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The Moroccan Monarchy and the Construction of Social Representations

ABSTRACT This article argues that the Moroccan monarchy's past political projects seek to perpetuate social representations and monarchial rituals. Moreover, the monarchy started with primitive strategies such as radical repression to maintain these representations. Meanwhile, through socio-historical changes, the Moroccan monarchy has been remarkably dynamic in adapting to the new social realities. This explains why the monarchy has reconstructed social representations. Thus, the resilience of the monarchy is not only due to its authoritative features, but in fact, due to the cultural foundations of authoritative relationships that exist in the Moroccan society as well. **KEYWORDS** social representations, Moroccan monarchy, monarchial strategies, construction of social representations, the king, rituals

INTRODUCTION

The Moroccan monarchy, like any political regime in the world, depends on a variety of meanings and representations to exercise power. More widely, the interactions between the social arena and the political infrastructure rely on their intersection with culture, which carries social representations in thought and practice and carry abiding forms that are stored in the public consciousness as abstractions (Combs-Schilling 1994, 658).

The Moroccan monarchy is not only powerful, but also, remarkably, one of the world's oldest ruling monarchies. Through history, the current dynasty, "Alawiyyin," has worked on creating and shaping social representation that can strengthen its political power around various Moroccan territorial spaces. Moreover, the monarchy gained power by perpetuating a constructed and shared social reality and certain representations.

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The continuity of Morocco's political system makes it an important arena for examination. Its continuity has depended mainly on its changing and dynamic features which address Moroccan social developments. Much research that has been done on the issue of the resilience of the Moroccan political system and its continuity tackles the question of authoritarianism and its relation to perpetuating political authority. Moreover, some research has focused on the cultural foundations of authoritarianism inside Moroccan society and its role in creating an authoritarian atmosphere in all social realities. On the other hand, little attention has been given to the question of representation as a cultural process in which every social agent seeks to create and sustain itself over time. In this regard, this article seeks to understand how the monarchy as a social agent tends to create meanings and perpetuate social representations inside Moroccan society. It first examines the theoretical framework of social representations, its foundation, development, and the theoretical model that has been used to analyze this issue. Meanwhile, the second section tackles the issue of constructing social representations in past monarchical projects, while the third section tackles current monarchical projects and their role in sustaining constructed social representations.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Representations are individual perceptions of social life. Individuals always seek to decipher the complexities of the social arena with perceived representations about the environment. More than that, individuals make their own representations vis-à-vis the social environment with which they come into contact. Thus, social reality always builds representations (Jodelet 1989, 47). Representations have two basic dimensions, the first being psychological and the second social, and both are a large part of our inner world. We resort to them to uplift us in moments of comfort and to socialize us in moments of loneliness and anxiety. In times of activity and interaction with others, they guide us in what we do because they oblige us to adhere to social norms and the cultural context in which we exist (Souissi 2016, 48).

Intellectual thought in relation to representations took on another dimension, especially with Moscovisi in the 1960s. It has been suggested that psychological and social dimensions should be invoked in the objective study of human behavior, based on the fact that mental life is social in nature (Moscovici 2003, 82). In contrast to Durkheim's view, Moscovici considers

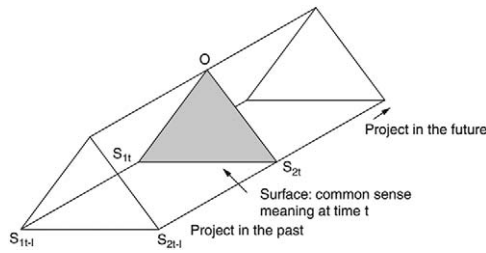


FIGURE 1. The Toblerone/triangle model representation. Source: Bauer and Gaskell (1999).

that social representations are constantly changing and unstable. They are unstable in that they are social, subject to review, renewal and reconstruction by social milieu and patterns of values. Representations in this sense change and vary in their meaning and content according to language, culture, ideological context, interests, and communication relations between group members. Thus, many representations are based primarily on knowledge that has been transformed into beliefs and instilled into us (Moscovici 1994, 166).

Over the last fifty years, the social representations approach has flourished and this has led to numerous developments in understanding social–psychological phenomena.

