289, 319. It should be noted that the dominance of Melilla over Algeria was not synonymous with the dominance of Spanish trade over French. Goods of French origin, notably sugar and flour, accounted for the highest percentage of total trade through Melilla during the Bū Ḥimāra period, with British products coming in second over Spain. This situation reflected the overall decline of Spanish trade into Morocco relative to the other major European countries during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See Fidel, 'Notes sur l'influence espagnole', 293-301; Bernard, *Confins*, 318-320; and Miège, *Le Maroc et l'Europe*, IV, 224-227.

²⁴ See Gavin White, 'Firearms in Africa: An introduction', *J. Afr. Hist.*, 12 (1971), 173-184.

²⁵ Quoted in Kenneth L. Brown, *People of Salé: Tradition and Change in a Moroccan City, 1830-1930* (Manchester, 1976), 183. Brown's translation.

²⁶ Miège, *Le Maroc et l'Europe*, IV, 106, 222.

²⁷ On the firearms trade in southeastern Morocco during this period see Ross E. Dunn, *Resistance in the Desert: Moroccan Responses to French Imperialism, 1881-1912* (London and Madison, Wisconsin, 1977), 125-9. Also see Germain Ayache, 'Société rifaine et pouvoir central marocain (1850-1920)', *Revue Historique* (1975), 345-370.

When Bū Ḥimāra occupied Selwan in April 1903, he was putting himself in a position to tap supplies of contraband arms at the coast rather than having to depend on the interior trade as he would have had he remained in Taza. During his rule he periodically purchased rifles and ammunition directly from European suppliers or indirectly through Rifian coastal agents, who handled trade to eastern Morocco in general. Arms shipments were sent to the coast from various European cities, most notably from Liège, which in the late nineteenth century had become the leading production centre of arms for African markets.²⁸ Among the many Europeans involved in the trade, the Tosso brothers of Gibraltar were particularly well known for running guns to the territory of the Kibdana Berbers east of Melilla.²⁹ Although the Spanish officially denied it, there is no doubt that military officers and other residents of Melilla were deeply involved in arms sales to the Rūgī and the Rifian tribes. According to an intelligence report from the prefecture of Oran, Bū Ḥimāra frequently deposited funds with merchants in Melilla, who then paid European suppliers after the guns were delivered at some point on the coast.³⁰

Some of the rifles in the Rūgī's arsenal even originated in the makhzan army. In addition to those captured during battles and skirmishes, rifles were acquired indirectly from makhzan soldiers and tribal contingents who sold their government issue privately, sometimes in order to buy food. This practice was in fact common whenever makhzan columns ventured far from the cities. In 1905 the Governor General of Algeria complained that some of the rifles the French were transporting to the Moroccan army at Oujda through Algerian ports were ultimately falling into Bū Ḥimāra's hands. Makhzan soldiers would sell their guns to Banī Znasan tribesmen, who lived in the area north of Oujda. Agents from the Kibdana region would then buy them at Banī Znasan weekly markets and in turn offer them to representatives of the Rūgī.³¹

Although muzzle-loading guns were still in wide use in rural Morocco at the turn of the century, the pretender's forces, including both his small regular army and the tribal bands which joined up periodically, were armed almost entirely with modern rifles. Most of these were single-shot breech-loaders. The most common model was the American-made 1860 Remington; others in use were the French 1866 Chassepôt and 1874 Gras, the British 1871 Martini-Henry, and the German 1877 Mauser. Magazine repeating rifles were less common, but they appear to have turned up in greater numbers from about 1907. These included the British 1888 Lee-Netford, the 1888 Spanish Mauser, the 1873 American Winchester, and, most prized of all, the French

²⁸ White, 'Firearms in Africa', 182.

²⁹ FO 174/277, British Envoy at Gibraltar to Nicolson, Feb. 22, 1903. AMG, C16, Min. of France at Lisbon to Delcassé, Jan. 26, 1905; C18, Prefect of Oran to Gov. Gen., 19 Dec. 1905, no. 11416.

³⁰ AMAE, n.s. 168, Prefect of Oran to Gov. Gen., 12 Dec. 1905. The numerous documents in the French foreign affairs and military archives which attest to Spanish complicity in the arms trade must be treated cautiously, owing, if nothing else, to their strong negative tone concerning Spanish influence in northeastern Morocco. Spanish involvement in contraband, however, had been reported by European observers over a period of many years prior to Bū Ḥimāra's appearance. The abundance of modern rifles among the Rūgī's partisans, including in later years large numbers of 1888 model Spanish Mausers, is perhaps the best evidence of Spanish complicity.

