

# **Tribes and Revolution; The “Social Factor” in Muammar Gadhafi’s Libya and Beyond**

**Joshua Jet Friesen Department of Anthropology, McGill University  
June 2013**

**Thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements of the degree of Masters of Art in Anthropology**

**Abstract:** A revolt against Colonel Muammar Gadhafi's Libyan government began in February of 2011. The conflict lasted for eight months and affected the entire country. Two distinct sides fought for control during those eight months making the conflict a civil war. This master's thesis uses a series of interviews as well as the academic and journalistic literature produced about the Libyan conflict to argue that the war should also be understood as a revolution.

Considering the war a revolution introduces a number of puzzles. Firstly, Colonel Gadhafi's position within Libya was officially symbolic in much the same way Great Britain's royalty is in Canada, yet Gadhafi was named as the revolution's primary enemy. Secondly, Libya was officially a popular democracy with no executive administrative branches. A revolution against a political elite was therefore theoretically impossible.

Nonetheless, the Libyans I interviewed considered Gadhafi more than the purely symbolic leader of Libya, and felt that Libya was actually closer to a dictatorship than a popular democracy. This thesis investigates the discrepancies between official and unofficial realities in Libya by exploring the role of society in the history of Colonel Gadhafi's government. My analysis is focused by the question, "what role did tribes play in Libya's revolution?" I argue that tribes provided a system for conceptually organizing Libya's society during Colonel Gadhafi's tenure. This conceptual organization of Libya's society is both in evidence and contested by the revolution.

**Résumé:** Une révolte contre le gouvernement libyen du colonel Mouammar Kadhafi a commencé en Février 2011. Le conflit a duré huit mois et a affecté l'ensemble du pays. Deux parties distinctes se sont battus pour le contrôle pendant ces huit mois donc ce conflit peut-être considérer une guerre civile. Cette thèse utilise une série d'entrevues ainsi que la littérature académique et journalistique produite sur le conflit libyen de soutenir que la guerre doit aussi être comprise comme une révolution.

Compte tenu de la guerre, une révolution introduit un certain nombre d'énigmes. Tout d'abord, la position du colonel Kadhafi en Libye a été officiellement symbolique en même façon que la royauté de la Grande-Bretagne est au Canada, mais Kadhafi a été pensé comme principal ennemi de la révolution. Deuxièmement, la Libye est officiellement une démocratie populaire sans branches administratives exécutives. Une révolution contre une élite politique était donc théoriquement impossible.

Néanmoins, les Libyens que j'ai interviewé ont considéré Kadhafi plus que le leader purement symbolique de la Libye, et a estimé que la Libye était en fait plus proche d'une dictature qu'à une démocratie populaire. Cette thèse étudie les différences entre les réalités officielles et non officielles en Libye, en explorant le rôle de la société dans l'histoire du gouvernement du colonel Kadhafi. Mon analyse est focalisée par la question: «Quel est la rôle que les tribus jouaient dans la révolution de la Libye?" Je soutiens que les tribus ont fourni un système pour organiser conceptuellement la société de la Libye au cours du mandat du colonel Kadhafi. Cette organisation

conceptuelle de la société de la Libye est à la fois en évidence et contesté par la révolution.

Ms. Sarah Sandham provided invaluable editing and support throughout my production of this thesis. My fellow masters students: Kristin Flemons, Julianne Yip, Raad Farak and Valerie Weber also gave me consistent feedback and encouragement while writing. My thesis supervisor, Dr. Philip Carl Salzman edited and commented on all of my writing, while also procuring me funds to pay for my research travels and providing me guidance throughout my master's program. My academic committee, Drs. Colin Scott, and Eduardo Kohn listened to my preparations and represented me to the faculty when Dr. Salzman could not. Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council awarded me a master's scholarship that paid for most of my living expenses while I was undertaking this research, and McGill University's anthropology department made up the rest of my expenses by giving me graduate funding, and the chance to work as a Teaching Assistant throughout my master's degree.

During the course of my research several Libyan Canadians from various organizations aided me. Because I promised to preserve their anonymity I cannot thank them by name, but I truly appreciate the time and energy they spared for my project. My participants are all incredibly busy and talented people who contributed to Libya's revolution in one or another fashion and who now have, in many cases, a role in Libya's post-revolutionary development. That they could make time for me is just one more attestation to their character. I especially thank the member of the Libyan Canadian Medical Association who translated for me and facilitated one of my research trips while he was running several other organizations. I also give a special thanks to the Libyan men who were being treated in Toronto for their injuries.

# Table of Contents

Title Page .....	i
Abstract .....	ii-iii
Acknowledgements .....	v
Introduction .....	1
Part 1: The Revolutionary Setting .....	10
Part 2: Was the Civil War a Revolution? .....	17
Understanding revolution .....	22
Part 3: Rhetoric and Practice .....	34
Why Gadhafi's particular 'ought'? .....	38
The Macro-historical context form 1969 to 2011.....	46
Gadhafi's rhetoric .....	49
The lived experience of Gadhafi's government .....	54
Starting the revolution .....	60
Summary .....	68
Part 4: On the Role of Tribes in Libya's Revolution .....	73
How did Gadhafi employ tribal connections? .....	82
Geographic and temporal distribution of the conflict .....	92
Tribes during the revolution .....	102
Summary .....	111
Conclusion .....	116
Bibliography .....	122

## **Table of Figures**

Figure 1: Map of Libya's major cities and towns pg. 9

Figure 2: Diagram of the Structure of Libya's Popular Democracy pg. 51

Figure 3: Map of the major tactical divisions during the revolution pg. 95

Figure 4: Map representing the dates of rebellion pg. 95

Figure 5: Map of the dates that cities were finally 'liberated' pg. 96

Figure 6: Map of the major tribal federations pg. 97

Figure 7: Map of the distribution of some of Libya's main tribes pg. 97

## Introduction

On March 29<sup>th</sup>, 1951 Libya's nascent National Assembly established the federal government of Cyrenaica, Fezzan and Tripolitania (Khalidi 1952). By this provisional act Libya became one of the first post-colonial nations in Africa, and finally established independence after a long history of occupation by the Ottomans, the Italians, the British and the French. Libya's first independent government was "a constitutional hereditary monarchy," whose form was "federal", and its system of government "representative" (Article 1 of the Libyan Monarchical constitution). King Idris, the head of the Senussi religious fraternity, was appointed ruler of the new Libya (Wright 1980). At the time of Libya's creation it had a population of approximately 1.25 million people and its fledgling government was reliant on British and American capital transfers (Martinez 2007). These transfers were paid on the condition that Britain and the USA were allowed to maintain massive military and naval bases in Libya (Ayoub 1987).

In 1955 serious oil exploration began, with the first shipment reaching Great Britain in 1961 (Clarke 1962). Within a couple of years Libya went from being one of the poorest countries on earth, in terms of average salary and Gross Domestic Product per household, to what economists and political theorists term a 'hydro-carbon state,' or a state that derives the better part of its revenue not from taxation but from the royalties produced by hydrocarbon exploration, extraction and refining (Davis 1987). Libya's transition from a largely agricultural and pastoral economy to a resource-extraction economy wrought massive changes on its political and social landscape. As Martinez writes, "In 1950, the urban population constituted 20 per cent of the total population, but this proportion increased to 45 per cent in 1970, 62 per cent in 1980, 79 per cent in 1990 and 80 per cent in 1995" (2007: 24). Oil also effectively destroyed Libya's federalism, "In 1963, scarcely two years after the first oil shipment, a royal decree abolished the federal system; it had proved impossible to cope with the exigencies of oil

exploration and manage the funds it generated without a centralized state” (First 1974: 81).

Muammar Gadhafi was born into this milieu of rapid and dislocating change. Trained as an officer in the modernizing Libyan army, Gadhafi and many of his cohort were dismayed by what they considered King Idris’ pandering to Western Powers. Inspired by Abdul Nasser who was fanning the flames of pan-Arabic nationalism in Egypt, Gadhafi and his fellows formed a group called the ‘young officers,’ which deposed King Idris on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1969 in a bloodless coup. The king was receiving medical treatment in Turkey at the time.

Colonel (as he like to be called) Gadhafi’s coup set the stage for 42 years of his eccentric rule. For most of this time Libya was officially a popular democracy, which after 1977 was called the “Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya” (Qadhafi et al. 1984), Jamahiriya being Gadhafi’s name for Libya’s ‘state of the masses.’

On February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011, hundreds of people from the city of Benghazi in Libya’s east demonstrated against the jailing of a young lawyer named Fethi Tarbel. Before his arrest, Tarbel had been distributing flyers advertising ‘day of rage’ protests set for February 17<sup>th</sup>. These planned protests emulated the ‘day of rage’ protests in Egypt, which by that time had successfully deposed Egypt’s president Hosni Mubarak (Hilsum 2011). Soldiers and plain clothes security personnel attacked Benghazi’s protestors, but the protestors would not return home and continued their demonstrations until the security forces sent to disrupt them quit the city altogether. Shortly thereafter the Libyan civil war began.

My motivation for studying Libya’s political history is twofold. Firstly, dramatic political change creates a situation to which anthropological work is both suited and helpful. It was my hope that by studying the Libyan conflict I might produce an account that could be of some use to those who are still trying to ‘make sense’ of the conflict in order to build away from its destruction and violence.

The second motivation was to examine what role Libyan tribes played in the war. My interest in this question was both theoretical and practical. Investigating Libyan tribes meant understanding the anthropological, historical and contemporary significance of the concept 'tribe.' This gave me an opportunity to research a central topic in the discipline of anthropology - kinship.

Naturally enough the study of kinship, like almost every other topic of investigation in anthropology, has passed through periods of popularity and unpopularity. In his useful review of kinship studies, Dwight Read juxtaposes the following two quotations which nicely demonstrate kinship's relative importance or disuse in anthropology depending on the time period in question (2007): "in inventing kinship, anthropology invented itself" (Trautmann 1992: 393), and "Kinship used to be described as what anthropologists do. Today, many might well say that it is what anthropologists do not do" (Sousa 2004: 265). One might summarily, if perhaps too simply, say that kinship studies are incredibly popular when researchers are interested in finding a universal theme relative to which different human practices can be compared and analysed. Whereas kinship studies have become very unpopular when anthropologists are more concerned with representing different modes of thinking and acting rather than finding how ethnographic difference is generated by the biological 'constants' of reproduction around which kinship may or may not be based.

I personally found the topic of kinship and its relationship to the study of tribes serendipitously related to my investigation of Libya's revolution. This was because studying Libya's recent revolution meant knowing something about the political and social scenarios in which the conflict happened. Once I started examining Libya's history I found that Gadhafi's government was characterized by a persistent difference between what analysts usually identified as the difference between Gadhafi's rhetoric and his practice (Davis 1982; El-Khawas 1986; St. John 2011). While studying the anthropological understanding of tribes I realized that a similar problem –

the difference between the way people talked about tribal organization and acted on it – was of primary concern, especially in the anthropological accounts of Libyan tribes (Benkhe 1980; Davis 1987; Peters 1990; Salzman 1978). The resonance between these two problems led me to wonder if there was some connection between kinship, tribes, and Gadhafi's political system that was consistently generating the perceived difference, or at very least, the confusion regarding the relationship between what Edmund Leach usefully called the "ideal" and "normal" ways of acting (1966). What, in other words, could help explain the divergence between ideal and normal actions that haunts kinship studies, the study of tribes, and the study of Gadhafi's Libya?

This second problem will take a good deal more research to answer. For this thesis my primary focus was what role tribes played in the revolution. It was my hope that by trying to answer this question I might uncover information that would prepare me for doctoral work on the larger connection between kinship, tribes, and Gadhafi's government.

In order to understand what role tribes played in the revolution I wanted to speak to Libyans about how the conflict had been organized, motivated, and prosecuted. Unfortunately, Canada's department of foreign affairs banned non-essential travel to Libya when I was carrying out my master's research, making my ethics approval from McGill University incumbent upon my not visiting the country. Right off the bat, then, this master's thesis leaned more heavily on textual evidence than many do. This did not seem like a terrible disadvantage though. As Thomassen writes,

No responsible teacher would send a Ph.D. student into a war zone. For this reason an anthropology of political revolutions will often have to be historical in nature, but this by no means precludes taking on such a project. In fact, when Marcel Mauss prefaced his book on the Bolsheviks, he called himself a "historian" (Mauss 1992: 165), and he wrote the study four to six years after the events it analyzed. Anthropologists with years of fieldwork experience in a concrete setting can normally also engage the historical record. And if the ethnographic work is carried out within years of the more dramatic revolutionary events, our informants will still be more than willing to talk about their experiences of the revolution. With current technologies of electronic communication, the possibility of studying revolutions from a distance has become spatial as well as temporal. An ethnographic account of

political revolutions is well within reach, and so too is an anthropological reflection on the nature and modalities of revolutionary behaviour (2012: 683)

Given that I plan to carryout fieldwork in Libya for my doctoral research, the master's work I undertook in the library and away from the field was not only a side effect of the political turbulence experienced by post-revolution Libya, but also a useful opportunity to develop tools for non-participatory observation, as well as a historical familiarity with Libyan affairs.