As interest in social representations grew through the 1990s, new refinements were produced. In this regard, the Toblerone/triangle model of social representations emerged bringing in a formal model to understand social representations (figure 1).

Bauer and Gaskell (1999) identify three defining characteristics of representations: cultivation in communication systems; structured contents that serve functions for communication systems; and their embodiment in different modes and mediums (Sammut and Andreoli 2015, 7). These characteristics are a process of reactions between the two main actors in the triangle, S_1 and S_2 , which share a concern with an object (O). That is to say, the triangle (S, O, S) is the basic unit for the elaboration of meaning. In the same vein, a time capturing the past and the future is added to denote the project (P), linking the two subjects and object (Sammut and Andreoli 2015, 7).

Through the triangle of mediation, representation is constructed and reconstructed constantly between the two subjects or actors and the core object. It is constructed through communicating acts that shape new meanings of social reality. In social milieus, systems of communication (representations)

evolve and circulate. This is referred to as the process of symbolic cultivation (Sammut and Andreoli 2015, 7). Thus, actors are constantly shaping and reshaping their social reality by creating a system of knowledge, a form of common sense to understand and relate to the world around them and to act towards it in meaningful ways. This is what is referred to, in this model, by “Project,” which is an unending process that can constantly change over time.

In every group, whether it is a politically dominant group or a political opposition group, communication is primordial in maintaining group homogeneity and solidarity. It is crucial in terms of its role in cultivating a system of values. Moscovici (1961/76) identified three communicative strategies that preserve the social representations of diverse groups. *Propaganda* is a centralized tool of communication that maintains the social reality of a political group. *Propagation* serves in developing communion. Lastly *Diffusion*, that is, a communicative genre that allows for a diversity of opinions based on skepticism and the questioning of consensus (Sammut and Andreoli 2015, 10).

In the same vein, Duveen and Paraltis (2008) has argued that communicative strategies serve not only to preserve social representations but also to seek to form solid ties among group members. He has mentioned that propaganda serves to develop solidarity between group members. Based on belief, social representations serve to reject out-group members, those who do not share the same compatible beliefs. One way that these affiliative bonds are put in place is through alternative representations. This term refers to that component of social representations that describes what others, who do not subscribe to the same social representations, are like (Sammut and Andreoli 2015, 10). Alternative representations, such as, for instance, those relating to a particular out-group who may be ignorant, illiterate, or closed-minded, seek to classify and limit the dialogue with the out-group members.

Such communicative strategies remain highly efficient in protecting the group system of values and core representations, ensuring their survival over time.

Based on the Bauer and Gaskell (1999) triangle model and Moscovici (1961/76) communication strategies, we will analyze issues of the Moroccan monarchy and the construction of social representations. The exercise of political power usually comes with a communicative interactive strategy between political actors. These strategies play the role of creating and perpetrating representations about the characteristics of the political regime. Through the triangle model, these political interactions create what Bauer and Gaskell (1999) call the “Object” or the “Representation,” which transforms in time into social representations shared by the whole society.

In this respect, we argue that the Moroccan monarchy as a political system tends to construct and reconstruct social representation through its political interactions with political actors. The monarchy also seeks to shape a system of object meaning delivered to its subjects to sustain its political legitimacy and the resilience of its political regime. This process of construction is what Bauer and Gaskell refer to, in their triangle, as a project in the past and the future. Meanwhile, following the Moscovici method, the monarchy also tends to perpetuate the constructed representation by implementing a communication strategy that can sustain the social representation about the monarchy through time. These representations are not necessarily unconscious, but in the heat of action they always seem to prevent social actors from sustaining other representations. They function as sort of grammar which governs daily interaction and ensures the reproduction of existing authority and power relations in a human climate fraught with strong undercurrents of ambivalence (Hammoudi 1997, 5).

CONSTRUCTED REPRESENTATIONS IN PAST ROYAL POLITICAL PRACTICE

Following Bauer and Gaskell's (1999, 167–68) model, a representation can be characterized by the relation of three elements:

- Subjects or bearers of representations (S).
- An object that is represented, a concrete entity or abstract idea (O).
- A project, or a pragmatic context of a social group within which the representation makes sense (P).

Following this model, we assume that the monarchy, as a subject (S_1) is interacting with other political subjects (S_2) in the political sphere to construct a political project. This latter is full of meanings, representations, and characteristics of the dominant political power. Through time, abstract ideas or objects become a representation and thereby a social reality.

