

Al-Kāhina: Jewish Warrior Prophetess

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Introduction

In the latter 600s, the Arab Muslim armies that had conquered fortified Byzantine Egypt in just two years tried to conquer western North Africa – and were stopped for five years by Berber tribes under by Dihya Al-Kāhina, a Jewish prophetess of the Berber Djeraoua (*aka Jerawa*) tribe. In modern times she became a symbol of resistance, with different Berber, Jewish, and feminist groups claiming her as “their” heroine.

She is also a very controversial figure. Writers have called her everything from a fanatic to a villain to a complete myth. Few medieval sources on al-Kāhina survive to resolve these different interpretations, and the one source that claims to be from her side and her century is very likely neither.

To clarify the truth of the matter, this paper begins by summarizing al-Kāhina’s tale according to the most complete and credible surviving medieval account: that of the great 14th-century Muslim historian Ibn Khaldūn. This paper then evaluates each argument against Ibn Khaldūn’s statements, identifies the three sentences where his account shifts from being solidly plausible to suspect, and proposes a corrected sequence of events. Finally, this paper’s appendix provides my translation into English of Ibn Khaldūn’s account since no commercially available English translation exists.



*Memorial to Al-Kahina in Kenchela, Algeria.
Image from Wikipedia, “Dihya”*

Ibn Khaldun and the limits of knowledge

In the late 1300s, Ibn Khaldūn wrote the *Kitāb al-'Ibar* ("Book of Lessons"), an extensive, detailed seven-book work that still today is considered a major primary source for Arab and Berber history. The translation of his Prologue (*Muqaddimah*) alone is 1,252 pages long.¹ The sections on Berber history were written while he was on Berber lands where armed Berbers could object if he got the tale of their ancestors wrong. His retelling of al-Kāhina's story is the most complete of the medieval Arab accounts and one that readers seeking to learn more on this topic will often see cited.

There are two glaring problems with using Ibn Khaldūn as a source for Dihya al-Kāhina. First, he wrote 700 years after her death – plenty of time for oral histories to have changed and previous writers to have made their own additions to the tale. Second, he was a member of the winning side, writing for both his side and for the Berbers who descended from those who had accepted Arab rule instead of dying with al-Kāhina. Thus, it is quite possible that he and his account were biased.

Why, then, should we start our search for the truth with the *Kitāb al-'Ibar*? The answer is that it is the least worst option available. The surviving documentation is limited and mostly from the Arab side: the early Berbers kept their histories orally, not in books. Archaeological evidence tells us that buildings burned, but it does not answer the critical question of who burned them.

Medieval historical accounts could be inaccurate, but modern experts have examined Ibn Khaldūn's and deemed it imperfect but mostly credible. Salo Wittmayer Baron, professor of Jewish history at Columbia University for 34 years and author of (among many other works) an 18-volume social and religious history of the Jews, wrote that Ibn Khaldun's account of al-Kāhina "is essentially confirmed."² Historian Norman Roth, editor of the *Medieval Jewish Civilization* volume of the *Routledge*

Encyclopedias of the Middle Ages, calls Ibn Khaldūn's account "Our most important source ... while there are other and earlier sources, none are as extensive or reflect [his] critical and judicious approach."³

We therefore start our search for the truth, but do not end it, with a summary of Dhiya (*aka Dahiya*) al-Kāhina's story as Ibn Khaldūn told it, re-organizing his thematically-grouped telling into a more understandable chronological sequence and adding clarifying details for Western readers but not yet questioning or changing his claims. It is based on Baron de Slane's translation of Ibn Khaldūn's Arabic work into French, the relevant sections of which – along with my translation of de Slane's text into English – appear in this paper's Appendix.

Dhiya Al-Kāhina's story according to Ibn Khaldūn

The Arab conquest of the Berbers took place in the Maghreb, which is Northwest Africa west of Egypt (i.e. from Morocco to Libya). Al-Kāhina's part in that war took place in *Ifrikia* - the old Roman province in modern Algeria and Tunisia that eventually gave its name to the entire continent of Africa.

The Berbers who lived in the 7th century Maghreb were a conglomeration of many different tribes and religions. The Berber tribes were divided into the el-Beranes and the el-Boṭr (*the former were mostly sedentary, and the latter mostly nomadic*⁴). The strongest tribal group within the el-Boṭr was the Zenata, and the most powerful tribe within the Zenata was the Djeraoua (*alternatively transliterated as Djerawa or Jerawa*). The Djeraoua, who lived in the Aurès Mountains of modern Algeria and Tunisia, provided most of the kings and chiefs over the el-Boṭr.

The Djeraoua were also one of the Berber tribes that had converted to Judaism. Other Jewish Berber tribes were the Nefouca (*aka Nefusa*), the Fendelaoua, the Medioun, the Behloula, the Ghiatha, and the Fazas.

In mid- to late-600s the Djeraoua were ruled by the prophetess Dihya, Al-Kāhina being a title meaning “the prophetess/seer” and not an actual name. Dihya al-Kāhina was of noble birth, able to trace her ancestry back to Guerao, one of the Djeraoua tribe’s founders. At first Dihya ruled through her obedient sons, who had inherited the actual formal ruling titles. Eventually, however, her prophetic abilities gave her such wisdom and success that she became the ruler in title as well. She is said to have ruled for sixty-five years and died at the age of one hundred twenty-seven (*Note: Even though this is likely an exaggeration, it means al-Kāhina was an old experienced leader at the time of her campaign*).

Before the Muslim invasion the Byzantines dominated the coastal cities, having conquered the region in 533. (*Note: Ibn Khaldūn called both the Byzantines and European settlers in this region “Franks”*). The Berbers ruled the inland “open country,” having kept their freedom by agreeing to fight for the “Franks” whenever summoned.

In 647 the Muslim Arabs, having already conquered Egypt in a two-year campaign, invaded the Maghreb. Count Gregory, the Byzantine Exarch of Africa whom Ibn Khaldūn called “Prince of the Franks,” raised an army to meet the Arabs. The Djeraoua, true to their promise, joined that army. In the ensuing battle the Arabs killed Count Gregory and routed his army. Each of the Berber tribes retreated to defend their own separate territories, helped by some surviving Byzantine troops.

Instead of quitting, however, the Berbers continued to rebel against the Arabs in a repeated cycle of battle, initial victories followed by eventual defeat, seeming surrender and conversion to Islam, and then re-rebellion as soon as the opportunity presented itself. In fact Ibn Khaldūn quoted an earlier scholar, Ibn-Abi-Yezid, who said that the Berbers had “apostatized up to twelve times.”

Eventually a devastating defeat in 67 AH (686-687 CE) at Mems of a unified Berber army under Koceila cost the Berbers their best cavalry and infantry. Still, when the Arab general Zoheir-Ibn-Cais-el-

Beloui who had beaten them died fighting elsewhere the Berbers rebelled yet again. However, this time each of the Berber sheiks fought separately, seeing themselves as independent rulers. The Caliph of the Umayyad caliphate, Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan, ordered his governor of Egypt, Hassan-Ibn-en-Noman-el-Ghassani (*aka Hassan al-Nu'man*), to finally truly subdue the Maghreb and sent him reinforcements. In 69 AH (688-9 CE), Hassan marched west, entered Kairouan (*in northern Tunisia*), and took Carthage by storm. The surviving Franks fled North Africa, heading to Sicily and Spain.