³¹ AMG, C18, Gov. Gen. to Min. of War, 11 April 1905, no. 462.

1888 Lebel, which fired bullets with 'smokeless' powder. Lebel, which were rare among the tribes of the Northeast, were acquired mainly as a by-product of fighting with French forces on the Saharan frontier. The pretender himself was known to carry a Winchester.³²

The Rūgī's arsenal also included a small number of artillery pieces and machine-guns. Contemporary accounts vary greatly as to the number and type of these weapons. The rebels captured two or three mountain guns in the summer of 1903.³³ In early 1906 Bū Ḥimāra purchased two Nordenfeldt rapid-fire cannons.³⁴

Because of his access to the remote Mediterranean coast, Bū Ḥimāra almost certainly enjoyed a steadier supply of modern firearms than any of the other regional warlords of the time.³⁵ But precisely what part guns played in the success and endurance of his hegemony over part of the Northeast is difficult to determine in relation to other factors. Only some tentative suggestions can be made concerning the role of firearms in the balance of power between Bū Ḥimāra and the makhzan army or the tribes of the greater Northeast.

After the initial clashes between the rebels and makhzan forces west of Taza in late 1902 and early 1903, almost no large-scale battles were joined. Except for a series of half-hearted thrusts in the environs of Oujda between 1903 and 1905, Bū Ḥimāra's strategy was aimed at defending territory under his control, extending it slightly whenever possible, and harassing makhzan columns in order to seize guns and other booty. His armaments were definitely equal to this policy largely because the makhzan soldiers were armed with the same sorts of single shot breech-loading weapons as his own partisans. Although the government side had greater numbers of armed men, it suffered some disadvantages. Its troops were poorly motivated and trained, they did not know the countryside as well as the dissidents, and their commanders (who were invariably makhzan officials or members of the royal family) were usually more interested in turning a personal profit from the struggle than winning it.³⁶ Given these conditions, Bū Ḥimāra's strength in

³² FO 174/263, Statement of Mohammed ben Abbas al-Rahmoui al-Burnusi to Vice-Consul Macleod, 18 July 1903. Clensault, 'L'Armée du Prétendant'. The French army at Oujda reported in 1908 that Bū Ḥimāra had a 'personal reserve' of 350 Lee-Metfords, 250 Mausers, and a few Gras, Remingtons, and Martinis. AMG, D4, Gen. Lyautey to Gov. Gen., 17 Nov. 1908, no. 1110.

³³ FO 99/396, Harry Maclean to Nicolson, 25 Dec. 1902. AMG, C18, Gov. Gen. to Min. of War, 23 Jan. 1906, no. 185 (report on a visit to Selwan by Ben Aouda ben Daoud, a Muslim from Oran). Jean de Taillis, *Le Maroc pittoresque* (Paris, 1905), 70. Clensault, 'L'Armée du Prétendant'.

³⁴ AMAE, n.s. 168, Min. of For. Aff. to Chargé d'Affaires, Tanger, 31 Jan. 1906, no. 25; n.s. 169, Gov. Gen. to Min. of For. Aff., 11 Feb., no. 372; AMG, Rapport du Capt. Ben Khouty, 14 Feb. 1908. Jean Rodès, 'Le Prétendant Moulay Mohamed', *L'Eclair*, 25 Feb. 1906.

³⁵ On the importance of firearms in the rise of Madanī al-Glawī, see Montagne *Les Berbères et le Makhzen*, 332, 335, 336.

³⁶ The rickety state of the Moroccan army in the field during this period is well known. A member of the French military mission remarked in 1905 that the makhzan could have captured Bū Ḥimāra a number of times but that 'the Moroccan commanders have too great an interest in prolonging a situation which brings them large profits through their exactions on the expenditures for maintaining the numerous soldiers sent from the interior. Moreover, there exists a great rivalry among them which favours the absence of a commander-in-chief.' AMG, C15, Fariau to Min. of War, 1 Aug. 1905, no. 117.

modern rifles was more than enough to discourage the makhzan commanders from venturing any but the most cautious offensive actions. Between May 1907 and January 1908, a makhzan column even camped on the beach about 30 kilometres from Selwan. Yet it did nothing more than make a half-serious attack on one of the Rūgī's customs posts and finally withdrew into Melilla with its soldiers in a state of semi-starvation.³⁷ Though both sides in the struggle possessed limited artillery and machine guns (the makhzan more than Bū Ḥimāra), there is no evidence that these potentially more destructive weapons had any significant effect on the balance of power. The makhzan army was poorly trained in firing and manoeuvring these weapons, Bū Ḥimāra's forces were not trained at all. On the few occasions where government artillery was used effectively in dispersing rebel bands, the guns were directed by members of the French military mission accompanying the army.³⁸