In this section we will focus on what Bauer and Gaskell (1999) describe as the project in the past. This means that we will analyze the past royal political project in terms of its communicative strategies and how it played the role of constructing the shared object (O) or more precisely certain social representations.

Despite the modern origins of its exertion of power, the Moroccan monarchy resides on a mix of sacred rituals, routines, and remarkably frames its

authority by relying on the historical weight of the past. Indeed, the monarchy is one of the oldest still existing ruling monarchies (Combs-Schilling 1991, 659). Starting in 789 CE, the central authority of Morocco was controlled by six dynasties. In 1666, the current “Alawit” dynasty gained political power (Combs-Schilling 1991, 659).

Through its history, the Alawit regime constructed social representations about the features of its power and the principal characteristics that govern its relationship with its subjects. In this respect, the regime frames its authority by depending on three main pillars: allegiance, charisma, and royal arbitration.

“Alawists” posit the existence of a direct relationship, sanctioned by divine decree, between the sovereign and his subjects. In this regard, the subject ought to show loyalty and allegiance toward a sort of sacred authority. Royal power, therefore, presents a huge obstacle for people who may consider challenging the current prevailing norms and rituals of power. By doing so, the individual violates not only the law but also the divine rights and the sacred image of the king.

In the same vein, order and allegiance must prevail because the king derives his authority from divine right; the king in this sense is a “commander of [the] faithful,” who exercises leadership over his subjects and cannot, therefore, be held accountable for his actions by any earthly authority. Thus, the king is not just any king; he is a descendant of the Prophet Mohammed. This may be interpreted implicitly as a wholly supreme lineage and therefore any criticism of the king is, by default, a rejection of both Islam and the Prophet Mohammed as the messenger of God (Daadaoui 2011). Furthermore, the king has no equal on earth.

The sacredness of the power is thus associated with the invisible political body of the royal regime (Kantorowicz 1959). Notably, these early constructed social representations overflow with ideas of unbounded power. Furthermore, the idea of a divine right gives the impression that political power is protected by supernatural powers and it is above the actor’s political conflicts, and thus it could never be removed from its wholly sacred place. Moreover, the one who tries to reject the king’s supreme position would be cursed and punished by both the monarchial political body and God who bestows legitimate rights for the former to prevail and to represent His will on earth. Meanwhile, the various cultural symbols that are practiced and reflected in the annual “*bay’a*” ceremony give the impression that the king presents himself as a father of his people, who are treated far more as subjects than citizens (Aroub and Yom 2010, 6). Besides, the holy rituals are

practiced through the significance of the symbols, represented during the ceremony of allegiance. The king in this ceremony rides his horse, which symbolizes his power over his people who come to offer their loyalty. Meanwhile, the king is usually covered by a green tent, which symbolizes both the color of Islam and the shadow of God in his land (Aroub and Yom 2010, 5). On the other hand, the five rakes that the elite perform signify the five usual prayers in the Islamic religion (Daadaoui 2011, 30). In this ceremonial event, the monarchy represents itself as a gated, closed entity, where the monarch always needs a mediator to address the public, as through prophets. Thus, the persona of the sultan (king) is exposed to the public, but the guards and the courtiers separate him from the rest of the world, just as taboos separate sacred untouchable beings (Hammoudi 1997, 74). These representations and symbols are endlessly constructed and reconstructed through these ceremonial events to maintain political power images. During the ceremony of the *baya'a* of Hassan the First, an Italian writer de Edmondo de Amics who attended the event wrote of it:

The numerous suites that were gathered behind and about him appeared to be petrified. All eyes were fixed upon him; not a breath could be heard, and nothing was seen but immovable faces and attitudes of profound veneration. Two Moors with trembling hands drove away the flies from his feet; another from time to time passed his hand over the skirt of his white mantle as if to purify it from contact with air; a fourth, with an action of sacred respect, caressed the crupper of the horse; the one who held the parasol, stood with downcast eyes, motionless as a statue, almost as if he were confused and bewildered by the solemnity of this office. All things about him expressed his enormous power, the immense distance that separated him from everybody, a measureless submission, a fanatic devotion, a savage, passionate affection that seemed to offer its blood for proof. He seemed not a monarch, but a God. (de Amics 1879, 230)