Hassan now turned to fight the Berbers. He asked who the most powerful Berber was, and was told it was al-Kāhina of the Djeraoua – the woman who in 683 CE had arranged the fatal ambush of Arab General Ocba ibn Nafe (*aka Uqba ibn Nafi*) while he was travelling south of the Aurès mountains. Hassan marched against al-Kāhina and took up a position on the Miskiana River at the foot of her mountain fortress. In the meantime, the surviving Berber troops from different tribes had rallied to join al-Kāhina and the Djeraoua in her fortress – not just the Zenata but all the Botr Berbers. With this combined force al-Kāhina attacked Hassan's army, killed many of them, routed the rest, and relentlessly drove them back all the way to Tripoli (in northwestern Libya). At that point the Caliph ordered Hassan to stop retreating, so Hassan halted at Barca (*modern Al Marj in northeastern Libya, 1900 kilometers from the Aurès and 1100 kilometers past Tripoli*) and built a series of castles that were still called in Ibn Khaldūn's day *Cosour Hassan* ("Hassan's Castles"). Al-Kāhina stopped her pursuit, returned to her lands, adopted as her third son one of her prisoners named Khaled-Ibn-Yezid-el-Caici, and ruled over the Berbers and indeed all of Ifrikiya for five years.

In 74 AH (693-94 CE) Hassan, having worked to divide al-Kāhina's supporters, invaded Ifrikiya again with additional reinforcements from Caliph Abd-el-Melek. Kāhina reacted by destroying all of the towns and farms from Tripoli (*in Libya*) to Tangier (*in Morocco*), leaving only ruins where there had

once been greenery. The Berbers whose property was destroyed left al-Kāhina's side and surrendered to Hassan, who then marched against al-Kāhina and her loyalists. Warned of her fate by her familiar demons before the battle, al-Kāhina told her two sons to also surrender to Hassan – which they did. Hassan utterly routed al-Kāhina's forces, drove into the Aurès Mountains, massacred there over a hundred thousand people, and killed al-Kāhina herself at the place still known as Bir-el-Kahena (*"Kāhina's Well", by the Algerian town of Bir el Atar*).

The defeated Berbers and al-Kāhina's sons accepted Hassan's amnesty and his authority, gave him twelve thousand troops to command, and embraced Islam. Hassan made al-Kāhina's eldest son the ruler of the Djeraoua and all the Aurès Mountains tribes. The Berbers, however, fought among themselves over Ifrikia and the Maghreb. When Mouça-Ibn-Noceir replaced Hassan as governor (*note: other sources put this in 704 CE*), he found these provinces almost depopulated and desolate. Ibn Noceir imported foreign troops from remote lands, attacked the Berbers, and again forced them to obey. In the end, the Djeraoua's power was destroyed, their surviving people merged with other Berber tribes.

Questioning Ibn Khaldūn's Account

Although the surviving evidence does not let us definitively *prove* whether Ibn Khaldūn's account is true or false, we can determine whether each part of his account is *plausible*. There are two ways. The first is by checking for consistency with other, independent accounts and with a general understanding of how humans usually behave in situations similar to the ones Ibn Khaldūn described.

The second way is by using the legal principle of "statement against interest." The logic is that people usually lie for gain or to look good. Therefore, if someone's statement makes them lose something or look bad, they probably wouldn't have said it unless it were true. For example, if someone says "Our divinely-inspired men easily defeated the infidel, who happily gave us all their

gold in their joy at being introduced to the True Way,” one could reasonably question the speaker’s accuracy. If, however, someone says “Our divinely inspired men ... were beaten by a woman from a competing religion who then drove them back almost 2,000 kilometers from the Aurès mountains to Barca in eastern Libya,” that would be a statement against interest and therefore probably true.

This paper will now use these two principles to examine each of Ibn Khaldūn’s key points in turn and determine whether each one is plausible.

Could a woman have commanded a Berber army?

The Berbers had a long tradition of respected prophetesses advising the male leadership. In the mid-500s the Byzantine historian Procopius of Caesarea wrote of such prophetesses during the then-recently-finished Byzantine wars against the North African Vandals and Berbers.⁵ Furthermore, Dihya al-Kāhina was not just a prophetess but a member of the leading Berber tribe’s ruling family who had proven herself for years before gaining the right to command.

At least one other desert-born woman of high birth and long deeds is solidly documented as having commanded an army during al-Kāhina’s lifetime. ‘Ā’ishah (*aka Aisha*) bint Abī Bakr, one of the Prophet Muhammed’s wives, came from one of Mecca’s most distinguished families and was the daughter of the first Caliph. She wrote 2,210 *hadiths* – accounts of the Prophet Muhammed’s life considered in Islamic law to be second only to the Qur’an itself. During the First *Fitna* (the first Muslim civil war), she led an army that captured Basra and fought Caliph Ali’s army near there in 656 CE – a battle still known as the Battle of the Camel because ‘Ā’ishah commanded her troops from the back of a camel.⁶

Thus Ibn Khaldūn’s claim that a woman commanded desert troops is plausible.

Could Dihya al-Kāhina have been Jewish?

Jews were recorded in northwest Africa long before Kāhina's time, with Jewish Berber tribesmen noted in Christian Berber author Tertullian's 197 CE book *Ad Nationes*.⁷ Then, in 429, Jews joined their fellow Berbers in fighting the invading Arian Christian Vandals. The Vandals won but gave the Jews religious freedom in order to focus on fighting the Catholic Romans.⁸ This freedom lasted until 533, when the Byzantines conquered the Vandals' coastal cities and more Jews fled inland to the Berber areas.⁹ Jewish Berber fighters are recorded after al-Kāhina too. In 695, an Arab army marching from Kairouan to Tripoli requested free passage from the Jewish Berber Nefusa tribe, attacking that tribe when it refused permission.¹⁰ In 711, Jewish Berber troops commanded by Kaula al-Yehudi were part of the Arab army that conquered Christian Spain.¹¹ Furthermore the Muslim 12th century historian Muhammed al-Idrisi recorded that the Jewish Barghwata tribe continued to maintain a capital at Aghmat (east of Marrakesh, in Morocco) until its fall to the Almoravids in 1059,¹² With not just Jewish Berbers but Jewish Berber fighters independently documented both before and after al-Kāhina's time, one can safely say that Jewish Berber fighters existed during al-Kāhina's time.

The main scholarly objection to the idea of Jewish Berbers *during* al-Kāhina's time stems from the fact that the Byzantines ruthlessly suppressed all other religions after conquering the Maghreb. For example, in 533-534 the Byzantines confiscated the religious objects, property, and places of worship of not just Jews and pagans but also of non-Catholic Christians such as Arians and Donatists.¹³ The argument is that Jews could not have survived in such an environment.¹⁴ The flaw in that argument is that Jews didn't have to. The Byzantines did rule the coastal cities, but as Ibn Khaldūn pointed out they left the inland Berbers free in return for military service – and as a result any coast-dwelling Jews would simply have had to join their Botr brethren inland to stay free. Such a move would have been consistent with the standard Berber (and general desert nomad) tactic of retreating into the inland

deserts and mountains when faced with a superior military force. Please note that the Aurès Mountains, the home of al-Kāhina's Djeraoua tribe, are 250 kilometers inland.

Since Jewish Berbers existed during al-Kāhina's time, was al-Kāhina herself Jewish? We do not have any hard proof either way. What we do have is the plausibility of Ibn Khaldūn's account that says she was and an extremely implausible account that implies that she wasn't.