In his relations with the tribes, Bū Ḥimāra's success at standing off and frequently harassing makhzan forces helped preserve his prestige after the Taza phase of the revolt was over. His direct access to stretches of coastline meant that he could exercise some influence over the distribution of arms to the tribes around Selwan, but the net of his authority was not nearly wide enough to control arms importation into the Rif, and therefore he could never get a clear military edge over the tribes beyond either his field camp or the general area of Selwan. In other words, he was no more able to achieve arms superiority over the populations of the greater Northeast than the makhzan could over him. When his popularity began to decline in 1906, his failure to widen the rifle gap in his favour became more apparent. The most decisive example of this was the defeat of his expedition in September 1908 at the hands of the Aith Waryaghar in the central Rif. This tribe controlled part of the coast too and were probably among the best armed warriors in the entire country. In short, the intensity of the international arms traffic, which no authority at any level could effectively control, contributed greatly to the instability and fluidity of political power in the Northeast during this period.

Relations with Algerian Businessmen

Bū Ḥimāra's dealings with European businessmen must be viewed in relation to the broader issue of Franco-Algerian commercial penetration of eastern Morocco. The Oran business community, led by the Chamber of Commerce, had throughout the second half of the nineteenth century pressed for expansion of trade across the frontier.³⁹ The rise of Melilla in the 1880s as the principal port of entry for northeastern Morocco caused them no end of frustration and drew them closer to those elements in the European settler

³⁷ FO 174/268, Macleod to Lowther, 5 Sept. 1907, no. 88. AGGA, 30H. 54, Reibell to Commander Division of Oran, 1 Oct. 1907. AMAE, n.s. 239, Saint Aulaire to Min. of For. Aff., 12 Jan. 1908, no. 18.

³⁸ This was the case in a fight near the walls of Oujda in April 1905. AMG, C15, Fariou to Min. of War, 1 Mar. 1905, no. 86. The military mission also directed artillery in the final battles with the Rūgī in 1909. AMG, C22, Mangin to Min. of War, 23 Aug. 1909, no. 79. FO 174/270, Macleod to Gray, 16 Aug. 1909, no. 29.

³⁹ See Déchaud, *Le-Commerce algér-marocain*. Déchaud was Secretary of the Oran Chamber of Commerce, and his book was published by the Comité Oranais du Maroc.

community and the French army urging a more aggressive national policy in the frontier zone.

Overland trade between Oran and Morocco through Oujda was more promising than coastal trade owing to the absence of harbours or good landing places other than those controlled by Spain. Moreover, there were no Algerian ports of more than local importance from Bani Saf to the frontier, a distance of about 80 kilometres. In 1900 Louis Say, a wealthy retired French naval officer, founded a small European settlement at a point just east of the border near the mouth of the Kiss River. Say's aim was to construct port facilities and develop trade with Moroccan populations living in the area north of Oujda and as far west as the Moulouya River valley, thereby cutting into Melilla's commercial hinterland. During the subsequent decade, the settlement, called Port-Say, grew steadily in population, though the volume of port activity remained minor.⁴⁰ The enterprise was none the less an indication of French interest in penetrating the Moroccan market by way of the coast.

Bū Ḥimāra, for his part, apparently decided early in his career upon the 'Algerian policy' which would guide him consistently: avoid bad relations with the French and cultivate good ones whenever possible.⁴¹ He needed arms and equipment to build up his fledgling army and administration and was no doubt perfectly aware of the Oran business community's feelings about expanding Moroccan trade. He may also have seen at an early point the undesirability of total dependence on the Spanish for commercial connexions with the outside world. In any event, his first contact with an Algerian businessman appears to have taken place in June 1903, when he met and exchanged gifts with Daniel Bourmancé, a son-in-law of Louis Say, at a location north-west of Oujda.⁴² Early the following year he played host at Taza to a certain Storto, the owner of a tailoring concern in Oran, and placed an order for a supply of military uniforms modelled after those of the makhzan.⁴³

Although these early contacts probably aroused interest in Oran and Algiers, Bū Ḥimāra appears to have done no further business with Algerian merchants until the fall of 1905, when he established his headquarters more or less permanently at Selwan. From then until the end of 1908 a diverse collection of European traders, businessmen, adventurers, military deserters, and journalists sojourned in his camp.⁴⁴ About November 1905 he permitted

⁴⁰ See Francis Llabador, *Port-Say et son fondateur* (Oran, 1955). Also Taillis, *Le Maroc pittoresque*, 39–44. Bernard, *Confins*, 267, 268.