It is notable that religion is the cornerstone in the exercise of political power in Morocco. Religion and politics are barely separable by reason of social consensus about the practice of religion, traditional culture, and modernity (Hissouf 2016, 46). The kingship is based on the dual powers: the king is the guardian of the belief system and the leader of the country in the name of God. This belief system makes the sultan (king) responsible for protecting the “Maliki” rites. The sociologist Mohamed Taouzi notes that the Maliki doctrine is noticeably closer to Moroccan concerns than any other Islamic doctrine. It is a doctrine of mediation and Sufism (Taouzi 2007). This also

explains that the image of the shadow of God on earth has, in general, never been challenged or rejected through time, despite local revolutions against the sultan's political deeds in Moroccan history.¹

Besides the key element of allegiance and its different religious features, the Alawit regime relies heavily on the idea of charisma as a way of constructing social representations and therefore legitimacy. Alawits always forcefully claim that in the absence of a commander, whose faith places him higher than power struggles of factions, the division between the inhabitants of the city and the country, between Arabs and Berbers and the social classes would split the nation-state (Hammoudi 1997, 10).

The king tended to represent himself as a defender of Islamic values and savior of the country in its fight against the greed of Christian powers beginning in the sixteenth century, and more recently in the mid-twentieth century. The royal authority created a charismatic image based on fortitude and courage in the battlefield where the wholly sacred, royal power shall never be defeated. Even more importantly, Morocco owes its existence, as a political and cultural entity, to the "*chorfas*" (descendants of the prophet), since they founded the first Muslim kingdom in the eighth century (Hammoudi 1997, 14). The claim of charismatic leadership has not been consistently effective in maintaining power; the monarchy faced hard times to prove its leadership between 1894 and 1927 (Hammoudi 1997, 15). Remarkably, after 1927, the monarchy recovered its charismatic features because of the political urban nationalist elite that pulled the monarchy and its symbols and rituals out of a long period of dormancy after the death of Hassan I up until the first decades of the twentieth century (Halstead 1964, 447). The recovery of royal charisma was noticeable with Mohamed V. Many observers agreed that during his reign, his appearance captivated the crowds and his presence unquestionably renewed the idea of sacredness (Hammoudi 1997, 16).

In the same vein, the monarchy has worked on creating a social reality based on its holiness by reinforcing the image of the king as an arbiter who is above all social and economic conflicts and private interests. This idea also comes from the purity of lineage and the prestige he derives from his family's historical titles and the legitimacy bestowed on him by the process of allegiance (Hammoudi 1997, 19). Thus, the king as arbiter is, in fact, a supreme

1. By political deeds, we mean the political choices that the kings made through history to overcome economic crises. These choices overall were all similar in raising taxes over the crafters.

spiritual leader, ruling the country in the name of God with the support of a group of religious scholars. In other words, God and the monarch are inseparable (Koprulu and Abdulmajeed 2018, 6). In Moroccan history, the monarchy carefully avoided identifying with a political group, which can also be seen as part of its effort to maintain balance (Hammoudi 1997, 19). By following this strategy, the monarch tries endlessly to reconstruct the image of a pure power which cannot and will not be corrupted by various private interests. It is, in fact, an image that shows the sacredness and wholeness of a power represented by the words of God and a powerful historical lineage.

Historical royal strategies to maintain social representations

The historical royal strategies would not be successful in maintaining social representations without the system of the “Makhzen.” Simply put, *makhzen* (central government) represents a hegemonic alliance between the king and the political elites, tribal chiefs, high-ranking bureaucrats, and the security system (Koprulu and Abdulmajeed 2018, 6). According to Mohamed Daadaoui (Daadaoui 2011, 5), the Makhzen is a sociopolitical instrument imbued by symbolic, historical, and traditional meaning to enhance the sociopolitical legitimacy of the monarchy and generate stability and survival of the monarchy. Meanwhile, Kausch (2009, 166) illustrates that the formally democratic structures and institutions veil an informal, shadow governance structure, commonly called the Makhzen, a network of the palace and its clients that dictate the main lines of policy and act as a gatekeeper for any kind of political reform. This hegemonic alliance is the tool with which the monarchy transforms its rituals and values for their subjects. In other words, the prevailing social representations about the monarchy would not stay vivid through time without the “Makhzenian” system.