My thesis research was not, however, only limited to the library. I also interviewed 13 Libyan citizens and three non-Libyan Canadians who had spent significant amounts of time in Libya observing and contributing to either the revolution itself (as in the case of a documentary filmmaker), or the revolution's aftermath (as was the case for the Canadian couple who functioned as official election observers). Of the Libyan citizens I interviewed, three were medical doctors. Two of those men (for all the doctors I interviewed were male) were members of the Libyan Canadian Medical Association (LCMA) and also Canadian citizens, while the last was a Libyan doctor living in the USA. The two Canadian Libyan doctors are pseudonymously referred to as Dr. El-Faria, and Dr. Riyah. Dr. Mahandri pseudonymously denotes the Libyan Doctor in the USA. All four of these doctors spent time (between two and eight months) in Libya during the revolution. They were all close to the revolutionary frontlines at different points and all volunteered their medical services. One of them, the American-Libya doctor named Mahandri, was captured and held for three months by Gadhafi's forces. Everyone I spoke with knew English except for the five Libyan patients I interviewed in Toronto. These men were hurt fighting in the revolution (except for one younger man that had accidentally picked up a piece of live artillery) and had been brought by the LCMA to Toronto for long-term rehabilitative care. I met with these patients at the hotel where they were staying. Dr. Riyah graciously agreed to translate their Libyan Arabic dialect for me into English. These interviews were very difficult to record, as they

were held in a crowded and loud restaurant in the hotel lobby, and were carried out in very quick Arabic. Thus, I was unable to transcribe those interviews and so do not quote directly from them. Instead, I use the information gleaned from those 5 men for contextualizing statements. I have given the pseudonyms Foraq, Sariq, Saram, Razman, and Muhammad to these men.

I also interviewed the founder of the Libyan Canadian Friendship Association (LCFA). I gave him the pseudonym Dr. El-Zaria. The LCFA is a lobbying group that was established first in Edmonton to enable the Canadian Libyan expatriate population to publicly endorse the revolution as well as to provide material and emotional support for family members still in Libya. The LCFA's founder did not travel to Libya during the revolution, but organized a good deal of the satellite communicational network that provided information to Libyans after Gadhafi had 'turned-off' Libya's internet. He is a physicist and an engineer, and also holds Canadian citizenship.

The last three Libyans I interviewed are either Canadian or American citizens as well. The first is a Canadian graduate student who volunteered for the Libyan Canadian Council (LCC), and who visited Libya shortly after the revolution for two months. She is researching institution formation in Libya for her doctoral thesis. Her pseudonym is Nada. The second worked for the Libyan government as a lawyer before the revolution. He spent time evaluating various bureaucratic procedures in Gadhafi's Libya. After the revolution (where he participated in as a non-violent protestor and international advocate) he got a job with the National Transitional Council. His pseudonym is Salam. The third interviewee went to Benghazi during the revolution in order to mourn the loss of his brother and to participate in the revolution as a media liaison, as well as to bring food supplies to Benghazi's frontlines. He is taking a bachelor's degree in commerce at a Canadian university. His pseudonym is Marwan.

To find and recruit these interviewees I used a snowballing recruitment technique (Creswell 2008). I first contacted the LCFA and Nada put me in touch with various members of the Canadian Libyan community, who gradually introduced me to the LCMA and other non-Canadian Libyans. A notable shortcoming to my recruitment technique is that it was self-selected in the extreme. Only those Libyans who were interested in my project volunteered to be a part of it, and those who were most happy to talk about the recent revolution were those who had supported its prerogative. In other words, I talked with people who were explicitly supportive of the revolution and against Gadhafi. Besides being supportive of the revolution, most of the people I interviewed were members of a privileged group of Libyans who had enough resources to leave Libya and pursue higher education around the world. Although the five men I spoke to in Toronto provided an interesting counterbalance to that reality.

I attempted to account for and remediate these methodological shortcomings by 'triangulating' what I heard from my interviewees with the journalistic and academic information about Libya. That being said, I did not employ what Paul Rabinow, following Paul Ricoeur, called the "hermeneutics of suspicion" (1999); a technique where "the task of analysis is to uncover an underlying disguised truth" and in which "an authority who (after rigorous self-analysis) has already seen the truth or the path toward it and is able to guide the self-deluded participant through a series of steps and so lead him to also see what had been obscured" (ibid: 173). I was not particularly suspicious of my participants' assertions. I did not, in other words, start from the assumption that they were deluded by their own interests and that their accounts, or they themselves needed to be led "through a series of steps" (ibid: 173) towards the truth.

Admittedly, this thesis attempts to lead the reader through a series of steps to a conclusion regarding the role of tribes in Libya's revolution, but it does not do so by assuming that self-delusion has been interpreted into truth. Rather, I consider the incongruences and puzzles presented by my

informant's assertions and the journalistic and academic reportage on Libya to be parts of reality itself, not accidental misrepresentations. This allowed me to approach the problems I encountered during research not as aberrations indicative of a lack of knowledge, but as actual features of lived reality. In this way, answering the puzzles posed by my project meant asking: "how and why are certain problems created?" and "how are these problems solved, arbitrated or ignored in real-time?" My thesis was organized around these three questions.

After I introduce the basic chronological details of the Libyan conflict in my first section, I investigate the problem of why all my informants considered the war a revolution while a significant number of commentators did not. In the third section I examine the difference between what Gadhafi said about Libya's government and how Libyans perceived his government. In the final section, I discuss the difference between the social and the political significance of Libya's tribes and how this significance is related to the role they played in the revolution itself.

In all of these chapters the difference between formal and informal, or official and unofficial representations is considered. In my conclusion I offer a few brief thoughts on this difference before suggesting two research questions for my doctoral work.

There is a great deal I have not covered in this thesis. So while I have certainly engaged in a little of what Pierre Bourdieu called the 'totalizing' of an actual event in order to present it as a symbolic whole (1990), the practical reality is that important information and themes slipped from between the figurative callipers of my analysis. In the course of further research I hope to have the courage to forsake the findings represented here if I should find out that my conclusions are invalidated by something that escaped my full attention.

A lot of this thesis speaks about Colonel Muammar Gadhafi as if he were an easily identifiable agency in Libyan history. By writing in this fashion I did not mean to imply that Gadhafi was likely to have a hand in everything

his government did, or that the whims and will of one man could shape an entire history. That being said, Gadhafi's administration and the people that it empowered did have a great deal of influence in Libya for 42 years. Additionally, my own emphasis on Gadhafi comes from my interviewees' emphasis on him. I did not have a single interview that was not largely dominated by a discussion of Gadhafi's policies, and these governmental 'things' were always attributed to Colonel Gadhafi himself.

One final difficulty to mention is that of transposing Arabic names into English. Many of the sources I consulted had different ways of spelling the names of Libyan cities, towns, and geographic features and individuals. To account for this I have always tried to adopt the simplest and most common spelling, and to note for the reader – as is the case in my final section – when names are spelt quite differently.



Figure 1: Map of Libya's major cities and towns

## **Part 1: The Revolutionary Setting**

On February 15<sup>th</sup> a group of 200 people gathered outside of the central police station in Benghazi where lawyer and activist Fethi Tarbel was being held (Hilsum 2011). By the end of the night, close to 600 protestors demanded Tarbel's release. From his prison cell, Tarbel said he could hear the people chanting, "When people aspire to live, the force of fate will respond!" (Shabab Libya, 2012). Hearing the demands of the crowd while talking face-to-face with Abdullah Senussi, Libya's security chief and a close friend and brother-in-law to Colonel Gadhafi, Tarbel remembered thinking: "that this was the start of the end" for Gadhafi's Libya (Lamloum 2013).

Even though Tarbel was released by the end of the day on February 15<sup>th</sup>, the crowds clamouring for his freedom marched unsatisfied towards Benghazi's downtown yelling, "Benghazi wake up! This is the day you have been waiting for!" When the protestors neared the city center, security forces with water cannons and blunt weapons forcibly broke up their cohort, injuring several people. By the next day, similar protests were held in the cities of Baida, Zintan and again in Benghazi.

The protests in Benghazi and Baida were direct calls for the "end of the regime," and were obviously inspired by similar movements in Tunisia and Egypt (Hilsum 2011). Protests in the western city of Zintan, about 200km to the southwest of Tripoli in the Nafussa Mountains, might have been less directly related to a desire to depose Gadhafi since they were reportedly motivated by an attempt on the part of Gadhafi's regime to forcibly recruit 1000 soldiers from the city of roughly 50 000 (Abdul-Ahad 2011). Media coverage suggests that Zintani residents, who are historically known for their military prowess, refused to fight 'other Libyans' and subsequently clashed with Gadhafi's recruiters.

By February 18<sup>th</sup>, protestors in Baida, Derna, Tobruk and Benghazi, all cities along Libya's northeastern coastline, were supplying armed resistance

to Gadhafi's regime. While the revolutionaries in Baida, Derna and Tobruk quickly overwhelmed the government, fighting persisted in Benghazi until February 20<sup>th</sup>, although Gadhafi's forces in Benghazi had mainly defected to the rebel side or had otherwise been isolated in the Katiba compound near Benghazi's centre (Hill 2011).

General Fatah Younis was sent with Special Forces to Benghazi in order to re-establish regime control there. But after refusing to fire at the protestors, he eventually defected on February 22<sup>nd</sup>. In an interview with Al Arabiya (translated roughly from Arabic by the moderators of "Tripoli Live News Feed") he said, "The Libyan people have suffered too long. We have so much oil, the people could have lived as in a 5 star hotel" and "Our plan now is to support the youth in Tripoli so that it is liberated like Benghazi was... I offer my condolences to the fallen martyrs [reads a statement of support for the youth revolution]... I begged Gaddafi not to send planes, I called him. Now of course we don't speak, I have joined the revolution." Many considered General Fatah Younis the number-two official within Gadhafi's regime, and his defection constituted a major morale boost for the fledgling revolt.

On February 20<sup>th</sup>, Misurata, Libya's 'third city', rebelled in solidarity with Benghazi and was independent of Gadhafi's forces, for the first time at least, by the 24<sup>th</sup>. As an informant of mine explained,

Misurata probably is the only city –; if you ask any Libyan they'll probably tell you that it's the only city that wasn't sort of – that you wouldn't expect to rise against Gadhafi. Not because they're [the Misuratans] loyal, but because it's a rich city. It's very well organized, everything is by the law, and everything... they're rich. Right? They've got lots of factories, they've got lots of... it's well built. But because they were very well connected to Benghazi from ancestry, because Benghazi was built from immigrants that went from Misurata, and immigrated there. So I have lots of people from my roots living in Benghazi. So when Benghazi rose I knew Misurata would not handle it some... You know, so it's not like "oh lets wait and see" [how the revolution goes], no they couldn't. If another city rose [rebelled] probably it would be a little more laid back: "let's see what happens."

Mercenaries fighting for Gadhafi were reported in Derna and Baida by the 19<sup>th</sup> of February, and what many Libyans believed were foreign pilots

bombed the eastern centers of rebellion (Rettman 2011). There is evidence that around 2-3000 Tuareg men from northern Mali entered southern Libya as early as late February (Vogl 2011). They were apparently enticed by sums of up to 10,000 US dollars upon joining Gadhafi's camp, and a further 1000 US dollars per day afterwards, though these sums are probably exaggerated (International Business Times 2011). Gadhafi's use of mercenaries was mentioned by a number of my informants. The revolutionaries considered it a major victory when the first video of a dead mercenary was circulated online because it proved, for them at least, that Gadhafi had been employing non-Libyans to fight for him. Problematically, some reports circulated during the revolution suggested that all-black Libyans were being identified and harassed as mercenaries (CBS News 2011).

Nearing the end of February, anti-Gadhafi protestors controlled much of Libya including the cities of Baida, Benghazi, Tobruk, Misurata, Sabratha, Sorman, Zawiya, Zintan, and Zuwara. The cities in Libya's center (excepting Misurata) were contested but were largely felt to be in revolutionary hands. These areas included the harbours of Brega and Raslanuf as well as the city of Ajdabiya. At this point during the uprising, the only areas under Gadhafi's control were Tripoli and its outskirts: Sirte, Bani-Walid and Sebha. However, on March 6<sup>th</sup>, Gadhafi mounted a counter-offensive. What remained of his troops managed to retake Raslanuf, Brega and to challenge Misurata, Ajdabiya, and even Benghazi. The city of Zintan was also attacked and badly shelled (Reuters 2011).

Instances of civil disobedience occurred in Tripoli after February 17<sup>th</sup>, but they were smaller than in the east, and were met with instant and overwhelming force. As one of my informants: Mr. Salam Terhani, a government worker in Tripoli, told me:

what actually happened is the revolution technically started on the fifteenth [of February], and Benghazi started early. It was supposed to happen on the seventeenth, but they started early... by the twentieth of February people in Tripoli started coming out, and on the twentieth

there was a massacre in the streets here. After the twentieth I didn't go back to work. No one did.

Resistance in Tripoli was not, it seems, markedly weaker than it had been in the east. Rather, the protests in Tripoli assumed a different aspect than they did in Benghazi. The 'youth revolution' that General Younis mentioned during his interview was headquartered in Tripoli, and many peaceful but disobedient groups were active in the city well before the February 17<sup>th</sup> revolution.<sup>1</sup> Gadhafi's security forces were, however, well established in Tripoli, and Tripolitarians did not rise *en masse* as they had in Benghazi until outside military help was imminent (Fahim & Kirkpatrick 2011).

Seeing the bloodshed and rapidly escalating conflict in Libya, the United Nations Security Council voted on March 17<sup>th</sup> to impose a no-fly zone over Libya as well as "all [other] necessary measures short of an occupation" deemed necessary to protect civilians (BBC 2011). Though the motives of this measure are widely contested – with some critics calling it an attempt by Western powers to depose an African leader they had never approved of, as well as an instance of ignoble meddling for the sake of Libya's oil fields, while other critics labelled the UN's measures necessary support for the emancipatory efforts of the 'Arab Spring' – the material effects of the UN declaration (which was ultimately taken up and prosecuted by NATO) are incontestable. Operation Odyssey Dawn, as it was code named by NATO, lasted from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2011, and consisted of 779 sorties and approximately 372 'strike sorties' (unclassified documents). According to NATO's report, the 'impacts' of Operation Odyssey Dawn were "Regime Air Forces Combat Ineffective; Regime Air Defenses Combat Ineffective; and Regime withdrawal from Benghazi" (NATO Report 2011).