⁴¹ For example, in May 1903, Bū Ḥimāra addressed a letter to the European ministers at Tangier in which he professed a special interest in having good relations with France. AMAE, n.s. 184, Mohammed ben El Hasan [Bū Ḥimāra] to 'Tous les intelligents Ministres de Chrétiens en résidence à Tanger', May 1903 (French trans. only).

⁴² AGGA, 30H. 49, Gen. O'Connor to Com. 19th Corps, 2 July 1903, no. 569. Col. L. Voinot, 'Les conséquences de la lutte du Makhzen et du Rogui à proximité de la frontière algérienne (1903–1905)', *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie et de l'Archéologie d'Oran*, LV (June 1934), 171.

⁴³ AMG, C18, Rapports du Com. de Labry, 18 Feb. 1904.

⁴⁴ The most well-known European in Bū Ḥimāra's entourage was the French adventurer Gabriel Delbrel, who styled himself the Rūgī's chef d'Etat-Major. The literature on Bū Ḥimāra has grossly exaggerated the importance of Delbrel as a political and military

a small group of French traders to set up a rudimentary commercial factory on the shore of the Sebkhā bou Areq, or Mar Chica, a deep lagoon extending from the environs of Melilla southward about 20 kilometres. It was cut off from the sea by a narrow neck of land. Bū Ḥimāra and his European associates may have talked of ambitious plans to develop a port, but his immediate aim was to give himself an alternative to Melilla for the purchase of equipment, supplies, and staples for his court and army. Though many European goods entered Melilla duty-free, importers still had to pay port and municipal taxes which affected the price of these wares in the interior.⁴⁵ The opening of the Mar Chica factory was therefore in the interest of both the Rūgī and prospective importers. The Spanish, needless to say, were furious.⁴⁶

Active trade was carried on at the factory for about eight months.⁴⁶ Sugar, tea, coffee, lumber, grain and cloth were unloaded there, as well as arms, ammunition, uniforms and various military equipment. Moreover, Bū Ḥimāra sold a quantity of wool to Storto and live sheep to another Oran trader.⁴⁷ In January 1906 work was begun on a channel linking Mar Chica with the sea in order to give commercial vessels access to the lagoon.⁴⁸ The digging was given up by the following summer, however, and trade at the factory all but abandoned. The reasons for the failure of this enterprise are not altogether clear, but a major factor appears to have been Bū Ḥimāra's procrastination in making good on debts to some of his European business partners.⁴⁹ There is no evidence that these traders had large reserves of capital to invest in development of the factory or the channel. So when the Rūgī failed to meet his obligations, they were either forced to pull out of the scheme or thought it prudent to risk no further involvement. Until negotiations for mining concessions were undertaken in the summer of 1907, Bū Ḥimāra appears to have had few business relations with Franco-Algerians, though trade with Melilla, it may be presumed, continued as before.

French intelligence information on the Algerians doing business with the pretender in 1905 and 1906 reveal that these individuals were few in number and that they were almost all independent entrepreneurs and not agents of major commercial firms. Four men were dominant in the trade in merchandise. One was Storto, who supplied the Rūgī with uniforms, cloth, and military equipment. The second and third were Louis Say and his son-in-law Daniel Bourmancé, who made several trips between Port-Say and Mar Chica in 1905 and 1906 and were contracted to supervise the channel project. The

adviser. The explanation lies in the fact that Delbrel himself was an irrepressible self-publicist. He wrote several articles on Bū Ḥimāra for the French and Algerian press, invariably characterizing himself as a kind of mayor of the palace.

⁴⁵ Bernard, *Confins*, 321.

⁴⁶ This section on French commercial dealings with Bū Ḥimāra draws mainly on an extensive collection of documents in AMAE, n.s. 168 and 169 (Contrabande des Armes).

⁴⁷ AMG, C8, Gen. Delanneau (Com. Division of Oran), 2 Aug. 1906; C18, Prefect of Oran to Gov. Gen., Dec. 19, 1905, no. 11416. Bū Ḥimāra also exported wool to Melilla. FO 174/267, Macleod to White, 31 Oct. 1906, no. 53.