To maintain the constructed social representations within Moroccan society, the Makhzen tends to work with several strategies which may manifest as radical repression, propaganda, and closeness to the royal palace.

First, repression has been one of the hegemonic tools that the monarchy and the Mekhzan has tried to use several times through Moroccan history. The royal authority has shifted radically to use means of power to repress people or significant opposition figures that are willing to challenge the prevailing norms and images. By aggressive deeds, the monarchy tries to represent itself as the sacred coercive force that maintains order and balance. In the same vein, the monarch, through the process of repression, is represented as the supreme father who cares about his children’s behavior. The

repression strategy does not exclude the possibility of extreme means such as humiliation, torture, and even taking the lives of subjects who are no longer submissive (Hammoudi 1997, 63). In royal historical traditions, rebellious subjects were usually brought before the king and then taken around in public on a camel to be seen by everyone,² with the aim of creating a sense of fear in individuals who think of disobedient acts. This scene has been described by a royal servant as follows: “He was forced to mount a lame camel, paraded bare-headed, and slapped, as God’s anger struck him from all directions. He was then put in chains; after his feet, hands and neck were cuffed, he was thrown into an iron cage like a wild boar or a savage dog” (Hammoudi 1997, 64). Through Moroccan history, the royal practice of repression has been dominant in order to maintain constructed social representations.

In addition to the strategy of repression, royal authority tends to use propaganda as a way to deal with rebellious individuals. Such individuals who fight against the king are portrayed as being against the whole Islamic faith, against the prophetic lineage, holiness and justice, and against the whole royal political body (Kantorowicz 1957, 254). This strategy has been widely used during peace and wartime and it clearly illustrates that those who declare disobedience against the king are acting against God’s will on earth. It is a strategy that perpetuates the representation of wholeness and power which the royal authority had in past, continues to have in the present and will have in the future. Therefore, any part of the realm that assails the king, assails the head of the realm and thus ventures to destroy the whole body and finally himself (Kantorowicz 1957, 256). Obversely, to fight for the royal authority meant, at the same time, to fight for justice and faith as represented by the holy king. Consequently, those killed on the battlefield for this just cause were promised spiritual rewards and that they would be crowned by God (Kantorowicz 1957, 256). Meanwhile, the Makhzan tends to represent the king as a person who enriches the land and social reality by just using his “Baraka” (blessings). Thus, wherever he is, prosperity and blessings shall prevail. Therefore, the presence of the sultan (king) at the head of his armies and the state constitutes a sign of God’s love for the Alawit lineage, which shall maintain the world order and with its hierarchies (Hammoudi 1997, 61). The historical propaganda, thus, tends to constitute a religious

2. This ritual called “Altawif” is like a spectacle where the guilty is paraded round on a camel’s back in order to be seen by all subjects (ben Khalid al-Nasiri 1956, 142).

philosophy in exercising power which is characterized by the will of God. Therefore, the message of God, in this sense, shall be maintained by using legitimate force to regulate the politics of a divided “Umma” (nation). The king, in this sense, is blessed by God to spread His message on earth. During the allegiance ceremony of Sultan Abderhman Ben Hicham (1790–1859), for example, several poets came at the time to present the wholly sacred body to the nation. Among these poets the king’s minster Aba Abdallah Mohamed ben Idriss Elfassi said the following lines in a long poem (ben Khalid al-Nasiri 1956, 4):

My lord. . . You returned to religion and the world its beauty
 So it becomes in a suit of a good meaning
 And the rain increases in God’s clouds.

Generally, the monarchy and its elites tried endlessly to keep these images alive within Moroccan society. The images and representations of the king, “the bestower,” are strongly defended through history via the king’s “Ulama” and poets. Therefore, the king, in this regard, becomes a focal point without whom the community would be fragmented and fragile.