In 1889 the French ethnographer David Cazès published an old Judeo-Arabic poem he'd heard from an Algerian Jew wherein a Jewish mother mourned her sons killed by al-Kāhina. The poem painted al-Kāhina in an extremely negative light, with lines such as "She gave our virgins to her warriors."¹⁵ This discovery led some Jewish scholars to question Ibn Khaldūn's account and say that al-Kāhina couldn't have been Jewish because no Jew would have done that to her own people.¹⁶

However, because the orally-transmitted poem Cazès heard was not written down until 1889 – half a millennium after Ibn Khaldūn – we have no way to investigate the poem's author's credibility. The poem could have been written by either side any time between 693 and 1889. Furthermore, having her own troops rape rebel supporters is inconsistent with the behavior of other historical female rebel commanders, but is consistent with the potential behavior of victorious armies – and victors have been known to re-write history. Indeed, this paper will later show that such a re-write probably happened.

Was the description of al-Kāhina's 688 CE campaign plausible?

Ibn Khaldūn described an incredible achievement. Two years before, in 686 CE, the battle of Mems cost the Berbers not only their best troops but their unified military command. Furthermore, when the Berbers rebelled again in 688 CE, the different Berber sheiks fought as separate forces. With the Berbers divided, Hassan first focused on and defeated the coastal cities' "Franks" so badly that

they fled North Africa for Sicily and Spain. This left the Berbers without allies – indeed without the people who had summoned them to fight the Arabs in the first place.

Despite all that, Ibn Khaldūn said that al-Kāhina managed to meet the oncoming Arab army with a unified army drawn many from Berber tribes, defeated the Arab army that had defeated the coastal cities, and relentlessly drove the Arab invaders back almost 2,000 kilometers.

In short, here was an Arab author writing that in the middle of the peak period of Arab Muslim military expansion a woman from a different, competing religion managed to turn around a nearly untenable military situation, defeated an army of Arab men, and forced that army into a prolonged retreat. It is indeed a “statement against interest” – an admission that he would not likely have made unless it were true. Furthermore, just in case any of his readers doubted his account, Ibn Khaldūn provided supporting evidence -- that the fortresses built to let the Arabs stop retreating still existed in his day.

What we do not have here is a full set of answers. How did al-Kāhina take a divided group of tribes who had just lost their best troops and their allies and form a united army able to defeat the Arab invaders? Furthermore, if the Berbers had originally been *forced* to fight for the hostile Byzantines, what motivated them to keep fighting the Arabs despite defeat after defeat? Perhaps additional research will uncover a source that answers these questions.

Who really burned the Maghreb's cities?

So far, each of Ibn Khaldūn's statements have been plausible. However, with the 693 CE campaign that led to al-Kāhina's death we come to the first of his sentences that were not.

Ibn Khaldūn wrote that when al-Kāhina heard of Hassan's advance, she burned all the towns and farms from Tripoli (in Tunisia) to Tangier (in Morocco). The traditional explanation, repeated as

fact on many Internet websites that retell al-Kāhina's story, says this was a scorched-earth defense that also sought to make the Maghreb a less attractive target. However, such a defense would have made the Berber army march 4,500 kilometers from the Aurès to Tripoli to Tangier and back, defeating and destroying walled towns all along the way, in time and in good enough shape to intercept an Arab army that had to march unopposed no more than 40% of that distance to reach the Aurès. Furthermore, the Arab army came from the east while Tangier is almost due west of the Aurès, making 3,300 kilometers of the alleged round trip completely useless as a scorched-earth defense.

Such a defense would have been not only nonsensical but unnecessary. Al-Kāhina could simply have repeated the defense that had worked five years before: stay in the fortified mountain terrain she knew well, with its peaks up to 7,600 feet high, hold easily-defended high ground, force attackers to march hundreds of kilometers inland away from any source of resupply or reinforcement, and wait for the enemy to make a mistake. The downside was that defense plan would have left the coastal regions open to exactly the sort of devastation Ibn Khaldūn described, except done by the Arabs and not by the Berbers themselves. However, by this point the Arab-Berber conflict had been raging for 46 years, and in those years the coastal towns had shown again and again that they simply could not hold out against a determined Arab attack. Protecting the coast was simply not militarily possible.

Why, then, would anyone believe that al-Kāhina was the one who burned the coastal towns and farms? We know from Ibn Khaldūn that Hassan worked to sow disunion among the Berbers. We can posit that many Berbers in the coastal towns would have resented their general's not defending their homes and families, regardless of the hard military facts behind that decision. It is therefore logical to conclude that Hassan would have worked hard to increase that resentment in order to get more Berbers to quit the rebellion. Furthermore, blaming al-Kāhina for the fact of the damage could easily have morphed over the centuries into blaming al-Kāhina for actually causing the damage, especially

when the victors were the ones who wrote the history books. Not all Berbers would have felt that way, of course, but the loyalists would have been disproportionately among the 100,000 people Hassan killed in the Aurès Mountains.

Did al-Kāhina truly consent to the Arabs conquering her people?

Ibn Khaldūn's second improbable sentence is that before her final battle al-Kāhina, warned by otherworldly guidance of what to come, sent her sons to join the Arabs and lead the Djeraoua after her death. This was very convenient for the Arabs, for what better way to help end decades of rebellion than by claiming that the last great rebel leader had bowed to the inevitable Arab rule and had even contributed her own sons to it? This was also very convenient for her sons, who thereby regained the position that their tribe had taken from them and given to their mother.

However, if al-Kāhina had really consented to her sons' saving themselves then why hadn't she and her army surrendered too, making a deal like the one her forefathers had made with the Byzantines? It would have prevented her death and those of 100,000 other Berbers. Furthermore, her sons' surrender and subsequent rule over the Djeraoua didn't save her tribe – another attack just ten years later ended with the Djeraoua's destruction and dispersal. The claim of al-Kāhina's consent makes too little sense and was too convenient for the people making the claim to be believed. It is possible that the sons did indeed make the claim, and that Hassan publicly accepted it knowing exactly what the claim was worth, but that does not mean that the claim itself was true.

Who was Khaled-Ibn-Yezid-el-Caici and what did he really do?

The claim that al-Kāhina allegedly contributed her sons to the Arab conquest (and thus by implication bowed to it) brings up Ibn Khaldūn's third questionable statement: that after her initial victory over Hassan al-Kāhina adopted an Arab captive named Khaled-Ibn-Yezid-el-Caici (*aka Khalid b.*

Yazid al-Absi) as her third son. Earlier Arab writers (who would have been known to Ibn Khaldūn's readership) had given Khaled a much bigger part in al-Kāhina's story. For example, Ibn Abd al-Hakam (d. 871) wrote that Khaled served as Hassan's spy, regularly sending Hassan messages, and ultimately served as the go-between – at al-Kāhina's request, of course – who arranged her two other sons' surrender.

Al-Hakam also wrote that as a prophetess al-Kāhina knew perfectly well that Khaled was a spy, but instead of killing him al-Kāhina simply began helplessly whining to her sons that they were all doomed, that their fates were sealed. Such a portrayal, while assuring al-Hakam's Arab readers that theirs was a God-ordained victory, was hardly the behavior one would have expected of a successful general and leader. Indeed, given the Arab culture of the time making a woman look less worthy of command may have part of al-Hakam's goal.