⁴⁸ AMAE, n.s. 168, Saint Aulaire to Min. of For. Aff., 6 Jan. 1906, no. 5; n.s. 169, Min. of For. Aff. to Tangier, 14 Feb. 1906, no. 31; Daniel Bourmancé to Louis Say, 26 Feb. 1906, no. 35505. *L'Afrique Française*, no. 2, 1906, p. 57.

⁴⁹ AMAE, n.s. 168, Gen. Herson to Gov. Gen., 7 Dec. 1905. AGGA, 30H. 52, Herson to Gov. Gen., 26 June 1906. AMG, C8, Gen. Delanneau, 2 Aug. 1906.

fourth was Alexandre Baille, a small-time merchant who had been elected to a term in the Algiers Conseil Général in 1898. He, as well as a group from Paris whose principal agent was a Monsieur Corbut, made unsuccessful attempts in late 1905 and early 1906 to acquire land or mining concessions from Bū Ḥimāra.⁵⁰ Baille, however, was to be a chief figure in the successful mining negotiations in 1907. Several other Europeans were involved in the Mar Chica in more marginal ways, and still others were interested in doing business but could not find the capital.⁵¹

The French government suspected several of its nationals, Storto, Bourmancé and Say, of selling guns to Bū Ḥimāra under cover of legitimate trade. It was clearly established that an Oran merchant named Nougaret was involved with a Liège firm in selling the Rūgī 1,000–1,500 Gras, Kropatchek and Mauser rifles, plus two rapid-fire Nordenfeldt cannons in December 1905.⁵² Baille was also suspected of dealing in contraband but no case was ever made.⁵³

There is no hard evidence that any of these individuals were receiving official aid or encouragement from the French or the Algerian provincial governments. The European settler community, however, together with most of the army in Oran Province, favoured a much more aggressive frontier policy, including direct relations with tribes and local notables in eastern Morocco in order to further France's 'pénétration politique' as a preliminary to conquest. Bū Ḥimāra attracted a good deal of sympathy in Algeria, not because he was viewed as a better-qualified sultan than 'Abd al-'Azīz, but because French political and commercial interests might be served and Spanish influence undermined in the north-east by entering into friendly relations with him. If Algerian officials were lending covert support to the Rūgī, there is no reason to expect to find these activities reported in the official archives. The Oran police and harbour authorities categorically denied that Nougaret or any other individual had ever loaded or unloaded contraband arms in the port.⁵⁴ Yet at the height of the Mar Chica activity the Foreign

⁵⁰ AMAE, n.s. 168, Gov. Gen. to Min. of For. Aff., 12 Dec. 1905, no. 374; n.s. 169, Min. of Interior to Min. of For. Aff., 7 Feb. 1906, no. 211; n.s. 88, Gov. Gen. to Min. of For. Aff., 11 Jan. 1908, no. 319. AMG, D4, Gov. Gen. to Min. of War, 5 Sept. 1908, no. 3110. AGGA, 30H. 52, 'Note sur les Français en relations avec le Rogui', 1906. Corbut was director of an insurance company in Paris and in 1905 founded the Syndicat d'Etudes d'El Rarb, whose objective was commercial and industrial investment in Morocco. His chief associates in dealings with Bū Ḥimāra were Jean Hess, a French journalist, and Montagnon, a newspaperman who was also involved in land speculation in another part of Morocco. Their initiative on the Moroccan coast was tragically ended when their boat sank off Melilla in January 1906.

⁵¹ AMAE, n.s. 168, Piétri, Special Commissioner, Sûreté Générale, 'Rapport au sujet de la contrebande d'armes de guerre', 20 Nov. 1905.

⁵² AMAE, n.s. 168, Piétri, Special Commissioner, Sûreté Générale, 'Rapport au sujet de la contrebande d'armes de guerre', 20 Nov. 1905; Gen. Herson to Gov. Gen., 7 Dec. 1905; Min. of For. Aff. to Chargé d'Affaires Tanger, 31 Jan. 1906; n.s. 169, Min. of For. Aff. to Tanger, Madrid, and Algeciras, 6 Feb. 1906; Gov. Gen. to Min. of For. Aff., 11 Feb. 1906, no. 372.

⁵³ AMAE, n.s. 169, Gov. Gen. to Min. of For. Aff., 5 July 1906, no. 5223; n.s. 88, Gov. Gen. to Min. of For. Aff., 11 Jan. 1908, no. 319.