Besides historical propaganda, the royal authority opens its gates to newcomers who would work for the perpetuation of the constructed images about royal sainthood. The Moroccan scholar Abdulah Hammoudi explains this process by the term “closeness” strategy (Hammoudi 1997). This means that the monarchy constructed a sphere of competition between actors for the objective of being close to symbolic royal power. It is in reality a hegemonic patronage system that constitutes the vehicle that motivates interactions between various actors, and where everybody is seeking the king’s satisfaction. In the same vein, the closeness can be interpreted as a sign of being chosen by the sacred king (Hammoudi 1997, 49). The benefits of closeness are thus remarkably attractive for servants who would show their willingness to serve the sultan (king). This explains that both disciples and government officials derive from their practice, a belief that individual effort is not enough; one must apply oneself within a framework of allegiance and obedience to a master (Hammoudi 1997, 94).

We can notice from the above analysis that the past project, based on Bauer and Gaskell’s (1999) view, can help us understand the royal interactions and their role in the invention of images and representations, as well as the regime’s resilience over the past decades. Past political interactions thus

play a crucial role in shaping images and representations that make Moroccan society believe that the monarchy is a wholly sacred regime that should be obeyed at all times. Furthermore, the political project in the past would not be successful if it were not based on several communicative strategies whether with political actors or subjects. These communicative strategies are authoritative in using different forms of repressions.

THE RECONSTRUCTED-INSTITUTIONALIZED SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE RESILIENCE OF THE MOROCCAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

In this section we will continue analyzing the reconstructed social representations following Bauer and Gaskell's (1999) model in what they call the project in the future. As an alternative, we will focus on the current political project and how it plays the role of institutionalizing past representations and how it functioned to maintain the resilience of the political system after the Arab Spring.

Moroccans honor the king as a bearer of "blessings," but they always knew how to distinguish between his personal holiness and the authority of his government, and they often recognize the former without recognizing the latter (Waterbury 1982, 207–08).

The Moroccan constitution has legitimized the dominance, control, and power of the monarchy in the Moroccan political system, both materially and symbolically, without regulating this hegemony and, more importantly, without setting limits (Camau 1979, 380).

It should be noted, however, that the constitution was developed in a political context that aimed to resolve the conflict of factions in the interest of the monarchy, and the most important consequence of this crucial context, in contemporary history, is first the centrality of the king in demanding independence and his emergence as a third power, as described by Muhammed Abid Jabri (Abid al-Jabri 1997, 25).

In the same vein, the political practice in Morocco allows the transgression and marginalization of legal rules, sometimes through interpretation or continuation in their traditional form. For instance, the constitutional referendum is an expression of popular support for the king rather than a modern means of participation. The vast majority of those who participate in the constitutional referendum respond to the call of the king and express their allegiance to him. Neither the concept of the constitution nor its content is

absorbed by the majority of Moroccans; all they understand is that “Our Master said yes, we vote yes, yes about what does not matter; our master knows what works for us and what does not work . . .” (al-Massaadi 2013–14, 72).

On the other hand, the title “commander of [the] faithful” in the actor’s representations and Moroccan society bears many meanings. Some consider it to be the leadership since the “commander of the faithful” is the leader of the state and some consider him the guardian of Islamic values, and others still believe that he is the caliph of God on earth. In contrast, there is a new generation that does not recognize this title and considers it misplaced and should be confined only to the prophet’s earlier companions (al-Massaadi 2013–14, 72).

In the meantime, social predominant thinking gives the title a religious meaning, as the latter refers, in the minds of Moroccans, to Islamic values and collective Islamic unity (al-Massaadi 2013–14, 76). Thus, in Morocco, the religious dimension is still strongly present and this reflects a strong dichotomy in the Moroccan political imagination between the modern and the idealistic model of the exercise power (al-Massaadi 2013–14, 76–77).

According to Clifford (1992), the monarchy in Morocco derives its specificity from the fact that it combines two elements: first, the traditional principles of Islamic legitimacy; and second, the theory of public will. These two principles are incompatible, but they have been constructed in Morocco, where the art of combining contradictions has been acquired (Clifford 1992, 21).

As a consequence of the previously mentioned political practice, the representations about the monarchy have been institutionalized by legal norms, and thus become the principal foundation of the Moroccan political system. This process began with the institutionalization of the title “commander of the faithful” in the 19th article of the previous constitution in the 1990s, which says:

The King ‘Amir Al-Muminin, shall be the supreme representative of the Nation and the symbol of the unity thereof. He shall be the guarantor of the perpetuation and the continuity of the state. As Defender of the faith, He shall ensure the respect of the constitution. He shall be the protector of the rights and liberties of citizens, social groups and organizations. The King shall be the guarantor of the independence of the Nation and the territorial integrity of the Kingdom within all its rightful boundaries.