It is also telling that in a culture where tales dwell extensively on ancestry and who begat whom, none of the medieval Arab writers provided Khaled's background. Nor did they provide any explanation for the adoption, though modern authors have speculated reasons ranging from mercy to a desire for a handsome boy toy. Given the lack of hard facts and the implausibility of what the sources did say, it is best to mark this one down as "unknown" and acknowledge Khaled's presence in the legend without giving it credence.

Conclusion: Dihya Al-Kāhina's tale re-told

The improbable claims we've identified here have been repeated and accepted at face value in many books, articles, and Internet pages. After all, they and similar claims from other medieval writers were from actual medieval sources. However, since all the surviving medieval accounts of al-Kāhina were written by Arab Muslim men about a Berber Jewish female foe, and since even Ibn Khaldūn's account (the most complete and accurate of those accounts) had some dubious statements, we need to treat any medieval portrayal of al-Kāhina – or any modern retelling that draws upon those portrayals – with appropriate caution.

Appropriate caution, however, does not mean that we cannot form conclusions. We can take Ibn Khaldūn's account, accept as probably true the portions consistent with independent accounts or which qualify as statements against interest, replace his two low-probability-of-truth statements with ones that make more sense given the surrounding events, and complete the story by adding what came after Ibn Khaldūn's telling.

Dihya Al-Kāhina's tale part #1 (Based on Ibn Khaldūn's account)

Dihya al-Kāhina – Dihya “the prophetess” – was a mother of chiefs and the daughter of chiefs. Descended from a founder of the Berber Djeraoua tribe, a tribe that provided most of the kings and chiefs over the nomadic branch of the Berbers, she initially ruled through her sons but eventually earned the right to rule in her own name. The Djeraoua were based in the Aurès Mountains, a rugged inland range in modern Algeria and Tunisia with peaks up to 7,600 feet high.

Al-Kāhina and her Djeraoua tribe were Jews, as were six other Berber tribes, but in the early 600s the Berbers of northwestern Africa were a conglomeration of many different tribes and religions.

The Byzantines ruled the coastal cities, leaving the inland Berbers politically and religiously free but compelled to provide troops when called.

In 647 the Muslim Arabs, having conquered Byzantine fortified Egypt in just two years, invaded the Maghreb (northwest Africa from Morocco to Libya). Forty years of war followed, with the Berbers repeatedly fighting, being defeated, and rebelling yet again whenever opportunity presented itself. Al-Kāhina ruled the Djeraoua during many of those years and helped arrange the fatal ambush of an Arab general.

In 688 the Caliph ordered his governor of Egypt, Hassan Ibn-en-Noman, to finally truly pacify the Maghreb and sent him extra troops to do so. With the Berbers divided and weakened from a bloody defeat two years before at Mems, Hassan could attack his foes one at a time. First, he conquered the coastal cities in Tunisia, convincing the Byzantines to flee North Africa. Then it was the Berbers' turn. Hassan asked who the most powerful remaining Berber leader was, and upon hearing it was al-Kāhina he marched his army against her and camped at the foot of her Aurès mountain fortress.

Here we have an intriguing gap in the record. At the start of the 688 rebellion the Berbers were deeply divided – Ibn Khaldūn explicitly said that each Berber sheik fought separately, seeing himself as an independent ruler. However, by the time Hassan reached al-Kāhina's mountain she commanded a unified force from not just the Djeraoua but troops from all the Botr (*i.e. nomadic*) Berber tribes. It would be interesting to learn how al-Kāhina accomplished this, but Ibn Khaldūn does not say.

Regardless, al-Kāhina army routed Hassan's army and drove it relentlessly back. When Hassan's army reached Tripoli – 800 kilometers east of the Aurès – the Caliph ordered Hassan to stop retreating. In fact, al-Kāhina continued pursuing the retreating Hassan until he reached a series of forts (which still existed in Ibn Khaldūn's day) near Barca, 1,900 kilometers east of the Aurès. Al-Kāhina then turned and headed home, ruling the Aurès and all *Ifrikia* (Algeria and Tunisia) for five years.

Having been badly mauled by a unified Berber army, Hassan worked for five years to divide the Berbers before attacking again. Certainly there were divisions to exploit, such as the those rampant at the 688 campaign's start or the split between the nomadic Botr and sedentary Beranes Berbers. However, the division that most affected how al-Kāhina's tale would be told through the ages was the hard fact that al-Kāhina could defend the homes of the inland Berbers of the Aurès mountains but not the homes of the people of the coast (Berber and otherwise). Thus when Hassan returned with a reinforced army in 693, many of the coastal Berbers surrendered to him. It is also extremely likely that the coastal Berbers' bitterly blamed their general for not protecting their homes from destruction, a sentiment which morphed over the years into blaming her for perpetrating the destruction itself – a story change that would have been extremely convenient for the Arabs who wrote the history books.

After conquering the coast Hassan drove his army into the Aurès mountains, killed al-Kāhina and 100,000 other Berbers, compelled the Berbers to embrace Islam, and forced them to contribute 12,000 troops to his army. Since al-Kāhina's sons had already surrendered to him, claiming that their mother had told them to save themselves and abandon the rebellion, Hassan made her eldest son ruler of the Aurès mountain tribes.

This did not bring peace, however. The Berbers continued fighting among themselves, possibly (among other divisions) along the split between the surviving loyalists and those cooperating with Arab rule. When the new Arab governor arrived in 704 he imported foreign troops from distant lands and, with that army, finally crushed the almost-sixty-year-long Berber rebellion. As for al-Kāhina's tribe, the Djeraoua's power was destroyed and its surviving people merged with other Berber tribes.

Dihya Al-Kāhina's tale part #3 (After Ibn Khaldūn's account)

After the Arab conquest of the Maghreb, tension and intermittent conflict continued between the Arabs and the Berbers even though a Berber/Jewish force helped the Arabs take and hold Spain.¹⁷ In 909, Berber tribes helped create the Fatimid Caliphate, a North African entity independent of the main Abbasid Caliphate. With a few exceptions (most notably the insane Caliph al-Hākim¹⁸), the Fatimid Caliphate tended to tolerate non-Muslims, appointing both Jews and Christians to public offices.

In modern times the Maghreb was again the site of rebellion against a foreign invading power, except this time the foreigners were the French. Books published about Dihya al-Kāhina began portraying her as a heroine or anti-heroine, not a murderous villainess.¹⁹ Article and counter-article appeared, with the different portrayals varying according to the writers' political views and tribal/national/religious allegiance. The Berbers, drawing parallels between their struggle against the French and their old struggles against the Arabs, usually portrayed her as a clear heroine.²⁰ Kahina became a popular girl's name for Tunisian Jews (who joined the anti-colonialist movement), and Tunisian Jewish intellectuals who emigrated to France named their organization Kahina.²¹ During the revolt of the Kabyle Berbers in the 1850s, female warrior leaders such as Lalla Fathma saw al-Kāhina as a role model.²² Interestingly, Lalla Fathma's followers said that she too could see the future.

Despite centuries of being slandered and vilified, Dihya al-Kāhina was again helping inspire her people to fight for their independence.

Appendix: My Translation into English of Ibn Khaldūn's Account

One challenge that non-Arab-speakers face in researching al-Kāhina is that only the first volume of Ibn Khaldūn's seven-book world history (the *Kitāb al-'Ibar* or "Book of Lessons") has been fully translated into English. This is probably because the first book – the 1377 *Muqaddimah* ("Introduction to History" or "Prolegomenon") – is the one that presents Ibn Khaldūn's theories of history and is thus of most interest to American and English historians. Lest this strike readers as mere laziness on translators' part, please note that the *Muqaddimah's* translation's PDF is 1,252 pages long.²³

Fortunately, in 1852-1856 the Irish-born William McGuckin, Baron de Slane and eventually the French Army of Africa's principal Arabic interpreter, translated Ibn Khaldūn's books covering Berber history into French. I tracked down a copy,²⁴ borrowed it, and translated the sections dealing with Al-Kāhina and her historical context from French into English.