NATO's second mission, Operation Unified Protector, began on March 23<sup>rd</sup> and ended on October 31<sup>st</sup> (NATO 2011). This mission "consisted of

---

<sup>1</sup> See for instance the 'Free Generation Movement': <http://fgmovement.org/>

three elements: an arms embargo, a no-fly zone and actions to protect civilians from attack or the threat of attack” (ibid 2011). At its peak, it involved roughly 8,000 personnel, 260 ‘air assets’, and 21 ‘naval assets’. In the course of its 9,700 strike sorties, Operation Unified Protector “Destroyed over 5,900 military targets including over 400 artillery or rocket launchers and over 600 tanks or armored vehicles” (ibid). Given that the US Library of Congress, along with the International Institute for Strategic Studies estimated that Gadhafi’s army contained between 2200 and 3000 tanks, the 600 destroyed by NATO’s operation may seem relatively inconsequential to the outcome of the war, if not insignificant. The total number of Gadhafi’s military assets must, however, be read in light of his longstanding practice of moving resources away from the official military into what he called ‘revolutionary brigades’ (Hilsum 2011), a practice which in effect made Libya “the world’s largest parking lot for military equipment” (Pelman 2012). Of the 2-3000 tanks Gadhafi’s army officially possessed perhaps only half of those were not in permanent storage and of those 1500 remaining even fewer were fully operational. NATO’s reported destruction of some 600 tanks, as well as their decisive defeat of the pro-government forces approaching Benghazi are therefore indicative of the crippling effect the coalition’s barrage had on Libya’s governmental forces.

Notwithstanding NATO’s engagement in Libya, the ‘loyalist’ counteroffensive of March 6<sup>th</sup> stalled the overwhelming momentum anti-Gadhafi forces had enjoyed in February and made many outside observers predict a protracted Libyan Civil War rather than a brief Arab revolution like those observed in Tunisia and Egypt. It was not until March 20<sup>th</sup> – a day marked by the reported kamikaze flight of a Libyan pilot (Muhammad Mukhtar Osma) into the Bab al-Aziziya compound of Gadhafi’s family in Tripoli – that the rebels were able to resuscitate their advance towards Tripoli (Mail 2011). Moving from Benghazi towards Ajdabiya, the rebel forces liberated most of the eastern coast all the way to Misurata between March 20<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>. However these gains were short lived and despite

continuous NATO airstrikes, Gadhafi forces in Brega, Sirte, Bani-Walid, Sebha, Tripoli and even Misurata continued to pose a real threat to the newly formed National Transitional Council – the revolutionary governing body initially formed in Benghazi and first recognized by France as the legitimate government of Libya on March 10<sup>th</sup> (Cowell & Erlanger 2011). On April 21<sup>st</sup>, Misurata was finally liberated, though it would be attacked several other times before Gadhafi's death.

From March 20<sup>th</sup> to August 20<sup>th</sup> 2011 much of the progress made by the revolutionary forces happened in the Nafussa mountains southwest of Tripoli and in the northwestern towns near the Tunisian border. Nonetheless, several positions still held out as strongholds of Gadhafi support. Notably: Sirte (Gadhafi's hometown), Bani-Walid (the historical home of the Warfalla tribe), Sebha (the historical home of the Magarha tribe), Tarhuna and Tripoli, where the majority of Gadhafi's security forces were concentrated.

The rebel attack on Tripoli finally commenced on August 20<sup>th</sup>. Revolutionaries landed in the Tripolitania harbor and also attacked the west of the city from Zintan and the Western Mountains. Revolutionary brigades approached Tripoli's eastern suburbs from their bases in Brega and other rebel-held positions. Meanwhile, Tripoli's hitherto suppressed discontents joined the general attack (Al Jazeera 2011). I received an unsubstantiated report from a documentary filmmaker present during the attack on Tripoli that the rebels used captured cellphone infrastructure to text-message Tripolitanian rebels about where the revolutionary brigades would be attacking. As Gadhafi's troops could no doubt intercept these messages, it is difficult to assess their strategic likelihood. What is certain is that Tripoli was overwhelmed from within and without, and the protracted urban siege that many revolutionaries had expected never materialized. By the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August, Tripoli was considered liberated and by the 23<sup>rd</sup> Gadhafi's sprawling compound in Tripoli had been breached, exposing his luxurious and idiosyncratic lifestyle to Libyans and international media.

After Tripoli fell to the “February 17<sup>th</sup> Revolutionaries” (as they would come to be known), Gadhafi fled the city but his precise whereabouts were not identified. NTC forces took Sebha on September 21<sup>st</sup> (Reuters 2011); after four attempts the NTC overwhelmed Bani-Walid on October 17<sup>th</sup> (Barry 2011); and Sirte finally surrendered on October 20<sup>th</sup>. Evidently, Gadhafi had spent these last days in Sirte as his convoy was observed fleeing the town on the 20<sup>th</sup> and was attacked by NATO forces while doing so. The rebels that found Gadhafi hiding in a drainpipe near where his convoy had been targeted killed him on the spot. Although the NTC initially claimed that Gadhafi had been shot in the head during a crossfire, video of his death quickly surfaced proving that he had been killed by the troops that found him. Debate about the exact identity of the person(s) that pulled the fatal trigger which killed Gadhafi continues to this day. As do the numerous rumors surrounding Gadhafi and his family’s demise, or capture. One of my informants laughingly told me that:

there was a rumour that his [Gadhafi’s] supporters believed that there is a magic needle that costs two million dollars that they would bring from China that they were going to inject him with and he would be alive. So no, this was a legitimate thing that a lot of them believed. So yeah now the joke is they got the needle and they poked him with it and his leg moved. Now they need another one. I know it’s just like - and it’s hard to figure out, I mean that’s a rumour and that’s a joke. But there’s a fine line, there are some things that are less ludicrous.

He also asked me if I had heard about the repeated ‘resurrections’ of one of Gadhafi’s sons: “You know the one that keeps dying and living right? We have one, god knows if he’s alive or dead cause’ I don’t know what to believe anymore because the man has been killed like, eight times. And this is like official reporting ‘oh yeah we killed him.’ ” Given the degree of uncertainty regarding all of Gadhafi’s relatives, the NTC decided to put Gadhafi’s body on display in a freezer in Misurata for five days in order to diminish any chance of misinformation concerning his status (CBS News 2011; Hilsum 2011).

## **Part Two: Was the Civil War a Revolution at All?**

Because it involved two organized 'sides' fighting for the dominance of one nation, the Libyan war of 2011 is easily termed a civil war. Whether or not it was also a revolution is, however, debatable. The professional provocateur Slavoj Žižek wrote the following about the war: "the key difference between Libya/Syria and the Arab Spring proper... [is] in the former, a power struggle and rebellion were (and are) going on for which we are allowed to express our sympathies (to be against Gaddafi or Assad), but the dimension of radical emancipatory struggle is clearly missing" (2012: 72). For Žižek the Libyan civil war does not count as a revolution, in the Marxist sense, because it is not characterised by 'emancipatory struggle,' or a shift in the mode of production towards communism. In other words, the Libyan civil war is a conflict that fits comfortably into the narratives of Western capitalist-democracies and is therefore not a revolution of the proletariat. When Žižek says that we were 'allowed' to extend our sympathies towards Libya and Syria, he is arguing that the violence in those two countries permitted 'us,' his Western audience, to apply the dominant human rights discourse that he identifies with global capitalism, according to which, NATO military intervention was justified by the right of all Libyans to live freely.

That Žižek would publicly disdain the Libyan and Syrian revolutions because they lacked 'emancipatory' progress towards Marx's teleological endpoint is not surprising. After all, Gadhafi's government was the revolutionary socialist one; his was the regime that proclaimed the economic program of 'eminent domain' in 1973, which effectively turned whoever was living in a house or apartment into that domicile's owner and which made factory workers part-owners of their own produce (Davis 1987; Hajar 1980). The National Transitional Council and every Libyan I spoke with was, on the other hand, committed to democratic elections after Gadhafi's defeat, coupled with increased market freedom. The uprising against Gadhafi and the

subsequent involvement of NATO was consequently seen by many observers as an imperialistic war of aggression against a socialist leader hated by occidental states and oil companies (Forte 2012; Pilger 2011; Wile 2011). Theories proliferated about the *true* cause of the revolution (for instance, it could have been Gadhafi's plan to start minting gold denarii; or his vision of uniting Africa) and many pundits called the Libyan civil war a mature version of the 2003 invasion of Iraq; a grab for oil that was done with more nuance and less cost than the disastrous foray coalition forces had undertaken eight years previously (Mezyaev 2013).

However, this notational gerrymandering – an attempt to force the Libyan civil war into the same camp as Afghanistan and Iraq – resonated little with the Libyans I spoke to. For them, the civil war was a unique and seminal event. “For the first time in 42 years,” one man told me, “I could taste freedom.” The Canadian election observers I interviewed told me that many Libyans wept after voting for the constitutional assembly. And Marwan, speaking of his experience of voting in the constitutional assembly elections said, “It was amazing, I was so happy, it’s a new feeling. It’s like we are going to choose who’s going to represent us you know? It was amazing....”.

For the people I spoke with, there was a great deal at stake in naming the civil war of 2011 a revolution. If the war was a revolution everything that had been in place, as far as institutions and governmental practices were concerned, was open for re-negotiation. But even more importantly, if the war was a revolution then the revolutionaries (those people fighting against Gadhafi) were fighting for freedom and not simply their own interests. The importance of this distinction is evidenced in post-war Libya. Brigades that had what my informants called ‘revolutionary credentials,’ or ‘revolutionary legitimacy,’ were trusted to have the interests of the nation at heart and were hired by the NTC to preserve order<sup>2</sup>. These ‘revolutionary brigades’ were,

---

<sup>2</sup> Indeed, this caused the amount of money paid to government employees to balloon from \$6.6 Billion (USD) in 2011 to \$16 Billion in 2012 (Saleh 2013).

and are still, contrasted with the militias which were often formed after the civil war had been won (McQuinn 2012). Marwan told me:

After [the war ended] you know there's, - there were these single guys, every Qabila has an organization and all that. And after that, when it finished there's lots of people who were with Gadhafi and there's lots of people who weren't even doing anything just sitting home, and after everything is done (they [the people who stayed home] were scared from Gadhafi obviously) and after Gadhafi went [died], everyone joined a Qabila and everyone got a gun. Especially from Pub lazzizia where he was in Tripoli and in Sirte. They had mad [many] guns there. So everyone got a gun from there and whoever wanted, who wasn't in the war, now he wanted to show himself that he did something for the country you know? So I think it's - they are all like most of them are fake. And most of my friends who were in the frontlines in the real fights, all gave their guns to their fathers, or they gave it away, they gave up killing, they got enough from this shit, you know?

That Libya is, to this day, awash in militias (the media's pet name for any group with weapons) is not surprising given the massive influx of weapons into the country and the relative power vacuum created by Gadhafi's defeat. What is surprising is the degree to which brigades that can prove they had a hand in defeating Gadhafi are respected compared with those that formed after the war to defend their families, towns, and properties (McQuinn 2012).

Though respecting those who have fought 'for a nation' may seem intuitively plausible, revolutionaries are not always kind to the political community they fought for. Warriors for a cause have been known to use the 'proof' of their conviction as evidence for their respective claims. Such self-delusion has sometimes led to Jacobean violence against the often-inert populations that the victorious revolutionaries inherit. As Davis points out, "Men who have wounds which show their devotion to a cause seem to consider less the consequences of their policies: they belong to a sodality of the dead and the scarified whose company enables the survivors to ignore the social bonds, the conventional habits of respect and deference which sustain ordinary members of society" (1987: 37). What is it, then, about the Libyan soldiers of 2011, the 'scarified' men who have an undeniable sodality

with the war's dead, that makes them more and not less likely to respect the normal bonds of the society to which they return<sup>3</sup>? As Marwan told me, many of these young men "handed their guns to their fathers." What better way to symbolize a respectful demobilization in deference to the familial status quo?

Part of the answer to this question comes from the tight-knit nature of Libyan towns and cities. I was told again and again that Misurata was "like a village," meaning that its inhabitants all knew each other despite the fact that the city is Libya's third largest urban center, home to approximately 800 000 people. Obviously, to some extent the surety with which people 'knew' each other was, given the actual numbers involved, aided by forms of communal recognition. Like, for instance, when Dr. El-Faria told me: "if you go to my city [Misurata] and say you've met with another El-Faria, I'm going to tell you that seven out of ten people will know the family." In this case, as in others, the family, but perhaps not every individual within it, is known; a reality that makes what people often told me about all of Libya, namely that it was a small place where people generally know each other, understandable.

Urbanization in Libya, though a widespread phenomenon,<sup>4</sup> did not happen gradually with one family or individual moving into a city or town at a time. Davis' work with the Zuwaya shows, for instance, that entire lineal segments tended to move into a city together, "it was easy to see the divisions of Zuwaya into sections and lineages reflected in the street map of Ajdabiya, much as the oases of Kufra or Tazarbu were subdivided into tribal territories" (1987: 238). The lineal nesting within cities has important implications for my final chapter. For now, however, it suffices to notice that revolutionary brigades, insofar as, "they fought and... protected their neighbourhood or their house, and that's it" (Dr. Riyah) were attached to the social bonds that constituted their logistical and organization structures. The imbeddedness of revolutionary brigades in the fabric of existing Libyan realities is amply demonstrated by McQuinn's researches in Misurata (2013).

---

<sup>3</sup> 30-40,000 people died during the war.

<sup>4</sup> Libya is now at least 80% urban (CIA World Fact Book).