From this article, the supreme role of the king is noticeable and, to a large extent, it represents the symbolic dimensions of the ruler as a defender and unifier of the whole nation.

On the other hand, these symbolic dimensions could be found in very well-established democracies such Spain and France, but due to the constructed social representations about the sacredness of the monarchy, the symbolic dimensions turn out to be a very powerful tool for executing power. It is, in fact, an implicit power that can be used and interpreted according to the political context. The shared representation about the king as a wholly sacred body led, for instance, the political elite, mainly the opposition in the 1990s, to demand from the king to play the role of arbiter in creating laws that guarantee the transparency of election process. Since there is no clear article in the constitution to perform such a political act by the king, and since parliament has the power to take such decisions, the king replied by not accepting the demand legally but by accepting the role, politically speaking, based on the 19th article (Elmosadek 2006, 6). This arbitrary process ultimately creates a powerfully hidden constitution based on the 19th article itself, which changed from a symbolic dimension into an article that establishes a personalized power in Morocco (Blaiha 2018, 2).

The political elite thus see the king as a sacred person who shall be consulted and obeyed at all times. Hammoudi (1997, 90) illustrates that in a society where the relationship of disciple and master is predominant, the disciple subsequently seeks endlessly to serve his master, and thus he forgets about his family, society, and the state.

The social representation and the resilience of the political system

After the Arab awakening, there was debate about the resilience of the Arab monarchies in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and the real reasons behind local political stability in such a troubled area. Overall, there have been two dimensions in analyzing this issue. The first focuses on external factors as a primary cause of the regime's stability, while the second focuses on the role of domestic factors such as economic resources and the regimes' political strategies in collaborating with powerful Islamic opposition parties in maintaining political order. Even though the two perspectives are very prominent in giving explanations of the regimes' resilience after the Arab awakenings, they still omit the role of the shared social norms, representations, and images in maintaining power.

The monarchy in Morocco generally fared better than other leaders during the Arab uprisings by managing to control political demands by responding very quickly such as in the famous 9 March speech. The monarch thereby successfully managed to stay above the fray during protests and upheavals due

to the invented representations about the characteristics of his dual power as a head of state and as a religious leader (*amir al-mu'meminin*), and due to the protection of his large loyal network of regime allies (Yerkes 2016).

Moreover, the Moroccan monarchy counted a lot on constructed representations and images in maintaining political order between 2011 and 2018. It succeeded in this regard because of the constructed images about the sacredness of the king's natural and political body. This explains why the Moroccan demonstrations of the 20th February Movement and the demonstrations of the Rif region between 2017 and 2018³ never used aggressive slogans against the monarch. Also, the leftist and the Islamists political elites, who often protest against the political system, have never propagated the overthrow of the monarchy since independence, except of course the youth Marxists movements that were politically thriving in the 1960s and 1970s. They adopted an aggressive political project toward the monarchy.

Meanwhile, the upheavals of 2011, overall, remained elitist. This meant that the participation in the 2011 awakening was limited to young activist leaders and previous leftist and Islamic leaders who were well known for their rejection of the incumbent power's system of values and norms. Besides, the demonstrations remained elitist because the Moroccan collective consciousness was not ready to reject the political system as a whole, but instead society blamed other political institutions for the economic and social crisis.

Through the long historical and current political project, the monarchy has succeeded in eternalizing representations among the loyal network of regime allies and Moroccan society, in general. In this regard, the historicity of social representations is characterized by the fact that they are presented as a modality of knowledge and, thereby, play the role of priming behaviors and communication between individuals (Moscovici 1999, 166). They are powered by both knowledge, coming from daily experience and consolidated meanings, and invented traditions (Hobsbawm 1997, 1).⁴ The representations and the set of royal practices were governed through time by tactics or openly accepted rules; such practices and rituals of power seek to inculcate

3. There were very large demonstrations in the Rif Region after a fishmonger in the northern town of Al-Hoceima was crushed to death inside a garbage truck as he tried to retrieve fish confiscated by the police.