A word of caution, however: Because words in one language often do not exactly match the words in another language, translators need to pick among different words with different shades of meaning. Thus we cannot tell from the text alone whether a translator's choices truly reflect the original writer's intent or whether the translator added his or her own "spin." For example, Baron de Slane wrote that "familiar demons" ("*démons familiers*") guided al-Kāhina. Did Ibn Khaldūn really claim that she followed evil guides, or did de Slane, an 1800s Westerner, simply translate a word like *djinn* (who in Arabic mythology are not necessarily evil) that way? Resolving such issues, of course, requires reading the original source document. However, until someone skilled in Arabic provides a direct Arabic-to-English translation of the relevant sections of Ibn Khaldūn's *Kitāb al-'Ibar*, or until I learn enough Arabic to do so myself, the below is (to my knowledge) the only full copy in English of the primary surviving medieval account of al-Kāhina and her deeds.

Le Baron de Slane's 1850s translation from Ibn Khaldūn's Arabic text into French	My translation from de Slane's French into English
<p><i>Volume I, p. 198</i></p> <p><i>DES TALENTS QUE LA RACE BERBÈRE A DÉPLOYÉS, TANT DANS LES TEMPS ANCIENS QUE DE NOS JOURS, ET DES NOBLES QUALITÉS PAR LESQUELLES ELLE S'EST ÉLEVÉE à la PUISSANCE ET AU RANG DE NATION</i></p> <p><i>[Chapitre Ajouté Par L'Auteur Après Avoir Achevé Son Ouvrage]</i></p> <p>En traitant de la race berbère, des nombreuses populations dont elle se compose, et de la multitude de tribus et de peuplades dans laquelle elle se divise, nous avons fait mention des victoires qu'elle remporta sur les princes de la terre, et de ses luttes avec divers empires pendant des siècles, depuis ses guerres en Syrie avec les enfants d'Israël et sa sortie de ce pays pour se transporter en Ifrîkia et en Maghreb. Nous avons raconté les combats qu'elle livra aux premières armées musulmanes qui envahirent l'Afrique; nous avons signalé les nombreux traits de bravoure qu'elle déploya sous les drapeaux de ses nouveaux alliés, et retracé l'histoire de Dihya-t-el-Kahena, du peuple nombreux et puissant qui obéissait à cette femme, et de l'autorité qu'elle exerça dans l'Auras, depuis les temps qui précèdent immédiatement l'arrivée des vrais croyants jusqu'à sa défaite par les Arabes. Nous avons mentionné avec quel empressement la tribu de Miknaça se rallia aux musulmans; comment elle se révolta et chercha un asile dans le Maghreb-el-Acsa pour échapper à la vengeance d'Ocba-Ibn-Nafe, et comment les troupes du khalife Hicham la subjuguèrent plus tard dans le territoire du Maghreb. "Les Berbères," dit Ibn-Abi-Yezîd, apostasièrent "jusqu'à douze fois, tant en Ifrîkia qu'en Maghreb; chaque fois, ils soutinrent une guerre contre les Musulmans, et ils n'adoptèrent définitivement l'islamisme que sous le gouvernement de Mouça-Ibn-Noceir"; ou quelque temps après, selon un autre récit.</p>	<p><i>THE TALENTS THAT THE BERBER RACE HAS DEMONSTRATED, BOTH IN ANCIENT TIMES AND IN OUR DAYS, AND THE NOBLE QUALITIES BY WHICH IT HAS RISEN TO THE POWER AND RANK OF "NATION"</i></p> <p><i>[Chapter Added By The Author After Completing His Book]</i></p> <p>In discussing the Berber race, the many populations of which it is composed, and the multitude of tribes and peoples in which it is divided, we have mentioned the victories it has won over the princes of the Earth, and its struggles with various empires for centuries, since its wars in Syria with the children of Israel and its departure from that country to move to Ifrikia and the Maghreb. We retold the battles they gave to the first Muslim armies that invaded Africa; we have pointed out the many traits of bravery they demonstrated under the flags of their new allies, and recounted the history of Dihya al-Kāhina, of the numerous and powerful people who obeyed that woman, and of the authority that they exercised in the Aures Mountains, from the time immediately preceding the arrival of the true believers until their defeat by the Arabs. We have mentioned how eagerly the tribe of Miknasa rallied to the Muslims; how they rebelled and sought refuge in Morocco to escape the vengeance of Okba Ibn Nafi, and how the troops of Caliph Hisham subjugated them later in the lands of the Maghreb. "The Berbers," said Ibn-Abi-Yezid, "apostatized up to twelve times, both in Africa and the Maghreb; each time, they supported a war against the Muslims, and they definitively adopted Islam only under Musa ibn Noseir"; or sometime later according to another telling.</p>

<p><i>Volume I, p. 206</i></p> <p>COUP D'OEIL SUR L'HISTOIRE DES BERBÈRES DEPUIS LES TEMPS QUI ONT PRÉCÉDÉ LA CONQUÊTE MUSULMANE JUSQU'À L'AVÈNEMENT DE LA DYNASTIE AGHLEBIDE</p>	<p>AN OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF THE BERBERS FROM THE TIMES PRECEDING THE MUSLIM CONQUEST TO THE AGHLABID DYNASTY</p>
<p>Volume I, pp. 208-209</p> <p>Une partie des Berbères professait le judaïsme, religion qu'ils avaient reçue de leurs puissants voisins, les Israélites de la Syrie. Parmi les Berbères juifs on distinguait les Djeraoua, tribu qui habitait l'Auras et à laquelle appartenait la Kahena, femme qui fut tuée par les Arabes à l'époque des premières invasions. Les autres tribus juives étaient les Nefouça, Berbères de l'Ifrîkia, les Fendelaoua, les Mediouna, les Behlouloua, les Ghîatha et les Fazas, Berbères du Maghreb-el-Acsa. Idris premier, descendant d'El-Hacen, fils d'El-Hacen [petit-fils de Mahomet], étant arrivé en Maghreb, fit disparaître de ce pays jusqu'aux dernières traces des religions [chrétienne, juive et païenne] et mit un terme à l'indépendance de ces tribus.</p>	<p>Some of the Berbers followed Judaism, a religion they had received from their powerful neighbors, the Israelites of Syria. Among the Jewish Berbers were the Djeraoua, a tribe who inhabited the Aurès Mountains and to whom belonged the Kāhina, a woman who was killed by the Arabs at the time of the first invasions. The other Jewish tribes were the Nefouca, Berbers of Ifrikiya, the Fendelaoua, the Medioun, the Behlouloua, the Ghiatha, and the Fazas, Berbers of Morocco. Idris I, descendant of al-Hasan, son of al-Hasan [grandson of Muhammad], having arrived in the Maghreb, removed from that country the last traces of those religions [Christian, Jewish and Pagan] and put an end to those tribes' independence.</p>
<p>Volume I, pp. 212-215</p> <p>En l'an 67 (686-7), sous le khalifat d'Abd-el-Mélek, Zoheir-Ibn-Caïs-el-Béloui arriva en Ifrîkia pour venger la mort d'Ocba. Koceila rassembla aussitôt ses Berbères et alla lui livrer bataille à Mems, dans la province de Cairouan. Des deux côtés l'on se battit avec un acharnement extrême, mais, à la fin, les Berbères prirent la fuite après avoir fait des pertes énormes. Koceila lui-même y trouva la mort ... Cette bataille ayant coûté aux Berbères la fleur de leurs troupes, infanterie et cavalerie, brisa leur puissance, abassa leur orgueil et fit disparaître à jamais l'influence des Francs. Cédant à la terreur que Zoheir et les Arabes leur inspiraient, les populations vaincues se réfugièrent dans les châteaux et les forteresses du pays.</p> <p>Quelque temps après, Zoheir se jeta dans la dévotion, et prit le chemin de l'Orient, il trouva la mort à Barca en combattant les infidèles.</p>	<p>In 67 AH (686-7 CE), during the Caliphate of Abd-el-Melek, Zoheir-Ibn-Cais-el-Beloui arrived in Ifrikiya to avenge Okba's death. Koceila immediately gathered his Berbers and went to fight him at Mems, in Kairouan province. Both sides fought with extreme determination, but, in the end, the Berbers fled after suffering huge losses. Koceila himself was killed ... This battle cost the Berbers the best of their troops, infantry and cavalry, broke their power, lowered their pride and made the influence of the Franks disappear forever. Yielding to the terror that Zoheir and the Arabs inspired, the vanquished peoples took refuge in the country's castles and fortresses.</p> <p>Some time later, Zoheir threw himself into devotion, and on his way to the East, he found death at Barca in combat with infidels. As a</p>