He was told that, “no sizeable militia groups are operating in Misrata; when asked why, a senior military leader explained, “Because everyone in this city knows each other and what they are doing. If such a group existed, we would know about them” (ibid: 32). McQuinn goes onto explain that, “This view highlights a key feature distinguishing militias from other non-state armed groups operating in Libya [like revolutionary brigades]: weak connections to local military or civilian authorities. Given the close-knit nature of Libyan towns and cities, any group with a significant presence or membership would have to operate with the tacit support of local communities” (ibid: 32). In sum, Libyan communities that supported the war against Gadhafi embraced, supplied, and integrated their informally constructed fighting units. The young men that fought in those revolutionary brigades were, therefore, credited with the social capital of individuals fighting for, and not against their own populations.

This was not the case for Gadhafi’s so-called revolution in 1969: “in general terms Libyan cadres lacked the experience of struggle, and lacked the revolutionary credentials which might have allowed them to ride roughshod over resistance” (Davis 1987: 32-33). Gadhafi’s coup took a single day and was accomplished without fighting or bloodshed. He and the other ‘young officers’ (modelling themselves after Egypt’s Nasserite revolution) swept through Libya while King Idris, the monarch he deposed, was receiving medical treatment in Turkey (First 1974). That Gadhafi’s takeover succeeded at all is more a result of luck than popular support or careful planning. Upon being arrested the deputy commander of Libya’s army, Abdul Aziz Shelhi apparently said, “no you fools, the coup is not tonight!” (Fathali & Palmer 1980: 40). Had the young officers not received word that Abdul Aziz Shelhi was planning his own coup they would certainly have been defeated by the combined forces of the general’s army and the leading families in Cyrenaica that supported him.

Scrutinizing Gadhafi's own discourse concerning his rise to power it is easy to see where the idea of 'revolutionary legitimacy' comes from. As Ayoub points out,

Colonel Qadhdhafi distinguishes sharply between a revolution and a *coup d'état*. A *coup d'état* is at best a change of regime, although more often than not it is simply a transfer of power from one dictatorial group to another. A revolution is, in contrast, a total reorganization of society according to new plans and ideals. In other words, a true revolution is, as the term implies, the return to a new beginning in the history of a nation (1987: 17).

The Libyan populace was, by and large, ready for a change in government in 1969, but Gadhafi was not the anticipated agent of that change. He needed to demonstrate his right to rule, but lacked any form of legitimacy that could be supplied from the status quo,

A regime such as that in Libya after the 1969 military coup lacked justification for holding power... Its right to rule had therefore to be established on other grounds... This was revolutionary legitimacy, which justified the acts and politics of Colonel Qaddafi... The other mode of legitimation was socio-economic performance (eudaemonic legitimation) on which most authoritarian regimes relied. This mode is based upon the role of government in providing social and economic benefits for its citizens (Al-Werfalli 2011: 12).

Because Gadhafi lacked traditional authority he needed, in the time it would take to generate what Al-Werfalli calls 'socio-economic performance', revolutionary legitimacy. Or the legitimacy that is vouchsafed those charismatic figures who manage to convince a political group that they can make a new start without the prejudices, failures and embarrassments passed onto them by the handmaidens of history. But what is a revolution and how did Gadhafi's coup differ from the conflict in 2011?

## **Understanding Revolution**

In his *Notes Towards an Anthropology of Revolution* Bjørn Thomassen characterizes political revolution as,

not only an overthrow of a regime or a state but also an overthrow that involves a popular movement—the ‘masses.’ If there is no broader involvement of the populace, then we are dealing with a coup d’état, and that is something very different. ‘Masses,’ however, cannot act without leadership. Or rather, when they do it hardly leads to revolution: it remains merely a social uprising, a social protest that brings about no structural or institutional change (2012: 690-691).

Thomassen does two things with his definition. He underlines the importance of the ‘broader involvement of the populace’, which I take to mean, in quantifiable terms, a sizable portion of a political community; and he gestures towards the *directionality* of revolutions. Thomassen writes, “Revolutions can also be defined simply as ‘directed’ uprisings, as ‘rebels with a cause,’ but a cause needs formulation and leadership. This means that we need to examine both the existence of the mass or the crowd and how they are led” (ibid: 691).

Thomassen’s insistence that revolutions only obtain when people coagulate into a ‘mass’ with a singular cause and furthermore that causes necessitate leaders is a debatable position. As Setrag Manoukian argues in his work on the Iranian Revolution: “Given their heterogeneity, gatherings on the street always exceed the process of naming they undergo, pointing to trajectories that open up different usages” (2010: 242). In the chaotic moments leading up to the formation of ‘masses’ and in the equally chaotic moments following their formation, it is never clear that a singular cause motivates the resulting collective formation or that recognizable leaders manage the formative process. Rather, as Manoukian describes it, crowds are the generative swamp of potentiality out of which, “the people as a political subject” is fostered; where the people and their enemies are named; and lastly where “the order of things” is made “temporarily inoperative” (2010: 243-244). Thus, for Manoukian the crowd comes before the leader is identified and before communal goals are even articulated. The actuality in the street is the place where the ‘mass’ as an identifiable actor on the stage of Libyan politics is born. This differs from Thomassen’s approach by suggesting that a political cause and the leaders who help formulate it, are

not necessarily the tent poles around which the masses gather. Rather, the crowd assembles before the 'cause', and thus emphasis on what Thomassen called the 'direction' of the uprising is shifted to the lived experience of its generation.

Manoukian's work on political discontent in Iran is an important counterpoint to the overly reductionist simplification of the messy reality of lived politics. I will undoubtedly profit from a more careful engagement with his insights during future fieldwork in Libya. For the time being though, Thomassen's criterion is helpful from the historical perspective, because his definition of revolution as 'led masses' allows me to highlight and explore the differences between the civil war of 2011 and Gadhafi's 1969 coup.

By Thomassen's criteria the Libyan revolt in 2011 was almost certainly a revolution. Although, depending on whom I asked, the involvement of Libyan masses was an ambiguous notion. A young lawyer from Tripoli named Salam spoke about this topic in detail, and is worth quoting at length:

Yeah, I don't think he [Gadhafi] was at all [popular]. And I still say till this day, I mean, I think seventy percent of the population didn't like him. But, I would say thirty percent of the population actively participated to unseat him... There were others though that actively hated the man, because they remember, I think.... Give me one second (closes the door)...

I always say this. I say this to allot of Libyans, allot of people get offended by it but I don't care. Because I believe in saying the truth and it doesn't matter to me [what other people think]. I don't think that – Okay, Tunisia was an organic revolution by all means. In other words, eighty percent of Tunisians said enough is enough: the water has reached a boiling point, and they participated and they were all out on the streets and they were done. Egypt and Libya were different. I'm not saying that they weren't revolutions. I think it depends from whose frame of reference you're looking at it from.

In the segment of the population that was active to unseat Gadhafi it was an absolute revolution. In the segment of the rest of the population, like I said they really didn't do much or they worked against it. What I mean by this is that when Gadhafi was at his worst in the eighties; when Gadhafi [pause] when you needed an exit visa; When he used to hang people in public; When he used to put his shoe on the TV for four days, and we had no satellite TV, and he was just like "fuck you, watch my foot" – And in Arab culture you know that shoes are considered dirty and offensive and that's why the guy threw the shoe at George Bush. When he was at his worst the Libyan people didn't revolt against him. Meaning that they hadn't reached their threshold. Does that make sense?

Okay, the last ten years Saiff [Al-Islam, one of Gadhafi's sons, and his heir apparent] had liberalized Libya. Foreign companies were here, you could fly in and out of Libya, incomes had increased. It wasn't as bad as during the eighties, not to say that it wasn't bad. What happened in Tunisia and then again what happened in Egypt made people remember how bad Gadhafi was, and made them believe the it was possible [to get rid of him]. Does that make sense?

Okay. So, and that's why I look at Tunisia, and the Tunisian revolution and the way that I think it's been slightly more successful, I would say more successful than the other two, because it was organic. Eighty percent of people wanted and believed in something. And they were very intent, and still are on making sure that those goals are achieved. They won't let anyone take that dream away from them. In Libya because two thirds of the population were kind of, just stagnant and didn't believe in the dream, but just kind of went along with whatever happened, things haven't changed.

Salam's analysis contrasts with the perceptions of most of my other interviewees. Take for example Dr. Mazaghri's comments, "The political view was to get rid of Gadhafi, that's that. The common goal for everybody, and that's the denominator between all of them". Or the interpretation of the documentary maker Etienne Vivette who told me that the war should have been called a popular war because everyone was involved, forcing Gadhafi to use mercenaries.

Estimates of the number of combatants fighting against Gadhafi tend to support Salam's contention that roughly a third of Libyans directly participated in the war<sup>5</sup>; though determining the number of non-combatants who, like Marwan (a young man from Benghazi I interviewed), played a non-violent role in the war is difficult. Nonetheless, the nearly one million refugees produced by the conflict in Libya suggests (in a country of less than six million) that a sizable part of the 'masses' were not mobilized into the conflict itself (Cowell 2011).

Nevertheless, using Thomassen's criterion for political revolution – the engagement of led masses – the Libyan war of 2011 should be considered a revolution despite its questionable national popularity. In Benghazi and

---

<sup>5</sup> McQuinn's analysis of the number of revolutionary combatants in Misurata throughout the conflict shows that membership jumped from 4,000 men on May 15<sup>th</sup> 2011 when the frontlines outside of Misurata were established, to 36,000 men before Gadhafi's death (McQuinn 2013: 40). This suggests that participation in the revolution greatly increased as the probability that Gadhafi would be defeated grew.

Misurata, to name just two notable examples, the masses were certainly mobilized against the previous regime. As Dr. Munem El-Faria explained, “Misurata is a city in the form of a village, if you know what I mean. Everyone knows everybody, even though it’s a one million population. If you go, I’m sorry about the – but if you go to my city and say you’ve met with another [El-Faria], I’m going to tell you that seven out of ten people will know the family. So it’s a sort of *watan*<sup>6</sup>, so you know when the whole town rose it was very easy”. It is also very likely that the masses involved in Benghazi and Misurata were led, despite the emphasis that many analysts of the ‘Arab Spring’ have placed on what is often called the ‘network’ effect of social media, an effect that is supposed to allow masses to organize without clear charismatic leadership (Castilles 2009). Speaking with Marwan about organization during the war he said:

I didn’t see like big organization. It wasn’t even organized in the east side [of Libya]. There’s no, no much organization. It just happened because of the people who died in Benghazi. And they [the protestors] were going out like “we don’t want that”, we don’t want the killing that happened in Benghazi because we’re brothers and all that. So, - and it wasn’t even organized. I didn’t see organization or anything. It’s after that, at the beginning there was no organization but after that there were like... tribes, tribes, and I don’t know what they call it, *Qabil* you know what *Qabil* is?? Yeah so they make each *Qabila* some. But when it was in the city there was no like normal people, nothing. All of like each city, each area protecting themselves from the...[he ended here]

Dr. El-Faria had the following to say about organization during the war,

the transitional council in Benghazi Libya had four members from Misurata. Alright? Those members came from a local council, alright? And they were elected quickly. And they led all the day-to-day: sort of the emergency, the supplies, the food the organization of things within town. Now there’s also a command, like an army base that most militia and most army base crews attached to because that’s where they get their weapons and their, you know,

---

<sup>6</sup>*Watan* is an Arabic word generally used to refer to ‘my country’ or homeland. Behnke found it used specifically in relation to the geographies that allow for Bedouin transhumance in Cyrenaica (1980).

<sup>7</sup> *Qabil* is generally translated as ‘group’, but is also often used to denote ‘tribe’ in Libya (Evans-Pritchard 1949).

and the ammunitions they need. In the hospital the medical was different. It belonged to the local council, but they had their own teams running things. People who spoke English, people who had Internet, you know, knowledge – because we wanted to convey the message... Yeah so it was organized. And the reason it was organized actually, when I went there I couldn't believe it. I wanted to volunteer at one of the frontlines, and it was with a schedule. They said we're booked this week and we'll get you in one day next week. People had like rotations, yeah. And one of the main things was that it went too long. You know it was six months plus. So you know they've got time to organize themselves.

As one can see, the masses of Libyans that rose against Gadhafi were led, although this leadership might have taken some time to ferment. After spending six months in a besieged Misurata, Brian McQuinn called the organization of the revolutionary brigades in the city 'command and consensus':

A distinct feature of the revolutionary brigades was their consensus-oriented decision making, both within brigades and between brigade commanders, even when greater coordination emerged in the later stages of fighting. This was in part due to the egalitarian relationship between members of brigades. Yet the 'command and consensus' decision-making model continued even after commanders' positions became formalized through a vote or group decision (2013: 18).

The preceding observation may support the claim that Libya's masses were without salient leaders, and were instead more like anarchic groups engineering their fate through consensus decision-making – a conclusion that some analysts of the Arab spring were quick to make, calling the revolutions in North Africa the 'Facebook revolutions' (Beaumont 2011). But McQuinn also points out that, "the leaders of this group type [revolutionary brigades] command the respect of their members because throughout the formation of these groups individual fighters could choose whom to follow. Consequently, groups formed around commanders they esteemed" (2013: 15). Though the revolutionary brigades – the principal agents of armed insurrection against Gadhafi – favoured equality and camaraderie, they were not without their leaders. And the relative chaos and fluidity of the military units fighting Gadhafi was not necessarily a mark of unorganized or acephalous groups.

