Preface

I am a child of the Years of Lead. I breathed the air of the period and internalized its atmosphere of distrust. A period of political violence that lasted from Morocco's independence in 1956 to the passing of King Hassan II in 1999, the Years of Lead left a lasting imprint on my generation. Like my peers who were born in post-independence Morocco, I had to navigate the fears, silences, and ambiguities that were quintessential characteristics of living under Moroccan authoritarianism.

Until age seven, Tamazight was my only language. The day I inadvertently enrolled in the village public school by following older children to this intimidating place was the day my mother tongue lost its privilege as the only medium through which I understood the world around me. By enrolling in school, I left one world and entered another. It was not like entering the "wolf's mouth," to borrow Kateb Yacine's famous phrase about his French colonial education in Algeria,[1] but it was a process that, while it added another literate member of the family to my illiterate parents' home, confined my Amazigh language and culture to daily life in the village. The value of my language depreciated. When I opened my mouth to answer a question in my mother tongue, the Tamazight-speaking teacher ordered me to shut up if I did not know the answer in Arabic. Moroccan nationalists and the monarchy had already decided on behalf of Moroccans that they were an Arab-Muslim country, and the schools worked to produce generations of Arabized youth in conformity with this top-down definition of the nation. The complexity of the broader structures that shaped me as a child were only made apparent when I gained consciousness of language and identity politics in Morocco

and Tamazgha—the broader Amazigh homeland in North Africa. However, one thing was certainly clear from the beginning: my Tamazight was not welcome in school, the first space in which rural children encounter political authority.

This book is my attempt to make sense of how Moroccan cultural producers grappled with the forbidden pasts that repressive political forces prevented from being written about and circulated in the public sphere for almost fifty years. *Moroccan Other-Archives* offers a theorization of "other-archives." Other-archives are neither academic history nor firsthand memory, nor are they conventional archives. Rather, they are loci at which the stories of those who were left out of history and traditional archives reside, from where they return to rewrite history by haunting the predominant conceptions of identity and citizenship. Thanks to the creators of other-archives, rewriting history has become synonymous with exercising the right to citizenship in Morocco. Being a Moroccan citizen today means being able to reimagine the country's post-independence history, which has been mired in repression, disempowerment, and silence.

Moroccan Other-Archives examines how Moroccan cultural producers turned history into a space for civic engagement through the reconstruction of a pluralistic history that challenges taboos, silences, and omissions, none of which academic historians or political stakeholders were able to overcome before King Hassan II's death in 1999. Thanks to the production and wide dissemination of other-archives, formerly erased constituencies of Moroccan history—namely Imazighen, Jews, and political prisoners—reemerge in stories that reveal a traumatic history of disappearance and loss during the Years of Lead.

The Years of Lead came to a de facto end in summer 1999. I had just graduated from Ouarzazate Teacher Training School, and I was headed to Rabat for a well-deserved vacation with my maternal uncle's family. My uncle, a Black man, had joined the Royal Guards in 1958 and served in this elite army corps under both King Mohammed V and King Hassan II until his retirement in 1997. On July 23, 1999, as I was sipping mint tea in the upstairs kitchen, I heard a loud shriek from the downstairs living room, where a few minutes earlier I had left my uncle watching the news. I do not remember how I got down the two flights of stairs, but my uncle's tears as he mournfully announced the passing of King Hassan II are engraved in my memory. What followed were feelings of orphanhood, insecurity, and collective catharsis, as people took to the streets across Morocco to mourn the only king the vast majority of them had known. Torn between the urge to partake in this cathartic moment and my basic, albeit trenchant, knowledge about the deceased king's

troubled human rights legacy, I decided to stand with thousands of others on Moulay Abdellah Avenue to watch the funeral procession.

As I began my teaching career in September 1999, in the village of Tizgui N'Barda, one of the most isolated areas of the High Atlas, the Rabat-based *al-Ittiḥād al-Ishtirākī* daily newspaper started serializing the memoirs of Mohamed Raïss. Sentenced to life in prison in 1972, Raïss was one of the fifty-eight soldiers forcibly "disappeared" to Tazmamart prison camp between 1973 and 1991 in the aftermath of the *coups d'état* against Hassan II in 1971 and 1972. Entitled *Min Ṣkhirāt ilā Tāzmāmārt: tadhkiratu dhahāb wa iyyāb ilā al-jaḥīm* (*From Skhirāt to Tazmamart: A Roundtrip Ticket to Hell*), this memoir was only the first trickle in the coming flood of revelations about Hassan II's reign. It was startling to learn, between 1999 and 2005 specifically, about secret detention centers in Agdz, Kelâat M'Gouna, and even Tamddākht. These locations are less than one hour away from where I grew up, which made me realize that Hassan II's authoritarianism had played out in places close to home. A few years later, I discovered that some of my teachers had passed through these detention centers but had kept silent about these painful episodes. Retrospectively, I can still visualize the bodily effects torture had on some of them. This was a transformative realization, prompting major questions that became central to my academic work in the years that followed.

Tifoultoute, my childhood home, is a touristic Amazigh village situated outside the city of Ouarzazate—the Hollywood of Africa, as it came to be known. My family home, which was adjacent to Thami El Glaoui's famous Kasbah, overlooked Aït Baroukh, a Jewish holy site. Made of two adobe rooms surrounded by an age-old cemetery, Aït Baroukh (named for Rabbi Yehia Ben Baroukh, as I learned later from research in the United States), was built on the right side of the road that linked Marrakesh to Zagora. Throughout my childhood in the 1980s, *udayn* (Jews in Tamazight) arrived and departed from Aït Baroukh during specific times in the fall and early spring, but I never understood why they came or left when they did. My childhood experience with Moroccan Jews until this day evokes a gray Bedford truck, a couple of sedans, and nicely dressed people who spoke a variety of languages, including Arabic, Tamazight, and French. Aït Baroukh is most strongly associated in my mind with melodious religious chants in a language I did not understand that went late into the night. Only the whirring of overloaded trucks transporting dates and other merchandise between Zagora and Marrakesh interrupted the Hebraic melody in these quiet evenings. I learned a great deal about Moroccan Jews during the years 1999 to 2009, which I spent teaching in the communes of Telouet and Ighrem N'Ougdal, two former hubs of Jewish life. Instead of school curricula and history books, it was

older men and women who taught me the history they carried in their memories and entrusted it to me in the hope that it would not fall into oblivion.[2]

As I reflected on these events and their connections to the larger context of the Moroccan nation, loss emerged as an essential theme. Thus, I use loss as a conceptual framework to ponder the historiographical implications of the forceful cultural resurgence of the three categories of Moroccan citizens who symbolized this deprivation for Moroccan society for five decades: Imazighen, Jews, and political prisoners. Although much scholarship has focused on the impact of enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention on specific individuals or groups of prisoners, loss as a fundamental result of political repression and ensuing trauma has not been discussed in the current scholarship on this period. But authoritarianism took a costly socioeconomic and cultural toll throughout the Years of Lead. Cultural production stalled, investment in the economy failed to achieve its potential, education deteriorated, some regions housed secret prisons which, for security reasons, exacerbated their socioeconomic isolation, and the country lost the most vibrant segments of its population to either emigration or political imprisonment. Morocco suffered civically as well, as mistrust between society and state turned into a fear of institutions.

The Years of Lead may have ended in 1999, but their impact on people, space, and culture continues to shape the attitudes of the Moroccan people even today. *Moroccan Other-Archives* is just one of many possible ways to engage with the variegated, historiographical, and mnemonic legacies of a past that is not yet past.