A la suite de cet événement, le feu de la révolte se propagea de nouveau par toute l'Ifrikia, mais la désunion se me alor parmi les Berbères, chacun de leurs cheikhs se regardant comme prince indépendant.

Parmi leurs chefs les plus puissants, on remarque surtout la Kahena, reine du Mont-Auras, et dont le vrai nom était Dihya, fille de Tabeta, fils de Tifan. Sa famille faisait partie Djeraoua, tribu qui fournissait des rois et des chefs à tous les Berbères descendus d'El-Abter.

Le khalife Abd-el-Mélek fit parvenir à Hassan-Ibn-en-Noman-el-Ghassani, gouverneur de L'Égypte, l'ordre de perter la guerre en Ifrikia, et il lui envoya les secours nécessaires pour cette entreprise. El-Hassan se mit en marche, l'an 69 (688-9), et entra à Cairouan d'où il alla emporter d'assault la ville de Carthage. Les Francs qui s'y trouvaient encore passèrent alors en Sicile et en Espagne. Après cette victoire, Hassan demanda qui était le prince le plus redoutable parmi les Berbères, et ayant appris que c'était la Kahena, femme qui commandait à la puissant tribu des Djeraoua, il marcha contre elle et prit position sur le bord de la rivière Miskiana. La Kahena mena ses troupes contre les Musulmans, et les attaquant avec un acharnement extrême, elle les força à perendre la fuite après leur avoir tué beaucoup de monde. Khaled-Ibn-Yezîd-el-Caiçi resta prisonnier entre les mains des vainqueurs. La Kāhina ne perdid pas un instant à poursuivre les Arabes, et les ayant expulsés du territoire de Cebes, elle contraignit leur général à chercher refuge dans la province de Tripoli. Hassan ayant alors reçu une lettre d'Abd-el-Mélek, lui ordonnant de ne pas reculer davantage, il s'arrêta et bâtit les châteaux quell l'on appelle encoure aujourd'hui Cosour-Hassan (*les châteaux de Hassan*). La Kahena rentra dans son pays, et ayant adopté pour troisième fils son prisonnier Khaled, elle continue, pendant cinq ans, à régner sur l'Ifrikia et à gouverner les Berbères.

result of this event, the fire of rebellion spread again throughout Ifrikia, but the Berbers were divided, and each of their sheikhs saw himself as an independent prince.

Among their most powerful chiefs, we must take particular note of al-Kāhina, queen of Mount Aurès, whose real name was Dihya, daughter of Tabeta, son of Tifan. Her family were part of the Djeraoua, a tribe that provided kings and chiefs to all the Berbers descended from El-Abter (*i.e. the el-Boṭr*²⁵).

Caliph Abd-el-Melek ordered Hassan-Ibn-en-Noman-el-Ghassani, governor of Egypt, to win the war in Ifrikia, and he sent him the necessary help for this enterprise. El-Hassan set out, in the year 69 AH (688-9 CE), and entered Kairouan from whence he went to take the city of Carthage by storm. The Franks who were still there then left for Sicily and Spain. After this victory, Hassan asked who was the most formidable prince among the Berbers, and having learned that it was al-Kāhina, a woman who commanded the powerful Djeraoua tribe, he marched against her and took up position on the edge of the Miskiana River. Kāhina led her troops against the Muslims, and attacking them with extreme perseverance, she forced them to flee the escape after killing many of them. Khaled-Ibn-Yezid-el-Caici was held prisoner in the hands of the victors. Kāhina did not lose an instant in pursuing the Arabs, and having expelled them from the territory of Cebes, she forced their general to seek refuge in the province of Tripoli. Hassan then received a letter from Abd-el-Melek, ordering him not to retreat further, he stopped and built the castles that are today called Cosour-Hassan (Hassan's castles). Kāhina returned to her country, and having adopted her prisoner Khaled as her third son, she continued for five years to reign over Ifrikia and rule the Berbers.

En l'an 74 (693-4), Hassan revint en Ifrîkia à la tête des renforts qu'Abd-el-Mélek lui avait expédiés. A son approche, la Kahena fit détruire toutes les villes et fermes du pays; aussi, cette vaste région qui, depuis Tripoli jusqu'à Tangier, avait offert l'aspect d'un immense bocage, a l'ombre duquel s'élevait une foule de villages touchant les uns aux autres, ne montra plus que des ruines.

Les Berbères virent avec un déplaisir extrême la destruction de leurs propriétés, et abandonnèrent la Kahena pour faire leur soumission a Hassan. Ce général profita d'un événement aussi heureux, et ayant réussi a semer la désunion parmi les adhérents de la Kahena, il marcha contre les Berbères qui obéissaient encore a cette femme, et les mit en pleine déroute. La Kahena elle-même fut tuée dans le Mont-Auras, à un endroit que l'on appelle, jusqu'à ce jour, Bir-el-Kahena (*le puits de la Kahena*). L'offre d'une amnistie générale décida les vaincus à embrasser l'islamisme, à reconnaître l'autorité du gouvernement arabe et à fournir un contingent de douze mille guerriers à Hassan. La sincérité de leur conversion fut attestée par leur conduit subséquente.

Hassan accorda au fils aîné de la Kahena le commandement en chef des Djeraoua et le gouvernement du Mont-Auras. Il faut savoir que d'après les conseils de cette femme, conseils dictés par les connaissances surnaturelles que ses démons familiers lui avaient enseignées, ses deux fils s'étaient rendus aux Arabes avant la dernière bataille.

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Quelque temps après, les Berbères se disputèrent la possession de l'Ifrîkia et du Maghreb, de sorte que ces provinces furent presque deppeuplées. Quand le nouveau gouverneur, Mouça-Ibn-Noceir, arriva à Cairouan et vit l'Ifrîkia changée en une vaste solitude, il y fit venir les populations d'origine étrangère qui se trouvaient dans les provinces éloignées, et ayant tourné ses armes contre les Berbères, il soumit le Marghreb et força ce people à rentrer dans l'obéissance.