Rather, it was often a strategy adopted by the revolutionary forces that, even with NATO's help, had understandable difficulty battling Gadhafi's well equipped militia units. Some of which were, like the 32<sup>nd</sup> Khamis brigade, specifically created for counter-insurgency (St. John 2011). As McQuinn puts it,

Just as the revolution in Libya was decentralized, constituted by multiple, simultaneous—yet distinct—uprisings, so too was the armed rebellion in Misrata. This made the rebellion fluid and chaotic, presenting an unpredictable enemy to Qaddafi forces. As the armed resistance matured, coordination and organization improved, although this development was obscured—often strategically—by the highly decentralized nature of the fighting (2013: 34).

The fighting, but not necessarily the organization of that fighting, was decentralized in Libya. Thus, Thomassen's definition of revolution as involving 'led-masses' is satisfied at the very least by the revolts in Benghazi and Misurata.

Chalmers Johnson provides another definition of political revolution in his review essay *Revolution and the Social System* (1964). Johnson writes, "Regardless of the qualities of an elite and of the actions it is taking to relieve dysfunction, if change eventually takes a revolutionary form, the system elite will be attacked violently by the revolutionaries. Such an occurrence is, empirically, the mark of a revolution." (1964: 8). Here again, the Libyan war counts as a revolution. Granting the fact that Libya's elite were not securely established – leading Amal Obeidi to write that, "in practice, one of the main characteristics of the political system in Libya is the phenomenon of what can be called a '*temporary elite*': this category describes those whose elite status has been created by the regime in order to help implement the regime's programs" (2008: 105) – Gadhafi's elite were certainly 'attacked violently'. Indeed, in some respects they are still being harangued. See, for example, Libya's proposed 'political isolation act', which would constitutionally prevent Libyans who had a position in Gadhafi's government from working in the current administration (Fornaji 2013).

Though these definitions of revolution add, by way of their specificity, a great deal to the study of revolution, many, including Johnson himself, still consider Sigmund Neuman's definition to be the standard formulation of a political revolution. Neuman writes that revolution is, "a sweeping, fundamental change in political organization, social structure, economic property control and the predominant myth of a social order, thus indicating a major break in the continuity of development" (The International Civil War, 'World Politics' 1949). Despite the apparent grandeur of this definition, and the high-bar it sets for revolutions, the Libyan war still makes the rhetorical 'cut'. A truly 'sweeping' change in political, social, and economic organization was proposed and made possible by the 2011 war. As Hilsum puts it, "That Arab Spring uprisings of 2011 in neighbouring Tunisia and Egypt removed the decrepit leaders but left the infrastructures of the governments more or less intact. Libya's, by contrast, was a true revolution, in which the entire apparatus of the state was turned upside down and routed" (2011: 5). Another interviewee of mine – a Libyan graduate student planning to study institution formation – agreed with Hilsum, saying, "really it's building institutions from scratch [in Libya] so that's what my thesis is going to be about."

Gadhafi destroyed the Libyan army by engaging it in a series of ill-fated wars against Chad throughout the late seventies and early eighties, and chronically underfunding it after the officer-led coup against him in 1993 (Martinez 2007). He also consistently underfunded the Libyan education and health systems, and, apparently even contributed to the active failure of these institutions by leaking national exam answers to favoured families, encouraging the reduction of the university calendar from eight to six months, and supporting Libyan families when they went to Egypt, Turkey or Tunisia for medical treatments they could not receive in Libya's crumbling medical establishments (Davis 1987). Gadhafi's economic policies, though ostensibly in the midst of 'modernization' (privatization) since 2003, were also still antiquated barriers to commerce. As Salam Terhani explained,

there was private property under Gadhafi. Essentially you, the person who occupied the home, owned the home. This is under rule four inspired by the Green Book. So if you live in the house you own the house. If I was renting to you before rule four, and rule four comes out, who lives in the house? You do, so you own it. Me as the person who really owns it, and who you used to pay rent to can go to hell. That was one thing, but even with respect to obtaining a building permit, people never went to go get them. Ninety percent of the city [Tripoli] is built randomly without following zoning laws, without following health and safety codes, without even following a general scheme to make the city look uniform and beautiful. People just built them [houses and businesses] wherever the hell they want. People take parts of the road. Literally there are roads that are windy because everyone has stolen a couple meters here and there from the street. And all of that in general, and the reason why people won't get building permits is because it takes a fucking year to get one. There were eighty steps you had to go through and seventeen trips! This is what we used to do; we used to actually count it. We would read the procedure, like the legal procedure and then actually go test it, and ask other people who had done it, and their view [on the process] and a whole bunch of stuff to figure out why it is that people refused to follow the law. It's either that they're too cumbersome to follow or that they don't see the benefit in it.

The Libyan war of 2011, insofar as it required the establishment of new institutions and systems of political and economic governance, was a revolution by necessity. But what is in a name? What, besides the desire for naming, does recognizing the Libyan war as a revolution satisfy? For the purposes of my research it accomplishes two things: 1) naming the war a revolution distinguishes it from Gadhafi's coup d'état in 1969 as well as the subsequent coup attempts in 1970, 1975, and 1993, while also 2) suggesting a particular opportunity for anthropological inquiry. As Thomassen argues, "Revolutions more than any other event in modern history represent those instants of 'pure potentiality' that Turner evoked (1969: 41), moments where given hierarchies, social norms, and sacred values are brought into question" (Thomassen: 701). Whereas a coup d'état is considered an attempt "at revolutionary change made by small, secret associations of individuals united by a common sense of grievance that may or may not correspond to the objective condition of a social system" (underlining his, Johnson: 51), a revolution is a period of such dramatic change that even those who are not directly involved become players on its stage.

A revolution, similarly to a coup, may not be motivated by the 'objective' state of a particular nation, but unlike a coup it always has a dramatic effect on the objective state of affairs. This 'rupture', as Arpad Szakolczai called it (2010), constitutes an obvious state of liminality for the people involved. In which times, "taboos are lifted, fantasies are enacted, indicative mood behavior is reversed, the low are exalted and the mighty abased" (Thomassen 2012: 693). A state of liminality allows an observer to see what happens when standard procedures are drastically interrupted. Like a damn forced into a river bed, revolution provides a contrast that allows one, including those partaking in the revolution, to better observe what existed before the damn, while also noticing what the water does in order to carry on around the damn. A coup does not accomplish the same feat unless its elitist leadership manages to drastically alter the realities they have inherited from the previous regime.

Fathali & Palmer argue that Gadhafi's 1969 coup, though it was renamed a revolution, struggled to accomplish just that (1980). According to them, Gadhafi strained his personal and interpersonal resources to find a 'people' – in Thomassen's sense of a led mass – to support his government's revolutionary mandate. As Fathali & Palmer write, "the greatest challenge to Libya's revolutionary elite during its first decade lies in the area of mobilization, in both its organizational and motivational dimensions." (1980: 5). They argue, along with Joffe & MacLaclan (1982), that the primary difficulty facing Gadhafi's government was always behavioural rather than economic or political. Libyans were not altogether used to the notion of a Libyan 'nation' when Gadhafi took over from King Idris' Monarchy. Indeed, during Davis' extended sojourn with the Zuwaya of eastern Libya, he found that people often bragged that there had not been a policeman in their area for twenty years! (1987) Davis also found that the Zuwaya he knew were often indisposed to impersonal 'state' organizations, and forces. This is a phenomenon that apparently extended back to the Italian occupation of Libya, and the corresponding resistance supplied by Cyrenaican Bedouin led

by Omar Mukhtar and the Senussi religious fraternity. Davis writes, "Every indication is that Bedouin resisted the [Italian] invaders for a combination of religious and tribal or territorial principles, not nationalist ones" (ibid: 26).

Given the Libyan people's mistrust of the concept of 'nation', Gadhafi's biggest challenge as Libya's new national leader was not to generate wealth for governmental coffers, lucrative new oil contracts managed that just fine (Allan 1981), but to convince the average Libyan that they should become involved with the state; to convince them that they should 'buy-into' the paradoxically nationalist and pan-Arabic project that he endorsed, rather than viewing government as something that could maybe be gained from, but certainly not something that could be trusted (Joffe & McLachlan 1982). This was a task made difficult by the effective prohibition on Libyan civil society, and the failure of Gadhafi's grand intention to unify North Africa and the Middle East (Vandewalle 1998). In a manner that would surely make Gregory Bateson smile, the initial failure of the majority of Libya's to buy into Gadhafi's coup, exponentially diminished the chances that they would later. This 'feedback' loop resulted from the incorporation of individuals into Gadhafi's governmental apparatus who should not have been given positions of power, and probably would not have been if the 'traditional' or already present elements of leadership within Libyan society had endorsed Gadhafi's project to begin with. Even Gadhafi admitted that the wrong people had become members of the original 'people's councils' – an administrative appendage I will explain in the next section (First 1974).

Whether or not Fathali, Palmer, Joffe and McLachlan are correct in the finer points of their analysis, it seems clear that the greatest irony of Gadhafi's rule lies in that fact that his demonization and death was able to provide the popular support necessary for his own revolutionary ambitions. As one interviewee told me, 'the war brought all Libyans closer together'. Like an Oedipal father, Gadhafi needed to be overcome in order for Libyans to endorse the nation he considered himself to be the symbolic head of. In fact, I was told that it was the goal of his deposition that enabled a proper

revolution to occur. It is left to be seen whether the nationalism stirred by the chaos of revolutionary warfare will keep or moulder in the subsequent months of post-revolutionary disillusion, apathy, and necessarily renegotiated expectations.

## Part Three: Rhetoric and Practice

After providing a chronological description of the conflict in Libya, and arguing for its revolutionary nature, I will now discuss another topic that my informants highlighted for me. Namely, the difference between what Gadhafi said about government in Libya, and how, in fact, Libyans were governed. Usually this distinction is made by contrasting the official rhetoric of Gadhafi's state –communicated by Gadhafi's *Green Book* and his numerous speeches – with the way that Libyans transacted their daily lives. This comparison draws a rather stark difference between rhetoric and actuality. As St. John writes, "In Libya, an enormous gap exists between the ideas, beliefs, and myths which constitute Qadhdhafi's ideology and the respective realities which they purport to describe or explain" (1983: 472). For St. John, the 'enormous gap' existed between Gadhafi's ideas, and "socioeconomic and political" realities (ibid: 471). In this respect St. John is comparing what Gadhafi would *like* to happen in Libya with what St. John takes to be the underlying, and not necessarily represented realities captured by quantitative measures of Gross Domestic Product, Average Salaries, and the 'actual' political empowerment of Libyans. In this section, I follow St. John's example by comparing what Gadhafi wanted Libya to look like with how the Libyans I spoke to experienced Libya. In this respect, I compare Libya's theoretical political situation to its actual political experience.

To put an anthropological spin on this inquiry, I asked myself if such a comparison had anything to do with Edmund Leach's tripartite division of behavioural patterns:

The field worker has three distinct 'levels' of behaviour pattern to consider. The first is the actual behaviour of individuals. The average of all such individual behaviour patterns constitutes the second, which may fairly be described the 'norm'. But there is a third pattern, the native's own description of himself and his society, which constitutes the 'ideal' (1961: 30).

Leach argued that the anthropologists is, "always tempted to identify the second of these patterns with the third", and that, "any structural analysis of a kinship system is necessarily a discussion of ideal behaviour, not of normal

behaviour" (ibid: 31). Leach did not immediately elaborate on his second point, but he seems to believe that structural analysis necessarily considers the ideal rather than the normal, in order to maintain its structural consistency. The maintenance of this consistency is something, which is apparently of some importance. Leach writes,

the basic ideology [among the Jinghpaw or Kachin] was the grouping of... households of relatives, into the three categories *hpu-nau*, *mayu*, *dama*. In practice... these groupings are not necessarily permanent, but they 'ought' to be... What is the significance of this 'ought'...? I suggest that it is simply the logical framework against which the Jinghpaw themselves conceptualize their own kinship system (ibid: 51).

Ideal behaviour is, by Leach's account, an attempt to maintain the behavioural standard against which the actual and the normal are judged. In this sense, the way that an informant describes his society and his respective position within it has more to do with maintaining a particular field in which the informant is oriented, rather than observing the informant's heading with respect to that field. An informant's description of his society characterizes his relationship with the horizon used to judge his society, rather than a better or worse description of the objectively real.

Applying this insight to the difference between Gadhafi's theory of government and actual experiences of Gadhafi's government makes the difference between Gadhafi's rhetoric and practice a gap between the way my informants thought things 'ought' to be, and the way that Gadhafi thought things 'ought' to be rather than a divergence between perception and reality as St. John understands it. Naturally, if Gadhafi reported twisted socio-economic realities, then the difference between his rhetoric and the practical state of affairs, would be purely objective. But, keeping in mind Leach's division, we can see that the difference being discussed by academics is usually that which exists between Gadhafi's theory, and other people's perception of the practical reality of his theory. Without having been to Libya to observe over time the actuality of Gadhafi's governmental practices, I must

attend to the divergence as if it were fundamentally a difference between ideal behavioural patterns, rather than the actual ones. To simplify the following section I will simply refer to this gap as the difference between Gadhafi's rhetoric and practice, when am I really discussing Gadhafi's rhetoric and the reaction to its attempted implementation.

For my interviewees the importance of discussing this difference was related to their representation of the conflict as a revolution. These two points are connected because Gadhafi's government was overtly revolutionary, and he considered his coup in 1969 to be the beginning of a political 'third way' between democracy and communism (El-Khawwas 1986). A rebellion against his government therefore *looks* like a conservative or counter-revolutionary action, which could only be impeding the progress that Gadhafi continually touted (Forte 2012). Nevertheless, the Libyans I spoke with, and the various Libyans who were able to communicate their dissatisfaction with Gadhafi's rule to international media and academia, did not consider Gadhafi's government to be revolutionary – in the emancipatory political, or economic sense of that word – though they did say that it was constantly changing. In other words, the people I spoke with did not consider Gadhafi's popular democracy or his socialistic economy successful or even real.