⁵⁴ AMAE, n.s. 168, Min. of For. Aff. to Saint Aulaire, 12 Dec. 1905; Prefect of Oran to Gov. Gen., 20 Nov. 1905; Piétri, Special Commissioner, Sûreté Générale, 'Rapport au sujet de la contrebande d'armes de guerre', 20 Nov. 1905.

Ministry expressed surprise that the Oran authorities were even permitting ships to set sail for points in Morocco that were not recognised ports.⁵⁵ Moreover, the Minister admitted to the Governor General of Algeria in a 1906 letter that he did not have the full co-operation of Oran officials regarding contraband because of 'the state of local opinion'. He further pointed out:

It seems to me necessary to redouble your attention at this time in order that your instructions be executed in spirit by all the Oran officials and that we can accept no official complacency in regard to the promoters of contraband enterprises in the Rif.⁵⁶

This intimation may be as much of the story as will ever be known.

In relation to his other financial and military resources Bū Ḥimāra's Algerian business connexions during this period were of minor importance. Nougaret's shipment of rifles and cannons in late 1905 was certainly valuable, but the French archival sources in no way link it with a significant pattern of Algerian complicity in contraband.⁵⁷ In any event arms were readily enough come by through other channels. Legitimate trade in merchandise and military camp supplies was concentrated in a short eight-month period. Since the Mar Chica factory was only a rudimentary affair located on the beach, the value of trade unloaded there cannot have been great compared to the value of imports entering Melilla harbour during the same period. Whatever grand designs Bū Ḥimāra may have had for Mar Chica, he appears to have remained largely dependent on Melilla for imported goods and on a variety of coastal connexions for guns.

The mining concessions

Bū Ḥimāra made the fateful decision to grant mining rights to two European financial groups in the summer of 1907. His credit in the greater Northeast as a populist rebel had been rapidly draining away, especially since he abandoned active campaigning against the makhzan in 1905. As the flow of voluntary support for his movement diminished, his methods of collecting revenue became more oppressive. In 1906 he sent out a series of tax-gathering expeditions, as well as suppressing two local markets in order to force more people to trade at Selwan, where he initiated a market tax.⁵⁸ These actions alienated the population still further. In October part of the Galayya tribal confederation, in whose territory Selwan was located and who had been among the pretender's most militant partisans, staged an unsuccessful revolt. It was under these circumstances of unrest at the very centre of his domain that Bū Ḥimāra sought a greater measure of external support in order to firm up his regular army and ensure the loyalty of his lieutenants and the local tribal notability.

⁵⁵ AMAE, n.s. 169, St. René to Min. of For. Aff., 2 Feb. 1906.

⁵⁶ AMAE, n.s. 168, Min. of For. Aff. to Gov. Gen., 7 Jan. 1906.

⁵⁷ Nougaret is reported to have cheated Bū Ḥimāra by selling him cartridges filled with wax. 'Un reporter parisien chez le Prétendant', *La Dépêche Algérienne*, 8 Feb. 1906 (title refers to Jean Rodès, who is probably Jean Hess). AMAE, n.s. 169, Bourmancé to Say, 10 Feb. 1906.

⁵⁸ AGGA, 30H. 52, Herson to Gov. Gen., 19 Jan. 1906, no. 1012.

Alexandre Baille, along with a Monsieur Anglevy, who was the mayor of Bani Saf and head of the Mokhta el-Hadid Mining Company there, made the first overtures to the Rūgī for a mining concession in the fall of 1905.⁵⁹ It was generally known in European business circles that lead and iron deposits existed in the territory of the Banī bū Ifrūr between Melilla and Selwan. Nothing came of these negotiations until the summer of 1907. By then Bū Ḥimāra was hard pressed for friends and money. The French army had occupied Oujda in March. Despite a strong reaction throughout the country, the Rūgī took no action to oppose the aggression other than to send a round of letters to the tribes in the region declaring vaguely that he would.⁶⁰ In consequence, his popular credibility plummeted. Moreover, in May a makhzan column, with the help of the Spanish military authorities in Melilla, landed at Restinga, a point on the strip of land between Mar Chica and the sea. Although the expedition never proved to be a serious threat to the Rūgī, its presence may have prompted him to find faster, more expedient ways of building up his forces.