4. According to Hobsbawm (1997, 1), "invented tradition" is understood to mean "a set of practices, normally governed by tacit or openly accepted rules; such practices, of a ritual or symbolic nature, seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior through repetition, which automatically implies continuity with regard to the past."

certain values and norms of behavior through repetition, which automatically implies the continuity of the past.

It should be noted that the resilience of the monarchical regime was well known even before 2011. Hammoudi (1997, 82) argues in this regard that the cultural schemata of authority, which are presently dominant in society as a whole, must be investigated at the level of those regional nuclei. By this he means mainly the “*zawayas*,” or the “friends of God” as he calls them. These religious agents are very close to the local society in many Moroccan regions. Through history, the *zawayas* play a crucial role in defending the legitimacy of the Moroccan regime and this explains the present closeness and collaboration between the monarchy and the *zawayas*. These regional religious groups adopt ideas and representations of the sacredness of the leader, and remarkably do not reject the idea of the wholeness of the natural and political, royal body. The *zawayas* structurally consist of a master and disciples or followers who should obey their religious sacred leader or they may face repression and torture, just as the historical relationship between the monarch and his subjects. A *zawya* man thus submits to the will of a master, who rules his disciples’ lives according to a system of representations, ideas, and practices related to those used by a patriarch within his family and lineage, and more importantly, by *Baraka* (blessings). Once they have achieved a position of influence, the master and his disciples acquire more authority through the mobilization of other men Hammoudi (1997, 84). The “friends of God,” on the other hand, play a principal role in spreading the image of the sacredness of the royal authority through local religious practices.⁵ Generally, the invented representations about the sainthood of the monarch play a prominent role in sustaining the political order through time. The sainthood of the monarch is successfully spread among Moroccan society due to the social institutions that reflect the image of the monarchy in different regions.

Form the above articulated analysis, based on Bauer and Gaskell’s (1999) model, we have argued that S_1 , “the monarchy,” and S_2 , “the other followers,” mainly “the political elites” who stay loyal to the monarchy’s system of values, interact with each other in a political project. This thereby invents a system of meanings and representations. This project does not stop in the past but it is still operating in perpetuating the shared social representations about the

5. In their religious practices, they usually pray for the monarch and his family to prevail. Also, they take every opportunity to insist on the duty of every disciple to show obedience toward his master (king).

monarch and the monarchy and keep these norms vivid and alive in Moroccan society. These political projects and interactive practices would not be successful without the strategies Moscovici (1961/76) illustrates. Thus, we mainly focus on the communicative strategies through a historical and current perspective. The monarchial communicative strategies tend to be aggressive or soft, depending on the political context, and overall we argue that in the earlier exercise of power, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the monarchy tended to use repression more often against rebellious leaders. On the other hand, the communicative strategies have shifted radically in current times due to economic change around the globe. Thus, soft power is more likely to be used by controlling the mass media and educational system. Through these institutions, the Moroccan monarchy builds its strategies to let the social representations vivid. Furthermore, Bauer and Gaskell (1999), and previously Moscovici (1961/76), illustrate that social representations play a very crucial role in sustaining the solidity of social union over time, and we may argue that the shared representations are among the factors that can unravel the puzzle of the Moroccan regime's resilience before and after the 2011 and 2017 awakenings.

CONCLUSION

Social representations are thus a constant process of construction through time. The monarchy, through historical incidents, tends to represent itself as a wholly sacred political structure. It thus endlessly tries to perpetuate produced imaginative sacred images inside Moroccan society with the help of its political elites as well. Through history, the sultan, his servants, and ministers worked hand in hand to keep constructed representations alive inside Moroccan society by using different political strategies from repression to the system of closeness. The process of perpetuating social representations did not stop after independence but, in contrast, the monarchy and its political elite worked this time to institutionalize the constructed social representations through including the symbolic dimensions of lineage and sacredness within the constitutional framework. The institutionalizing of social representations and the political practice interprets the symbolic dimensions of power and turns it into real executive power in the hands of the king.

On the other hand, representations are not always constructed by the political structure, but also the social arena of interactions allow these representations to stay as they are within the hegemonic structure. Hammoudi

(1997) says that repression not only excites the political structure but also it prevails in the social structure through different social relationships, such as through father and son, disciple and master, employer and worker. These relationships constantly create a certain predominance of images of the master, who is an intellectual, a saint, and most importantly a defender of the Islamic faith and its values. ■

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