In the year 74 AH (693-4 CE), Hassan returned to Ifrikia at the head of the reinforcements that Abd-el-Melek had sent him. At his approach, Kāhina destroyed all the towns and farms of the country; so that vast region, which from Tripoli to Tangier had looked like an immense series of hedgerows, in the shadow of which rose a crowd of villages touching each other, held nothing but ruins. The Berbers saw with extreme displeasure the destruction of their property, and abandoned Kāhina to make their submission to Hassan. This general took advantage of such a happy event, and having succeeded in sowing disunion among Kāhina's followers, he marched against the Berbers who still obeyed this woman, and completely routed them. Kāhina herself was killed in the Aurès Mountains, at a place known to-day as Bir-el-Kahena (*Kāhina's Well*). The offer of a general amnesty convinced the vanquished to embrace Islam, to recognize the authority of the Arab government and to provide a contingent of twelve thousand warriors to Hassan. The sincerity of their conversion was proven by their subsequent conduct.

Hassan granted Kāhina's eldest son the chief command of the Djeraoua and the government of Mount Aurès. It must be known that following the advice of this woman, advice dictated by the supernatural knowledge that her familiar demons had taught her, her two sons had surrendered to the Arabs before the last battle.

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Sometime later, the Berbers quarreled over possession of Ifrikia and the Magrhreb, so these provinces were almost depopulated. When the new governor, Mouça-Ibn-Noceir, arrived in Kairouan and saw Ifrikia transformed into a vast desolation, he brought in people of foreign origin from remote provinces, and having taken arms against the Berbers, he subdued the Marghreb and forced that people to return to obedience.

<p>Volume III, pp. 190-191</p> <p>PREMIÈRE PÉRIODE DE L'HISTOIRE DES ZENATA</p> <p>:</p> <p>Les Berbères, se croyant alors assez forts pour résister aux musulmans, réunirent leurs bandes et occupèrent les forteresses qui couronnaient les montagnes, pendant que les Zenata se rallièrent à la Kahena, femme qui se tenait dans l'Auras avec sa tribu, les Djeraoua. Mis en déroute par les Arabes et poursuivis à travers les plaines, les montagnes et les déserts, ces peuples durent, bon gré mal gré, embrasser l'islamisme et subir la domination des enfants de Moïse. Dès lors, le gouvernement arabe leur imposa les mêmes obligations auxquelles les Francs les avaient soumis.</p>	<p>THE FIRST PHASE OF THE ZENATA TRIBE'S HISTORY</p> <p>:</p> <p>The Berbers, believing themselves strong enough to resist the Muslims, united their bands and occupied the fortresses which crowned the mountains, while the Zenata rallied to al-Kāhina, the woman who stood in the Aurès Mountains with her tribe, the Djeraoua. Routed by the Arabs and pursued across the plains, mountains and deserts, these peoples at last, whether they had wanted to or not, embraced Islam and suffered the domination of the children of Moïse. From then on, the Arab government imposed on them the same obligations to which the Franks had already submitted.</p>
<p>Volume III pp. 192-195</p> <p>HISTOIRE DE LA KĀHINA ET DE SON PEUPLE, LES DJERAOUA – LEUR CONDUITE A L'ÉGARD DES MUSULMANS, LORS DE L'INVASION</p> <p>Les Djeraoua, peuple berbère qui habitait l'Ifrikia et le Maghreb, se distinguaient par leur puissance et par le nombre de leurs guerriers. Ils montraient aux Francs établis dans les Villes une soumission apparente et, pour rester en possession du pays ouvert, ils prêtaient à ceux-ci l'appui de leurs armes à chaque réquisition. Quand les musulmans se montrèrent sur la frontière de l'Ifrikia dont ils voulaient faire la conquête, les Djeraoua marchèrent contre eux avec les troupes de Djorédjîr (Grégoire), [prince des Francs]. Dans cette rencontre, Djorédjîr perdit la vie, son armée fut mise en déroute et la puissance des Chrétiens fut brisée. Depuis ce moment, les Berbères ne se présentèrent plus en masse devant les troupes arabes, mais chacune de leurs tribus combattit dans son propre territoire, en se faisant aider par un détachement de Francs.</p>	<p>THE HISTORY OF AL-KĀHINA AND HER PEOPLE, THE DJERAOUA – THEIR BEHAVIOR TOWARDS THE MUSLIMS, DURING THE INVASION</p> <p>The Djeraoua, Berber people who lived in Ifrikia and the Maghreb, were distinguished by their power and the number of their warriors. They showed the Franks established in the Cities a seeming submission, and to remain in possession of the open country, they lent to them the support of their arms at every summons. When the Muslims appeared on the frontier of Ifrikia where they wanted to conquer, the Djeraoua marched against them with the troops of Djoredjir (Gregory), [Prince of the Franks]. In this encounter, Djoredjir lost his life, his army was routed and the power of the Christians was broken. After that, the Berbers no longer massed together before the Arab troops, but each of their tribes fought in its own territory, being helped by a detachment of Franks.</p>

La guerre entre Ali et Moaouïa empêcha les vrais croyants de songer à l’Afrique; mais, après l’Année de l’union [661-2], Moaouïa donna le gouvernement de ce pays à Ocba-Ibn-Nafê de la tribu de Fihir [Coreich]. Ce chef, lors de sa seconde administration, pénétra dans le Sous et, à son retour, il fut tué en traversant le Zab. Sous le règne d’Abd-el-Mélek-Ibn-Merouan, Zoehir-Ibn-Caïs, de la tribu de Bila, marcha contre les Berbères qui s’étaient réunis sous le drapeau de Koceila, chef de la tribu des Auréba. Dans cette expédition, les musulmans essuyèrent une défaite qui les força à quitter l’Ifrikia, après avoir perdu Cairouan. Hassan-Ibn-en-Nôman, le général qu’Abd-el-Mélek y envoya ensuite à la tête d’une nouvelle armée, battit les Berbères, tua Koceila, reprit Cairouan et s’empara de Carthage. Les débris de la population franque et grecque (*Roum*) se réfugièrent en Sicile et en Espagne. Le commandement des Berbères qui, jusqu’alors, avait été exercé par un chef unique, se morcela entre les divers chefs de tribus.

De tous ces peuples, les Zenata étaient les plus redoutables, à cause de la multitude de leurs guerriers. Les Djeraoua, enfants de Guérao, fils d’Adîdet, fils de Djana, et une de leurs nombreuses tribus, habitaient l’Auras et reconnaissaient pour chef la *Kahena* (*divinresse*) Dihya, fille de Tabeta, fils de Nîcan, fils de Baroura, fils de Mes-Kesri, fils d’Afred, fils d’Ousîla, fils de Guérao. Cette femme avait trois fils, héritiers du commandement de la tribu, et, comme elle les avait élevés sous ses yeux, elle les dirigeait à sa fantaisie et gouvernait, par leur intermédiaire, toute la tribu. Sachant, par divination, la tournure que chaque affaire importante devait prendre, elle avait fini par obtenir pour elle-même le haut commandement. “Elle gouverna pendant soixante-cinq ans,” dit Hani-Ibn-Bekour-ed-Darîci, “et elle vécut cent vingt-sept ans.” Ce fut elle qui poussa les Berbères de Tehouda à tuer Ocba-Ibn-Nafê, pendant qu’il traversait la plaine qui s’étend au midi de l’Auras.

