

Acknowledgement

Immiq simmiq azikshim olghum tikint

The above was one of the first proverbs I learned. It literally means that a camel can be fitted into a cooking pot only little by little, and only piece by piece. Any task, no matter how big, can be accomplished, if one just takes it slowly and in small steps. It is a joking way of saying that anything is achievable with just enough persistence. This book was my camel, and at some point, I almost got the impression that I had been cutting off too many big chunks in order to accomplish my task. And inevitably, now that I am writing this acknowledgement, I have the feeling that far too many other parts of the camel should have found their way into the pot as well.

During the process of writing, this book seemed more and more like a living thing; evolving and changing. Maybe it is just the same for every author and every attempt to write a book, but this is what I found in my first experience: This book started as vague idea, as a project, and as an uncertainty. There were guidelines and a framework, but not much more in the beginning. I “finished” my time of fieldwork without the feeling that I had finished. Similarly, I finished my dissertation thesis and submitted it in to the University of Cologne, and I did not feel quite finished either. I felt exhausted and relieved. Happy even, a little later. But finished? While thinking and re-thinking parts, abstracts and ideas that went into this manuscript and book, I now believe, in retrospect, that such a feeling of “completion” or “having finished” is completely illusory. Perhaps that is the beauty of it. While there are certainly moments of ac-

complishment, where one feels truly finished, it feels almost impossible to have put down on paper everything I wanted to say and everything that was going on in my head. Moreover, if I had started to write this book at any other point in time, I am sure that the outcome would have been slightly different. Writing this book is, thus, somewhat coincidental, contingent, and uncertain. That is why, in a way, I do not consider it as a completely finished piece of work, but rather as a documentation of my line of thinking, researching, and reasoning at that certain period of time. Even as I finish writing it, the book continuously keeps (re-)writing itself in my head. To borrow an anthropological truism: if a gift keeps on giving, a book—or more precisely, ethnographic research—keeps on demanding.

Many people have contributed to this book. I cannot possibly name all of them and all the details and aspects of the ways in which they have supported me. First and foremost, and I really do not know to put this in words properly, I would like to thank the people of Zawiya Ahansal from the bottom of my heart for making this book possible: the people, interlocutors, research partners, friends, who welcomed me in their midst. It has been a truly overwhelming experience. Above all, I would like to mention the staff of Amezray SMNID and ACF. Without their support and willingness to share their work with me, none of the below could have been developed. Thank you, Youssef and Medina, for having my back, Sidi Amahdar for your wisdom, Ayoub, Hassan, Bahemu. I do not know I would have started my stay without you, Ismail. Thank you for your friendship. Mohamed (Bahelu), thank you for your impressive unreserved compassion and support. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for teaching and encouraging me, for being a family to me in the absence of my own: Said, Tuda, Baba Moh, Ati Fadma, Baba Hamou, Ati Doha, Ati Aicha. Bouchra, Sanaa, Ayoub.

Many colleagues and friends have at one point or another contributed to the ideas that I have developed in this book, with discussions, critical comments, and suggestions. This was indispensable. I am grateful for the academic environment at the University of Cologne, which enabled me to develop the thoughts and questions that led to this research: The participants of Prof. Martin Zillinger's research col-

loquium, the discussions in the a.r.t.e.s. research lab, with Thiemo Breyer, Johannes Schick, Mario Schmidt; Michaela Haug and the Future Reading Group; the Delta Research group for discussing my overflowing chapter concerning water; class 7 of the a.r.t.e.s. graduate school for the humanities, Katrin Sowa, Souad Zeineddine, Susanne Ebner, Felix Lussem, Karim Zafer, and, of course, Julian Schmischke. Thank you Monika Böck and Anja Höse, without you nothing would have been possible. Thank you for great cooperation as “Team MZ”, Leonie van Dreuten, Anna Krämer, Annette Steffny, Ole Reichardt and, above all, Christoph Lange.

I would also like to thank the CRC 1187 “Media of Cooperation” for the funding and providing the financial and academic background through which I was able to conduct my research. I especially thank my colleagues from BO4, with whom I had a horizon-expanding exchange and a truly wonderful time: Prof. Volker Wulf, Markus Rohde, Sarah Rüller und Konstantin Aal (*bo lihya*). I would also like to thank my supervisors Prof. Martin Zillinger, Prof. Thomas Widlok and Prof. Erhard Schüttpelz for taking the time to look so deeply into my tangled thoughts from the High Atlas. The discussion with you was stimulating, motivating and a pleasure. Thank you, Martin, for your tireless support and the occasional nudge in the right direction. But most of all, thank you for your enduring enthusiasm for the questions of anthropological research, which truly motivated me, almost as much as your inspiring handling of complex theory and worlds of thought. A big thank you also goes to Michael Dorrity, who copyedited my manuscript with excellent expertise. All existing errors remain due to my own shortcomings.

Finally, many friends and family have supported me along the way. Through the depths of my repeated writing exile you have helped me wonderfully, thank you, David, Marlene, Jona, Martin, Jari and Paul. Thank you, Seb, for always being there! Thanks, Paps and Anita, for your never-ending support. Without the Bavarian writing exile, this book would surely have one chapter less, thanks Mam and Andreas for the surprise packages and impulses to push through. With all my heart, I thank you, Anja. I cannot think of anything more I would like to ask for than this: to grow with you together. Carla, I dedicate this book to you.

Note on transliteration

Since I am not a trained Arabist and this is primarily an anthropological study, the transliteration of Arabic and Tamazight terms does not follow an official linguistic transcription. Rather, I have adopted the terms as they appear in the relevant literature, or used the common English way of writing Tamazight phrases, which was also used by my interlocutors. Linguistic impossibilities or errors in the transliteration are entirely my own fault and I hope that interested and informed readers will nonetheless be able to recognize and make sense of my use of foreign-language and emic terms.

I use the following notations for letters of the Arabic alphabet that have no clear equivalent in the Latin script:

خ: kh

ع: ‘

غ: gh