Discussing the difference between what Gadhafi said and did, between his rhetoric and his practice also provides useful insights into why the revolution happened, and why it happened the way it did. If Gadhafi was a purely symbolic figurehead in Libya, as he maintained, then why did my informants, and the anti-government Libyans immortalized by international media, figure him as their primary enemy? If Gadhafi was merely the warden of a continual revolution why was he targeted as the new revolution's arch-nemesis?

One way of characterizing the difference between Gadhafi's rhetoric and practice is to point out that Libya was formally a popular democracy, and informally a dictatorship (Davis 1987; El-Kikhia 1997). This discrepancy has

been called Libya's 'paradox' (Anderson 1990; Martinez 2007). What my interlocutors helped me see, however, is that the apparently paradoxical tension between Libya's formal democracy and its informal tyranny, or between a maximum of individual sovereignty and a minimum of personal freedom, was partly obfuscated by a carefully drawn distinction between the social and the political, which Gadhafi cultivated in his philosophic manifesto *The Green Book* (1976). This distinction was not immediately evident to me because while I assumed that 'social' relationships in Libya had some bearing on Libyan government, I did not consider, or fully understand how society and government could have two mutually discrete and yet public roles.

Bruno Latour argued that, "the historical genealogy of the word 'social' is construed first as following someone, then enrolling and allying, and, lastly, having something in common" (Latour 2005: 6). This etymology had some resonance with my own understanding of the concept.

Theoretically, I considered society to be the all-encompassing result of the interaction between people sharing the same geographic and political community. This definition worked only so far in Libya where the social was considered something specifically related to family, and therefore not merely the sum total of interaction between people sharing a conceptual (the nation) and physical (the town or whatever) space.

Colloquially, I most often thought of 'society' in respect to the time spent with friends and family, i.e. time spent 'socially'. Based on this understanding the 'social' is something casual, which is different from politics by being relatively private, and inconsequential. Once again, my understanding fell short. In Libya it seemed that time spent with friends and family could be of the greatest political import. And that social spaces like the sitting room, and café could have greater political significance than the formal settings of Gadhafi's popular democracy (Hüsken 2012). Furthermore, I was often told that Libya is like a big town where everyone knows and watches each other. In this context socializing is decidedly public.

Throughout this section I therefore hope to show that Libyan society, insofar

as it can be and sometimes is conceptually organized into lineages that place people into a nation-wide network of geographic and historical webs of alliance and animosity, has a political dimension.

Part of this discussion needs to include an analysis of Gadhafi's interests. Gadhafi tried to use the convergence of society and politics to realize his political ambitions. By doing so, he effectively exacerbated their overlap. The greater occlusion of the political sphere by the social was, I argue, one reason for the revolution. My informants no longer wanted the social to impinge upon the political, mainly because Gadhafi used society to secure and prolong his power as well as to justify social and political inequality. Thus a war against Gadhafi was, to some extent, a war against the influence of Libyan 'society' that Gadhafi tried to inculcate and use. An understanding like this makes sense, I think, of Foraq's assertion that the Libyan conflict had been a 'revolution of the mind', as much as it was a political revolution. If the divergence between Gadhafi's rhetoric and practice was not, as is generally thought, a product either of Gadhafi's Machiavellian prevarication, or his idealistic failings, but rather a difference in the way Gadhafi thought society 'ought' to function, and the way the revolutionaries I spoke with thought society 'ought' to be, then the 2011 revolution was a massive step towards legitimizing the revolutionaries' 'ought' at the expense of Gadhafi's. Recalling Leach, this transition creates a different description of Libyan society and a person's place within it, a different 'ideal'.

### **Why Gadhafi's Particular 'Ought'?**

In terms of formal government, Libya was a popular democracy that enjoyed a great deal of decentralization (Vandewalle 2008). Some of this decentralization explains how cities, towns and villages were able to manage their own affairs during and after the revolution without the help of an organized federal bureaucracy (McQuinn 2012). With regards to daily life, however, Libyans were carefully scrutinized and surveyed (Aikans 2012).

Salam told me that, “If you actually went and spoke your opinion at those [basic people’s] committees you’d be picked up.... So no-one really participated in them”. Dr. El-Zaria related to me a disconcerting story about Gadhafi’s surveillance capabilities:

[At first we thought that] Gadhafi did not do anything for Skype. However on the phone you could not say anything. And of course I got comfy myself. You know if you can say anything, you start speaking about what’s going on [using] Skype... Blah Blah Blah [He was always] updating her [his sister]... And I got to the point where I realized this is too easy. It’s too easy for me to tell what’s going on to Libya with nobody watching. Because if you say that on the phone your family’s gone in, you know, in a couple of hours. And then, using Skype I also talked to my niece... Exchanging information, telling her remember what’s going on. And then I think within a week after February seventeenth. It was early March I was sitting at home [in Canada]. I think it was reading week at that time. So nothing to do, I was sitting at home doing these YouTube videos [about the revolution] and everything. And the phone rings, starts ringing. I pick up the phone and I hear the conversation I had on Skype with my sisters and my nieces played back to me. And not played back like a continuous conversation, but excerpts. What I said about the government: this piece, this piece, this piece. So I’m trying to answer the phone saying ‘who, who, who’. No answer. It just plays my, what I say, and it plays my sister or my niece’s reply to me. And then there would be like a pause... And surely, my sister was actually interrogated after that, [her] being a professor...

Gadhafi used the expertise of companies around the world to effect this sophisticated level of electronic surveillance (Sonne & Coker 2011). The Libyan government had, for example, no legal way of knowing Dr. El-Zarria’s phone number in Canada. His number is not connected to his Skype account, nor did he list it at the Libyan embassy. Obviously, then, Gadhafi’s government had ways of recording conversations and of connecting them with expatriates who they had files on.

Gadhafi’s government also employed thousands of paid informants colloquially known as mosquitos. In a paper prepared for the US State Department on state-sponsored terrorism, it was estimated that up to 20 percent of adult Libyans were employed by Gadhafi’s Revolutionary Committees for one or another type of surveillance (1997). Gadhafi tried to justify this degree of mutual suspicion and high-tech surveillance using the specter of Islamic extremism and terrorism. He furthermore reasoned that the revolution needed to be perpetuated and protected from social

degenerates, the 'diseased' as he called them, who might attempt to sabotage its efforts (El-Khawas 1986). In actual fact, however, Libya's security apparatuses were often used, as in Dr. El-Zarria's case, for the purposes of regime security (Aikins 2012).

Libyans had the opportunity to engage in popular democracy through mechanisms that I will explain shortly, but if they actually used those mechanisms Gadhafi's revolutionary cadres could censure them. In this way, government provided the maximum *theoretical* sovereignty for every adult Libyan, while unofficial – either 'revolutionary' or 'social' – forces constrained this theoretical sovereignty to a narrow field of actually permissible action.

In a BBC interview with Gadhafi held in Tripoli during the revolution, the difference between what Gadhafi said about his role as leader and the relative freedom of Libyans was highlighted and made to look ridiculous by international journalists (BBC 2011). That interview painted a picture of a completely detached and possibly senile megalomaniac. At one point in the interview, however, Gadhafi tells the journalists that they do not understand the Libyan political system, and that their questions assumed a degree of governmental control over Libya that he had never possessed.

There is some truth to Gadhafi's reply, because he explicitly addresses the difference between a theoretically open government, and the constraining influence of society in his *Green Book*. Near the end of book one (the section on government) he writes, "Theoretically, this is the genuine democracy. But realistically, the strong always rule, i.e., the stronger part in the society is the one that rules" (1976: 40). For Gadhafi, the fact that the 'stronger part of society' rules is permissible because the nation, insofar as it is legitimate, should be modelled on the family: "The national state is the only political form which is consistent with the natural social structure. Its existence lasts, unless it becomes subject to another stronger nationalism, or unless its political structure, as a state, is affected by its social structure in the form of tribes, clans, and families" (ibid: 89). Going further, Gadhafi

considered the family as a model for, but also, in Geertz's famous terms (1976), as a model of nations: "The social, i.e. the national, factor is the driving force of human history. The social bond which binds together each human group, from the family through the tribe to the nation, is the basis for the movement of history" (ibid: 73). In the family, as opposed to the state, it is beneficial and also natural for the strongest members to dictate family 'policy'. As far as families are concerned, leadership by the strong is actually leadership by the more experienced, the wealthier and the older. The differential rights and obligations of each family member are justified by the greater good of the family unit. In this way, Gadhafi justified the 'natural' division of labour within the family versus the 'artificial' division of labour within western democracies. He argued that,

Freedom means that every human being gets that education which qualifies him for work which is appropriate to him. Dictatorship means that a human being learns what is not suitable for him. That leads him to work which is not suitable for him. Work which is appropriate to man is not always appropriate to woman, and the knowledge that is proper for the child is not suitable for the adult.

There is no difference in human rights between man and woman, the child and the adult. But there is no absolute equality between them as regards their duties (ibid: 106)

Notice that in this passage – one of the only excerpts in *The Green Book* which explicitly addresses the division of labour in society – that the relational model used is familial: man, women and child are the positions discussed. The state's relation to this familial distribution of 'appropriate' and 'suitable' work is to guarantee "human rights", but not to establish "absolute equality" in terms of duties. The distribution of appropriate work is sometimes gendered: "these innate characteristics [menstruation, childbearing, and breastfeeding] form differences because of which man and woman cannot be equal... they assign to each of them a different role or function in life" (ibid: 94). If freedom means undertaking work that is appropriate or suitable to your position, a person can submit to parental or

gendered authority without diminishing their personal sovereignty because they consider their subjugation a moral distribution of social inequality, rather than an artificial imposition of false inequality through the mechanism of representation. As Gadhafi writes, "Nature has thus been designed in harmony with the inevitability of life... Existence between the beginning and end is based on natural law, *without choice or compulsion*. It is natural. It is *natural freedom* (italics mine, ibid: 102).

Gadhafi argued that as families grow they eventually form tribes, and as those tribes grow they naturally form a society, which insofar as it shares a single heritage and orientation towards the future is already, or will come to be unified by a single 'nationalism' (ibid: 81). Because, "Mankind... is the individual and the family, not the state. The state is an artificial economic and political system, sometimes a military system, with which mankind has no relationship and nothing to do" (ibid: 79). Gadhafi's solution to the problem of government was therefore to slowly atrophy the state and what he called 'instruments of governing', which included political parties, unions and other professional or civil associations, so that a maximum amount of personal sovereignty and freedom could be obtained through the naturalness of an autonomous family.

The family and by extension the tribe was able to naturally censure the individual without endangering his personal sovereignty because the individual feels personally obligated to act unselfishly around his family. The tendency towards self-discipline is something that Gadhafi did not feel was encouraged by a state government, or even by its educational systems. He writes,

What needs to be emphasized is that the individual might sometimes act in a disgraceful manner which he would not dare do in front of his family. But since the family is smaller in size he can escape its supervision, unlike the tribe whose supervision is felt by all its members. In view of these considerations, the tribe forms a behavior pattern for its members which will be transformed into a social education which is better and more human than any school education (ibid: 83)

As far as this belief is concerned Gadhafi's rhetoric and practice were completely unified. In the early eighties he vociferously supported a plan to abolish state sponsored elementary schools in favour of homeschooling by the family. Apparently, the only thing that stymied this idea was the "vigorous opposition from Libyan females... [of whom] Many saw the home education debate as an attempt by the state to weaken their position" (El-Kikhia 1997: 6).

For Gadhafi, society disciplines its members by 'forming a behaviour pattern' through social pressure, rather than artificial punishment. Specifically, society does this in two ways. The first of which is tradition, also called custom, and the second of which is religion. Gadhafi writes that

The law of the society is an eternal human heritage that is not the possession of the living only... Encyclopaedias of man-made laws derived from man-made constitutions are full of material penalties against man while traditional law seldom has these penalties. Traditional law imposed moral, not material penalties that are appropriate for man. Religion embraces and absorbs tradition. Most material penalties in religion are postponed until the Day of Judgement (1976: 32)

Tradition, Gadhafi thinks, is a source of moral obligation and is absorbed and embraced by religion – a belief that is perhaps uniquely suited to Libya where 97% percent of the population is a mix of Arab and Berber ancestry and 97% of the population is Sunni Muslim (CIA World Fact Book). I was also told that Libya is a country that many Libyans believe was settled for seemingly social reasons, and not for material or selfish reasons. As Dr. El-Zaria explained,

Who settled Libya? Libya was never a country. More of a crossover. People come to Egypt and stayed there. And they crossed to Libya [in order] to and end up in Algeria, Tunisia, or Morocco because there's no water in Libya. Why would they come to settle in Libya? ... So people who settled there, they settled because they wanted to be there. They did not move for economic purposes. Those people that wanted to move to Tunisia [because] it's greener over there, or Algeria, nice farms and rock right? And that developed. So they have more of a belonging to the land then you know anything else. And that passed from generation to generation back back back. So in Libya if I say my name, my last name 'El-Zarria' people exactly know where I came from. Which part of the country I came from, who my great grandfather is, it's very closely knit.

In this quotation Dr. El-Zaria asserted that people settled in Libya “because they wanted to be there”, but that the desire to settle in Libya could not be economic because richer areas for human settlement existed in nearby Tunisia and Algeria. When people chose to remain in Libya for non-economic reasons Dr. El-Zaria thought that they developed a closer connection to the land itself, rather than the products of its tillage. This connection with the land itself, and not the land’s produce “developed” and “passed from generation to generation”, such that now Dr. El-Zarria’s name binds him to a particular place, grandfather and lineage.