The war between Ali and Moaouia kept true believers from thinking of Africa; but after the Anniversary of the Union [661-2 CE], Moaouia gave the government of that country to Ocba-Ibn-Nafe of the tribe of Fihir [Coreich]. This chief, during his second administration, entered the Sous and, on his return, he was killed while crossing the Zab. Under the reign of Abd-el-Malek-Ibn-Marouan, Zoheir-Ibn-Cais, of the tribe of Bila, marched against the Berbers who had reunited under the flag of Koceila, chief of the Aureba tribe. In this campaign, the Muslims suffered a defeat which forced them to leave Ifrikia, after having lost Kairouan. Hassan-Ibn-en-Noman, the general whom Abd-el-Melek then sent there at the head of a new army, defeated the Berbers, killed Koceila, retook Kairouan, and seized Carthage. The wreckage of the Frankish and Greek (*Roman*) population fled to Sicily and Spain. The Berber command, which until then had been wielded by a single chief, broke up among the various tribal chiefs.

Of all these peoples, the Zenata were the most formidable, because of their large number of warriors. The Djeraoua, children of Guerao, son of Adidet, son of Djana, and one of their many tribes, lived in the Aurès and recognized as their chief the *Kāhina* (*prophetess/diviner*) Dihya, daughter of Tabeta, son of Nican, son of Baroura, son of Mes-Kesri, son of Afred, son of Ousila, son of Guerao. This woman had three sons, heirs to the tribal command, and, as she had raised them before her eyes, she directed them as she willed and governed, through them as intermediaries, the whole tribe. Knowing, by divination, the turn that every important matter had to take, she finally gained the high command for herself. “She ruled for sixty-five years,” said Hani-Ibn-Bekur-ed-Darici, “and she lived one hundred and twenty-seven years.” It was she who pushed the Berbers of Tehuda to kill Ocba-Ibn-

La part qu'elle avait prise à ce coup de main n'était pas ignorée des musulmans. Après la mort de Koceila, les débris de l'armée berbère se rallièrent autour de la Kahena, dans sa forteresse du mont Auras. Les Beni-Ifren ainsi que toutes les tribus zenatiennes et berbères-botr de l'Ifrikia étant venus se joindre aux troupes de cette femme, elle attaqua les musulmans dans la plaine située au pied de sa montagne, le mit en déroute et les expulsa de l'Ifrikia.

Hassan s'arrêta à Barca pour y attendre les renforts qu'Abd-el-Mélek devait lui envoyer. En l'an 74 (693-4), il culbuta les Berbères, tua la Kahena, pénétra dans l'Auras et y massacra cent mille individus. Avant la bataille, deux fils de la Kahena étaient passés du côté de Hassan, conformément aux recommandations de leur mère, laquelle avait appris de son démon familier ce qui allait arriver. Accueillis honorablement par le chef arabe, les transfuges embrassèrent franchement l'islamisme et servirent avec dévouement la cause qu'ils venaient d'adopter.

Dans la suite, ils obtinrent du gouverneur de l'Ifrikia le commandement de leur tribu, les Djeraoua, et toutes les populations qui s'étaient jetées dans l'Auras.

Plus tard, la domination des Djeraoua fut anéantie et les restes de ce peuple allèrent s'incorporer dans les autres tribus berbères.

Nafe, while he crossed the plain which extends to the south of the Aurès. The Muslims did not overlook her helping hand in making that happen. After Koceila's death, the wreckage of the Berber army rallied around al-Kāhina, in her Aurès Mountains fortress. The Banu Ifran, as well as all the Zenatan and Botr Berber tribes of Ifrikia, came to join the troops of this woman. She attacked the Muslims in the plains at the foot of her mountain, routed them, and expelled them from Ifrikia.

Hassan halted at Barca to wait for the reinforcements Abd-el-Melek had to send him. In the year 74 AH (693-4 CE), he overthrew the Berbers, killed al-Kāhina, drove into the Aurès and massacred there a hundred thousand people. Before the battle, two sons of Kāhina had gone over to Hassan's side, following the recommendations of their mother, who had learned from her demon familier what was coming. Received honorably by the Arab leader, the defectors truly embraced Islam and served with devotion the cause they had just adopted. Subsequently, they obtained from the governor of Ifrikia the command of their tribe, the Djeraoua, and all the populations who had thrown themselves into the Aurès.

Later, the Djeraoua's supremacy was wiped out and the remains of that people were merged into the other Berber tribes.

Endnotes

¹ Abd Ar Rahman bin Muhammed ibn Khaldun. *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*. 1377. Trans. Franz Rosenthal. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

² Salo Wittmayer Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews, Vol. III* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1957), p. 271, note 24.

³ Norman Roth, "The Kāhina: Legendary Material in the Accounts of the 'Jewish Berber Queen'," *The Maghreb Review* 7, nos. 5-6 (1982) : 123.

⁴ Andre N. Chouraqui, *Between East and West - A History of the Jews of North Africa*, trans. Michael M. Bernet (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1968), 19.

⁵ Procopius of Caesaraea, *History of the Wars, Volume II, Books 3-4 (Vandalic War)*. Trans. H. B. Dewing. (London: Loeb Classical Library Series, 1916), viii.

⁶ "A'ishah bint Abi Bakr (c. 613–678)." Women in World History: A Biographical Encyclopedia. *Encyclopedia.com*. (February 21, 2019). <https://www.encyclopedia.com/women/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/aishah-bint-abi-bakr-c-613-678>

⁷ Chouraqui, 21, 326.

⁸ *Ibid*, 24-26.

⁹ Haim Beinart, *Atlas of Medieval Jewish History*, trans. Moshe Shalvi (Jerusalem: Carta - The Israel Map and Publishing Company Ltd., 1992), 14.

¹⁰ Chouraqui, 37.

¹¹ Isidore Singer (ed.), "Kaula al-Yehudi," *Jewish Encyclopedia.com – The Unedited Full Text of the 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1906), <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com>.

¹² Norman Roth (ed.), *Medieval Jewish Civilization: An Encyclopedia* (New York and Oxford: Routledge, 2003), 22.

¹³ Chouraqui, 26.

¹⁴ Roth (1982), 124.

¹⁵ Roth (1982), 122.

¹⁶ Abdelmajd Hannoum, "Historiography, Mythology, and Memory in Modern North Africa: The Story of the Kahina," *Studia Islamica*, No. 85 (1997), 113.

¹⁷ Singer, "Kaula al-Yehudi"

¹⁸ Mark R. Cohen. *Under Crescent & Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 164-165.

¹⁹ Hannoum, 87.

²⁰ Hannoum, 116-120.

²¹ Hannoum, 123-124.

²² Hannoum, 124.

²³ Ibn Khaldun. *The Muqaddimah*.

²⁴ Abd Ar Rahman bin Muhammed ibn Khaldun. *Histoire des Berbères et des Dynasties Musulmanes de L'Afrique Septentrionale* (Books 6 and 7 of the Kitāb al-'Ibar), 1377. Trans. Le Baron de Slane. (Paris: Librarie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1925).

²⁵ Abd-Errahman Ibn Abd-el-Hakem, *Ibn Abd-el-Hakem's History of the Conquest of Spain*, ca. 870, Trans. John Harris Jones. (Göttingen: Dieterich's University Press, 1858), 67

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