One of the two concessions announced in July 1907 went to the *Compania del Norte Africano*, whose chief agents were Alexandre Baille and a Paris businessman named Massenet, who became the firm's president.⁶¹ The company was backed entirely by French capital, but owing to some early difficulties in securing the co-operation of the Spanish authorities in Melilla, it was legally constituted as a Franco-Spanish firm with its seat in Madrid and two Spanish personages as fronts.⁶² The company was given rights to mine for lead in the Jebel Afra mountains northwest of Selwan and to construct a railway from Melilla to the site. The other enterprise, the *Compania Española de Minas del Rif*, was purely Spanish.⁶³ The Melilla government co-operated closely with it. Its chief engineer, Manuel Becerra, was also director of Melilla port facilities. Bū Ḥimāra awarded it a concession to mine iron in the Jebel Youksen area, also northwest of Selwan, and to build its own railway from Melilla. Both companies started preliminary work at the mine sites and on their respective rail lines early in 1908.

* If the concessions made Bū Ḥimāra richer over the short run, they erased whatever political credit he had left with the people of the region. His financial gains from the concessions in 1907 and 1908 are a matter of speculation, but for the two companies together they probably amounted to a few hundred thousand pesetas.⁶⁴ The mine works and the rail construction,

⁵⁹ AMAE, n.s. 168, Prefect of Oran to Gov. Gen., 28 Nov. 1905; 12 Dec. 1905. AMG, D4, Gov. Gen. to Min. of War, 5 Sept. 1908, no. 3110.

⁶⁰ FO 174/268, Macleod to Lowther, 18 May 1907, no. 45.

⁶¹ The mining concessions are discussed in some detail in Maldonado, *El Rogui*, 346–52; Benhamu, 'Bu-Hamara', 169–71; Bernard, *Confins*, 313–15; and M. Becerra, 'La Région des Guelaya (Rif) et le chemin de fer de Melilla aux mines des Beni-Bou-Ifrouir', *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie et d'Archéologie d'Oran*, xxix (1909), 367–95.

⁶² AMAE, n.s. 88, French Commissioner at Oujda to Saint Aulaire, 6 Feb. 1908.

⁶³ Its chief backers were Enrique Macpherson, Clemente Fernandez, Antonio Guel, and the Count of Romanones. The anti-French politician Don Miguel Villanueva was also a strong supporter of the enterprise.

⁶⁴ One French source claims the Spanish company paid him initially 260,000 pesetas. AMAE, n.s. 88, French Commissioner at Oujda to Saint Aulaire, 6 Feb. 1908. Another source suggests it was only 50,000. AMAE, n.s. 88, Gen. Dautelle (Com. Oran Div.) to Gov. Gen., 6 March 1908, no. 10.

however, were blatantly visible signs of European penetration and the pretender's complicity in it. Moreover, Bū Ḥimāra's dealings with the two companies corresponded in time with the rise of Mawlay 'Abd al-Ḥafīz, older brother of 'Abd al-'Azīz, as pretender to the throne. 'Abd al-Ḥafīz launched his rebellion on a platform of resistance to European incursions, which by early 1908 brought him widespread popular support. Bū Ḥimāra, in the meantime, sat by while the Spanish army occupied Restinga, a point on Mar Chica, in February 1908 and Ras el-Ma (Cabo de Agua) on the Kebdana coast in March. Then in September the Aith Waryaghar's victory over his tax-gathering expedition set off a chain reaction of revolt around Selwan that forced the mines to shut down temporarily and Bū Ḥimāra virtually to barricade himself in Selwan fort with his regulars and a small band of committed partisans. Although the insurrection quietened down in November, he left Selwan the following month and headed south, never to return. The mining concessions thus precipitated the collapse of his authority, but his downfall must also be seen as a consequence of the emergence of a truly national movement of resistance to Europeans, a movement to which Bū Ḥimāra had never honestly subscribed in his entire career.

Conclusion

The Bū Ḥimāra episode was a manifestation of the sort of political adventurism made possible in Morocco by the military weakness of the central government and by the availability of modern arms to any rural chieftain having the means to purchase them and to control, in some measure, their distribution. Although the Rūgī made pretensions at one time or another of being both a millennial figure and a leader of resistance against European penetration, he was neither. He was rather a political upstart who, unlike the other regional warlords of the period, had absolutely no previous tribal connexions in the area where he rose to power. He fashioned his claims to legitimacy out of the transitory successes of the Taza rising of 1902-3; subsequently he was able to invest this residual prestige in a petty state-building enterprise based on external access to guns and other tools of wealth and power.

Because his movement was, except in the very beginning, a political adventure rather than a genuine revivalist movement or *jihād*, he had little hesitation about accepting the same kinds of external support as the makhzan. His methods of gaining and exercising political power were essentially the same as those of the government: not social revolution but rather accommodation with European interests in return for material aid. Though neither Bū Ḥimāra nor 'Abd al-'Azīz can be characterized simply as instruments of imperialism, both men found that their political and financial dealings with Europeans ran against the tide of popular resistance in Morocco, especially after 1906. Ultimately these compromises cost both men their kingdom, and Bū Ḥimāra his life.