In this regard, one can see the connection that Gadhafi made between tradition, religion and social control. Gadhafi was not talking about specific traditional rituals for maintaining social cohesion when he identified custom and religion as the sources of “the law of society”. He never once mentions a particular Bedouin rite or custom within *The Green Book*. Instead, Gadhafi talks about ‘tribal supervision’ providing a “social education which is better and more human than any school education” (1976: 83). It was the traditional or customary association of particular families and lineages to pieces of territory for non-pecuniary reasons that formed the social supervision, which encourages appropriate behaviour, *not* specific Bedouin practices. Thus, religion, insofar as it was a personal religion that encouraged the supervision of one’s peers by oneself and not by a clerical overseer, naturally inherited the duties of custom and tradition.

Gadhafi thought that tribes, families and religion create interpersonal harmony and the possibility of society by convincing the individual to behave unselfishly rather than punishing the individual who has acted selfishly. By encouraging the growth of a nation (a huge family) rather than a government, Gadhafi hoped that personal sovereignty could be absolute without compromising social or political order.

Thus, the difference between Gadhafi’s rhetoric and his practice is ameliorated by his conception of the variable roles of society and government. For Gadhafi, society is created by the everyday interactions of

people who live together, and who are united culturally, linguistically, and by their shared objectives. Society is dominated by the “strong”, or by those members of its cohort who are respected more than the others.

Government, on the other hand, is an artificial encumbrance around society’s neck. Government is what transpires when one element within society becomes dominant at the expense of the others. Governmental politics, according to him, is the ‘fraudulent’ dialogue between various groups that pretend to ‘represent’ the people. As such, governmental politics needed to be done away with. Representation needed to be eliminated. And all adult Libyans needed to assume their position within the ‘nation’, which, for Gadhafi, was effectively a scaled-up version of the Libyan family or tribe. As Gadhafi writes near the end of *The Green Book*, “the social factor will inevitably triumph over the political factor... the basis for the life of individuals is the family, the tribe, then the nation... The essential factor is the social factor” (1976: 90).

Gadhafi supposed that within the Libyan nation, those who are considered strong by the community would ultimately lead. But how is a belief like that operationalized in a nation that still maintained, and needed to maintain, some vestiges of centralized statehood? Vestiges like an army, navy, air force, and nationalized oil industry. How, in other words, could the socially strong lead when institutions like the army or the state bureaucracy cemented the political importance of particular people, irrespective of the social vicissitudes of various Libyan communities included in the Libyan state? And how would the educational and technical requirements of modern equipment and industry be integrated with Gadhafi’s understanding of social respect for one’s elders? To answer this question I provide a brief survey of the macro-historical context of Gadhafi’s government from 1969 to 2011. The historical context provides the behavioural ‘norm’ of Gadhafi’s tenure. After this, I undertake a thorough examination of Gadhafi’s basic ‘theory’ of government and society. This theory is then contrasted with the lived experience of Gadhafi’s state. Once this contrast is drawn, I investigate the

primary causes of the Libyan revolution as my informants and the academic and journalistic reportage on the Libyan conflict represented them to me. Finally, I reiterate my argument concerning the role of society in in Gadhafi's government, and how this affected the revolution of 2011.

### **The Macro-historical context from 1969 to 2011.**

In his 42 years in office, Gadhafi made multiple changes to Libya's government. Political theorists and other consummate observers of modern Libya generally recognize four periods to his rule, although these periods could be further subdivided due to the eccentricity of his program. The first ran from 1969 to 1973. This was the period directly after Gadhafi's *coup d'état*, when he and the eleven other members of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) were formulating how the new Libyan state would carry out the motivations and teachings of the Egyptian president Abdul Nasser, their ideological guiding light. During this time, the RCC held intellectual conferences to discuss what the revolution was for, which classes of people were 'revolutionary', and what role religion would play in the new state (Davis 1987). Gadhafi also managed to renegotiate oil extraction contracts with international companies, to close the British and American military and naval bases in Libya; and to expel roughly 20,000 Italians living in Libya since their occupation in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (First 1974). These three victories for the Libyan people against what were seen as imperial oppressors initially secured Gadhafi a great deal of popular approval.

The next period runs from 1973, with the 'proclamation of the rule of the people', to the late eighties and early nineties, when the effects of international sanctions began to take an obvious toll on Libya (Martinez 2007). During this approximately 20-year period, Gadhafi published the three volumes that make up his *Green Book*.

Davis notes that, "the first thing to say about *The Green Book* is that it did not cause the Libyan revolution of 1969" (1981: 61). Gadhafi did not start writing his manifesto until after the 1969 putsch. So, while the book

established the philosophic principles of his coup and provided the intellectual framework filled in by the basic people's committees and the people's congresses, they did not instigate the coup and were therefore more like 'works in progress' rather than revolutionary canon. Libya also engaged in intermittent fighting with Chad throughout this period, including four times when Libyan soldiers briefly occupied northern Chad in 1978, 1979, 1980-81, and 1983-86 (Davis 1987 & Wright 1981). An estimated 10,000 Libyans died in these conflicts (Brahimi 2011).

From 1990 to 2003, international sanctions in combination with a collapse in global oil prices depressed Libya's economy (Altunisik 1996). Martinez notes that, "Libya's income from the sale of hydrocarbon products fell drastically from 20 billion dollars in 1981 to 5 billion in 1986", and that this drop in revenues coincided with costly new military outlays (Martinez 2007: 16). Up until 1988, Gadhafi's revolutionary regime attempted to manage the distribution of practically all goods and services to its citizens. Because domestic production in Libya was minimal, this meant using oil and gas revenues to purchase international produce which could then be sold to local vendors who would, in turn, sell the foreign produce to Libya's consumers. Because these consumers were primarily government workers, the entire system was notably cyclical (Ahmida 2012). Consequently, when decreases in state revenue resulted in no further increases to government salaries, real wages in-terms of purchasing power dropped (Martinez 2007). As the real wages of approximately 700,000 government employees continued to fall<sup>8</sup> Gadhafi's government rescinded the ban on private enterprise and even "initiated a number of reforms linked to recommendations of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These included trade liberalization, the abolition of subsidies on certain products including grain and tea, together with permission for Libya's agricultural producers to market produce privately" (ibid). Though these measures eased the decrease

---

<sup>8</sup> Martinez estimates the total working population of Libya at that time to have been 900,000 (2007, 16).

in real Libyan wages and opened up new opportunities for enterprising individuals they also delegitimized parts of the socialist program Gadhafi had based his leadership on (Ahmida 2012).

After consistent increases since the beginning of Gadhafi's rule, the Libyan standard of living decreased in the nineties, with GDP per head falling from 6700 US dollars in 1993 to 4900 US dollars in 1999 (IMF 1999 as quoted in Martinez 2007). Given that economic success, and the continued improvement of Libyan living conditions were integral to Gadhafi's legitimacy (Al-Warfali 2011), the decrease in real wages brought about by international factors unsettled the image of Libya as a powerful and independent nation, which Gadhafi had been so careful to cultivate since his 1969 putsch. Martinez argues that, "The era of the United Nations sanctions, from 1992 to 2003, was a key stage in the transformation of the Libyan regime. During the course of that decade, the revolutionary institutions of the regime divested themselves of their ideology and became what could truly be described as predators on Libyan society" (2007: 1). While, and purportedly because, his government was becoming observably predatory in the late eighties, Gadhafi attempted to abolish it altogether. In 1998 he declared, "Hereafter, there is no 'government'. The entire system is abolished! Henceforth we shall work with the 'Mahallat' (communes) and the 'Sha'biyat (regional municipalities). You shall no longer be answerable to any higher authority in Tripoli, Kufra, or Sirte" (address to the General People's Congress, found in Martinez 2007). Shortly after this address, Gadhafi would formally step down as leader of Libya, taking up instead the 'purely symbolic' role as the director of Libya's revolution; becoming, as he put it, like the Queen of England.

The final discernable period in Gadhafi's tenure runs from 2003 to 2011, and is bookended by the American (and coalition) invasion of Iraq in 2003 and by the February 17<sup>th</sup> revolution in 2011. In 2003, Gadhafi reoriented his international policy towards American interests by dismantling Libya's nascent nuclear weapons program and compensating the

American, French and English families who lost loved ones in the Lockerbie and the flight UTA 772 airline bombings, which American courts accused Libya of sponsoring (BBC news 2008). During this period, Libya also engaged in a program of liberalization led by Gadhafi's third-born son Saif Al-Islam. Al-Islam, or simply Saif, as he is usually referred to, "called for an end to the revolutionary era, and... emphasized the need for a constitution to replace what he called the 'transitional' revolutionary institutions" (Al-Warfalli 2011: 169). Helped by the new Prime Minister, Shukri Ghanem, Saif's efforts resulted in the establishment of private media outlets and a report on human rights violations in Libya. Saif's liberalizing project was cut short, however, in 2009: "When a Saif-appointed committee proposed laws setting out a new penal code and authorizing the creation of a political non-governmental organizations [sic], his father overruled him, telling the General People's Congress in January 2010 that there was no place in Libya for a civil society complete with NGOs" (ibid: 171). Shortly after this political defeat, two newspapers Saif helped establish in Tripoli were also closed. In late 2009 Saif stepped away from his position in Libyan politics. He realized, no doubt, that the revolutionary and military powers that represented the more conservative aspect of Gadhafi's regime were asserting their authority, and that, for the time being, his brothers Khamis and Mutassim who held positions within the army, would take precedence (Al-Warfalli 2011).

### **Gadhafi's Rhetoric**

In theory, Gadhafi's Libya was a state eminently for and by the people (Mahmoud 1987). The basic structure of the people's congress supposedly allowed for any issue to be raised and addressed within the formal political apparatus, and the decentralization of the Libyan state in 1973 into roughly 600 administrative districts all served by 'basic popular congresses', was officially intended to enable local solutions to local problems (St. John 2011). As figure 2 below shows, Gadhafi's government worked around a system of reciprocal checks and balances, which would gradually obviate the need for

administrative bureaucracy and other state apparatuses. It would do so by making every popular assembly of Libyan citizens responsible to and for every other assembly, thereby negating the need for a specialized group of governmental overseers. Because, as *The Green Book* says, "representation is fraud" (1976: 9), the only way for Libya to be a popular democracy was, in Gadhafi's view, for state government to wither away altogether. He explains that in the west, "*Democracy... [is] the supervision of the government by the people...* It will be replaced [in Libya] by the right definition *Democracy is the supervision of the people by the people*" (1976: 27).

Davis explains that, "Qaddafi's rejection of representation is the basis of his rejection of the state" (1987, 20). In order to promote individual sovereignty, the centralized state apparatus that Libyans were familiar with from the later part of King Idris' rule (after federalism had failed) was supposed to be abolished. Replacing the central monarchy and its royal house – called the *Diwan* – would be "a series of Popular Assemblies (*mu'tamarat*) and committees (*lijan*)" (ibid: 21). Gadhafi's slogan for this process was, "committees everywhere!".

Under King Idris, Libya's administrative districts corresponded to the tribal *watan*, or the homelands of Libya's segmentary lineages (Evans-Pritchard 1949 & First 1974). These lineal districts were, first and foremost, economic distributions of land that allowed each lineage segment the necessary terrain to maintain their herds and agricultural projects (Behnke 1980). In 1973 Gadhafi changed all that. He abolished the 'traditional' administrative boundaries and discharged the sheiks – respected members of powerful lineal groups – from their positions as local governors (Obeidi 2001). From 1973 onwards each district had its own 'Popular Assembly'. Every adult citizen was made member in one of these Popular Assemblies, and was supposed to meet at least once a year for what Davis tells us were generally evening sessions. Inside these sessions, "members receive[d] reports on the conduct of local affairs and discuss[ed] an agenda of important items", supplied to them by a chairman and an executive committee (1987:

20). The respective chairman of the local assemblies took the ‘sense’ of these meetings and parlayed it to the National Assembly’s annual meeting. After this sense is communicated – but apparently not represented – the National Assembly voted on such issues as whether Libya should “give aid to Malta?” or “build a new hospital?” (ibid). The decisions made by majority consensus were then taken to the secretariat of Libya whose members were tasked with executing them. In the figure 2, which is taken from *The Green Book*, the popular assemblies are called ‘basic popular congresses’ (BPC).

Running in tandem with the BPCs or popular assemblies were the ‘people’s committees’, which “run the local services and work in close relation to the secretariats, although they are technically responsible to the districts” (ibid). The People’s committees were the administrative engines in Gadhafi’s Libya. Residents of each administrative district elected the People’s Committee members once every three years. They were supervised not only by the secretariat but also by the executive members of the BPC, who were elected once per year during the congress’s annual meetings.

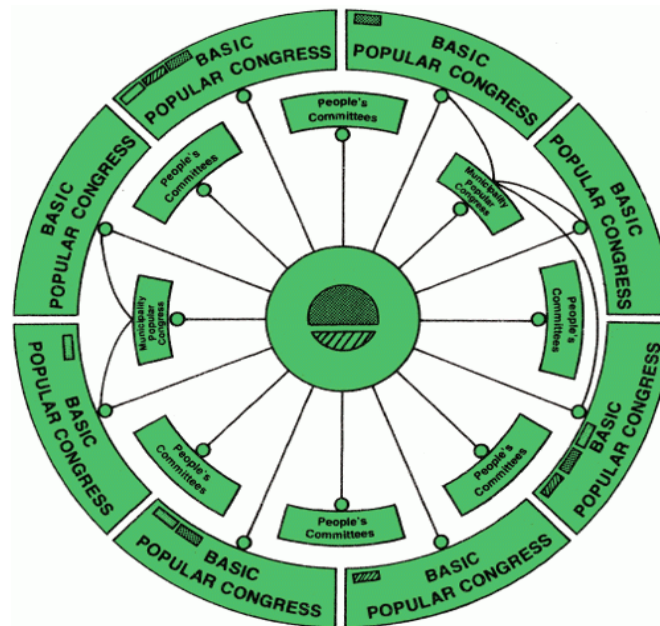


Figure 2: Diagram of the Structure of Libya’s Popular Democracy (Qadhafi 1976)

BPCs, People's Committees, and the General Secretariat were not the only political structure in Libya, however. Alongside these organs of popular democracy were the 'Revolutionary Committees' (RCs) and the Popular Social Committees (PSCs). Gadhafi "called on Libyan revolutionaries... to form their own committees throughout the country... Revolutionary Committees were organized in every office, business, and educational institution, and also in the Armed Forces" (El-Khawas 1986: 57). These RCs had a membership of approximately 3-4000 people at their zenith in the late eighties, and were organized into local and national units for the better coordination of 'revolutionary' activities (Anderson 1985: 200).