It would do the Rūgī an historical injustice, however, to conclude that there were no ideas whatsoever behind his opportunism. By pursuing the pragmatic connexions he did with the outside world, he revealed a sensitivity to the forces of economic and technological change that would separate him from rural rebels of the previous century. He could not, of course, have risen to the political heights he did had his leadership of the Taza revolt not rested

on the traditional Islamic rhetoric of protest and had his government not been closely modelled on the structure and ritual of the nineteenth-century makhzan. Even so, his persistent efforts to find friends and support outside Morocco betray perhaps a wider vision of the future than most of his followers possessed or were prepared to accept. When foreign visitors came to his camp, he frequently talked not only of guns and money but of developing the mines, opening a port and building a town on Mar Chica, constructing a railroad and paved highway from Selwan to Taza, and initiating an irrigation project for the Moulouya river valley.⁶⁵ He was known to have European newspapers translated into Arabic so that he could keep abreast of world events.⁶⁶ In 1906 he sent an emissary to Constantinople in an unsuccessful attempt to establish diplomatic contacts with the Ottoman sultan.⁶⁷ Bū Ḥimāra may be characterized as a transitional figure in Moroccan history, drawing heavily on the values and standards of the past while at the same time striving to control the political environment by making use of modern ideas and techniques.⁶⁸ In this respect he was not unlike his two enemies, 'Abd al-'Azīz and 'Abd al-Ḥafīz, both of whom tried to borrow from Europe without losing the loyalty of Morocco and, like the Rūgī, ultimately failed.

SUMMARY

The rural rebellion and dissidence of Jilālī ibn Idrīs al-Zarhūnī al-Yūsufī, alias Bū Ḥimāra, was among the most debilitating of the crises to afflict the Moroccan central government (makhzan) during its final decade of freedom from formal French control. Bū Ḥimāra, falsely declaring himself to be Mawlay Muḥammad, older brother of the reigning sultan, and thereby rightful claimant to the Sharifian throne, held sway over much of the northeastern part of the country between 1903 and 1909. Though the rebellion never extended beyond this region, the makhzan's protracted attempts to stamp it out contributed significantly to Morocco's political instability and fiscal collapse. The movement, under Bū Ḥimāra's leadership, may be divided into two major phases: the first, lasting about six months, when the revolt had the character of a mass popular protest against the makhzan; the second, from late 1903 to 1909, when Bū Ḥimāra, with a reduced and fluid band of partisans, settled into the role of regional warlord, ruling over a petty state apparatus in the mountainous Northeast. During the longer second phase, his paramountcy was similar in form and objective to that of other regional strong men who carved out principalities in peripheral areas of the country, building their power on access to modern firearms in defiance of the makhzan. This paper argues that the success and tenacity of Bū Ḥimāra's dissidence was dependent on his ability to develop connexions with the wider world of European commerce: merchandise and commodities trade yielding customs revenue, importation of firearms, relations with Algerian businessmen, and mining concessions. These forms of external support are examined and evaluated, leading to the conclusion that Bū Ḥimāra's

⁶⁵ Jean Rodès, 'Le Prétendant.' Also AMG, D4, French Commissioner at Oujda to Lyautey, 21 Feb. 1908, no. 140 (on report from Capt. Ben Khouty).

⁶⁶ Ghomri Hamida, 'Au camp du Prétendant', *L'Echo d'Oran*, 9 Dec. 1905.

⁶⁷ AGGA, 30H. 54, 'Note pour Monsieur le Chef du Service des Affaires Indigènes et du personnel militaire', Sept. 26, no. 9086; Prefect of Oran to Gov. Gen., 8 Nov. 1906; Herson to Gov. Gen., 17 Nov. 1906, no. 613. AMAE, n.s. 186, Chargé d'Affaires de France à Constantinople to Min. for For. Aff., 1 Oct. 1906, no. 194.

⁶⁸ Burke in *Prelude to Protectorate* (p. 67) refers to him as a transitional figure in Morocco's history.

principal objective from late 1903 onward was not active rebellion but rather an effort to maintain his political and military captaincy over the Northeast, drawing on whatever external resources were available. Though he successfully defied the government for several years, his increasing association with European commercial and mining interests undermined his popular support and ultimately led to his downfall.