In 1979 Gadhafi renounced his position as Secretary General of the Libyan secretariat, becoming instead leader of the revolution (Joffe & MacLachlan 1982: 236-237). In practice, this meant becoming the head of the Revolutionary Committees (Davis 1987). Membership in the RCs is not automatic, like it is for the BPCs, or democratic as in the People's Committees. Instead, "anyone who firmly believes in Qaddafi's ideology and his socialist society" is free to join (El-Khawas 1986: 58). This had the effect of making the RC members into Gadhafi's 'ideological shock troops' (*Time* 1981: 58). In his speech titled, "No Democracy Without Popular Congresses" Gadhafi described the RCs' formal duties as being:

1) Inciting the masses to exercise authority. 2) Firmly establishing the people's authority. 3) Practicing revolutionary supervision. 4) Agitating the popular congresses. 5) Leading the popular committees and the secretariats of the congresses to the right way. 6) Protecting, defending, and propagating the revolution (El-Khawas 1986: 58).

The RCs were only responsible to Gadhafi himself, and were not beholden to the popular democracy they were meant to incite, agitate, supervise and encourage. Given this broad mandate and lack of responsibility, Libyan RCs soon developed "tremendous power" in Gadhafi's state of the masses (ibid).

Though they had only operated for two years, Joffe and MacLachlan tell us that by 1979, "the Revolutionary committees had moved from the area

of motivation to the area of enforcement" (1982: 248). Unlike the BPCs and the other implements of popular democracy in Libya, the RCs were not organized horizontally. They did not supervise each other, but were supervised by committee members of progressively higher rank, ending with Gadhafi himself.

The last feature of Gadhafi's political structure was the 'Popular Social Committees' (PSCs), which he introduced in 1993 (Tarkowski-Tempelhof & Manal 2011). These committees were meant to formally integrate the social 'supervision' of tribes that Gadhafi approvingly outlined in *The Green Book*. "[T]ribal leaders were represented" in the PSCs, "which were designed, among other things, to hold tribal leaders responsible for subversive activity by members of their tribe (Lacher 2011: 146). As Otman and Karlberg tell us,

Its members were the 'respected natural leaders' of the local communities, which in turn choose a group of 'Coordinators' for 3 years... The main duties of the popular social leadership involved the resolution of local conflicts, liaising with the People's Congresses and Committees, and finally observing the implementation of socio-economic development plans for their areas (2007: 21).

The method used to find 'respected natural leaders' of a community appears to have been a little murky. Although Hüsken tells us that, "Members [of the PSCs] were renowned tribal leaders appointed by Gaddafi. As a part of this policy the tribal leaders were granted the right to distribute a significant share of the oil-revenue on the local level (2012: 4). We also know that the introduction of these committees coincided with Gadhafi's implementation of "compulsory 'certificates of allegiance' (wathiqat 'ahd wa mubya'a) and 'certificates of honour' (wathiqat ash-sharaf), in which 'tribes themselves were made responsible for the loyalties of their members'" (Brahimi 2011: 613). Gadhafi's introduction of the PSCs followed a coup attempt in 1993 against him, which was led by Warfalli officers from Bani-Walid (Barfi 2011). So it seems reasonable to suppose that the 'respected natural leaders' of Libyan communities were people Gadhafi considered likely to a) have enough

social influence to encourage pro-Gadhafi behaviour and censure anti-regime tactics, and b) a relative amount of loyalty to Gadhafi himself.

### **The Lived-Experience of Gadhafi's Government**

Davis argues that, "The theory [of this type of popular democracy] is that the Assemblies [or congresses]... and the committees create autonomous communities; within them no person has to surrender sovereignty" however in practice, "Tripoli [Gadhafi and his secretariat] has retained sovereignty which in theory should belong to the districts" (1987: 22). Similarly, the role of the Revolutionary Committees, and the Popular Social Committees reduced the autonomy of individual communities by a) pressuring communities to be 'properly' revolutionary, and b) by pressuring communities to be 'properly' traditional. Point (a) was the responsibility of the RCs, while point (b) was the task of the PSCs. Being properly revolutionary meant voting for the interests of the Libyan nation, as Gadhafi articulated them in his speeches and books, and being properly traditional meant respecting tribal authority within Libya's respective communities, and maintaining collective responsibility for the acts of individual members of your lineage.

As far as the average Libyan was concerned, Gadhafi maintained a large degree of central authority because he not only dictated the speaking points around which the annual meetings of BPCs were organized, but also because he advertised the way that people were supposed to opine at these meetings (Davis 1987). Additionally, in several crucial areas of governmental policy application: the military, the oil industry and the police, people's committees had no authority. Davis tells us that, "The authorities tried to set up popular committees in the petroleum companies" (ibid: 23), however these committees had difficulty convincing their largely foreign technologists, businesspeople and engineers to follow the decisions taken by un-technical committees. Furthermore, the military and police forces were kept firmly in Gadhafi's control in order to 'safeguard the revolution'. The various coups against Gadhafi, as well as a four-day mutiny against him in

Tobruk (in 1981) motivated Gadhafi to gradually wean non-Gadhafi (Gadhafi's tribe) from ranking military positions.<sup>9</sup> So it is not surprising that the 'people' were disavowed any direct influence on the military even though they were technically able, through the popular assemblies, to voice their opinion regarding whether or not the army should be engaged somewhere.

On the surface of things Gadhafi's government could satisfy grassroots pro-democracy groups. His popular committees and assemblies reduced the role that central government played in the local politics of Libya's nearly 600 districts, and his goal of making the people supervisors of their own democracy is a startlingly idealistic rejection of republican and parliamentary oversight by elite senators, and powerful executive and judiciary governmental wings. Unfortunately, many Libyans never considered these policies genuinely successful in emancipating the Libyan population from what Gadhafi called the 'tyranny of representation'. Rather, Gadhafi's various attempts to make Libya an all encompassing "family" for its denizens were almost always interpreted as efforts (sometimes ones that had good consequences for Libyans) meant to preserve the power of Gadhafi and his family (Obeidi 2001). As, for instance, this quotation taken from a taxi-driver in Tripoli interviewed by Martinez in 1996, indicates:

No democracy without popular participation' - it's meaningless; it doesn't work, because you can't mind the government's business as well as your own. Everyone should do his work: if not, things won't go well. We want for nothing: we have olive groves that we leave to rack and ruin, and we all have houses, cars, money. I only work two days a week. Young people lack nothing - their fathers give them everything. When you have a house and a car you don't need much, though food is very dear because of the sanctions and poor people bear the brunt of that because they can't afford to live. But this is because of the political problems - it's only politics (2007: 26)

Marwan echoed this point: "He [Gadhafi] doesn't want them [average Libyans] to think about the government. He doesn't want them to; so they

---

<sup>9</sup> The officer corps of the regular Libyan military had the unenviable distinction of being the most executed, per capita, section of Libya's society throughout the eighties (Davis 1987).

cannot say any opinion about the government or what the government does. Just him and the people around him, that's it." Al-Warfalli's research discovered the same sentiments in Benghazi, "I know that the BPCs [Basic People's Congresses] will not solve my problem; the problem of the delayed payment of our salaries. This problem has not been brought to the discussion. I won't earn anything from these meaningless discussions. I'd be better spending this time finding some ways to earn money (Sa'eed, aged 47)" (2011: 112-113); and, "I would rather make tours round the city looking for customers to earn some money... I have nothing to discuss in these meaningless [people's] congresses (Mansour, aged 28)" (ibid: 112). As the preceding passages show, many Libyans considered Gadhafi's revolutionary governmental apparatus ineffective, or even a complete waste of time.

Another problem posed by popular democracy was an effect of the rapid rate at which it was implemented. The people who had bought into the revolutionary project and staffed its Revolutionary Committees usually did so because they were not well established in Libyan society before 1969 (Fathali & Palmer 1980). This often had the effect of delegitimizing Gadhafi's government, sometimes making it look like a haven for sycophants, rather than a promising new alternative for all Libyans (Al-Werfalli 2011).

However, the main problem of popular democracy in Libya was not its inefficiency or the lack of respect it commanded in more traditionally authoritative Libyan circles. Libyan popular democracy's main problem was its fast and loose handling of authority altogether. Indeed, Gadhafi's *Green Book* fails to mention authority even once. It speaks about strength, and rule, but does not address authority, or the legitimate ability to decide between two equally matched forces, and to apply rules and regulations.

Davis observed that, "*The Green Book* provides no theory of the control of violence in a popular democracy" (1987: 23). The formal mechanisms of control were so little communicated in Libya that "Revolutionary groups attempted to take over the police in 1980, but their occupation of police stations was short-lived, apparently because the police

themselves objected”, not though, because the revolutionary groups were restrained by the government, or by Gadhafi (ibid). The lack of attention Gadhafi paid to authority is further evidence for his goal of extending society into politics. If Libya became a nation built upon the mutual supervision of tribes and families, then the only authority required would be that provided by the national father, a role that Gadhafi alone was suited to fill. Only when conflicts between lineal segments of equal force occurred would there be a need for some higher arbiter. Otherwise, the state could disappear altogether. The application of stringent governmental laws equally and in all cases was furthermore not required, so long as tribes and families encouraged a respectful ‘behavioural pattern’. Gadhafi’s vision did not, however, account for the possibility of conflict between himself and other Libyan segments. Given Gadhafi’s gradual derogation of all sources of authority external to the Revolutionary and People’s Popular Committees, which he controlled, conflicts that arose between Gadhafi’s social element and others lacked a ‘third’ authority capable of arbitrating it.

Furthermore, if the goal of popular democracy was to make the people supervisors of their own nation, it was not clear how situations and institutions that appear to necessitate hierarchy like, for instance the army, or highly technical skills, like the hydro-carbon industry, could be brought into the fold of the Jamihirray state.

These problems were exacerbated by the ubiquity of Gadhafi’s popular democracy. Officially, Libyan popular democracy was supposed to eliminate civil society, or any body outside of the revolutionary institutions that spoke for the country as a whole. To form a body like the one the lawyer Fethi Tarbel did, or to organize ‘day of rage’ protests meant advocating the interests of one group within Libya, rather than all Libyans. Only an ideologue like Gadhafi and his other committed revolutionaries possessed the ‘wisdom’ necessary to consider what was good for all Libyans. Such was Gadhafi’s official doctrine. Once popular democracy was established, anyone trying to advocate for causes outside of its purview were attempting to

further their own selfish interests at the expense of the common good. As it says in Gadhafi's *Green Book*, "*man tahazzaba khana*" ("Whoever forms a party, betrays") (as quoted in Vandewalle 2008: 62).

Gadhafi might have been indisposed towards individual political efforts by Libyan citizens because "the civilians of his generation and earlier ones ... had been ineffective in opposition under the monarchy... From this grew a sharp distaste for all voluntarist initiative and action" (First 1974: 19). He and the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) rarely trusted the Libyan population to manufacture their own freedom. Instead, the Revolutionary Committees were, like the 'natural' authorities of family and religion, responsible for the beneficence of Libya's citizens. Thus "All 'factional' politics and all ideology other than the one produced by the state... were declared illegal" (ibid). Public protests like the ones in 2005 as well as the February 17<sup>th</sup> protests, were therefore not merely requests for specific governmental responses (for instance, compensation for the families of victims from the Abu Salim prison massacre), but challenges to the status quo that were impossible for the Libyan state to respond to without admitting that its revolutionary policies had failed and that its 'official positions' were not supported by the majority of Libyans.

Given that the entire edifice of popular democracy was constructed on the assumption that traditional, religious and revolutionary authorities would steer their wards towards responsible (as defined by Gadhafi) behaviour, demands that were not articulated through those structures were unavoidably revolutionary. This is a point similar to the one Davis makes,

Grand gestures of defiance - such as the demand for blood wealth, considered rejections of the state made to the state itself... were born of frustration and powerlessness, expressed resentment at contradictions between rhetoric and practice... Whoever made the protest did so against a state which proclaimed its non-existence, and against the state's claim to lose citizens' lives in a war whose existence was not officially announced within Libya. What else should they do? (1987: 240)

One could see that even after half the country had risen up against Gadhafi, his government was still committed to the rhetoric of popular support. In his first interview after the beginning of the uprising against him, Gadhafi asked reporters “Have you seen protests?” When one of the journalists told him that he had indeed seen protests, Gadhafi asked him with apparent incredulity: “where?” The interviewer responded that he had seen them in Tripoli but also the day before in Zuwaya. To which Gadhafi simply replied, “those [protests] were for us” (BBC 2011). Gadhafi’s assurance that ‘thousands of loyal’ revolutionaries would stamp out the ‘rats, drug-dealers and other miscreants’ who had risen against his government, was the central pillar of his public relations right up until his death; and it was Gadhafi and his son Saif Al-Islam’s dogged insistence that those rebelling against their family’s domination were nothing but agents of foreign powers and provocateurs attempting the licentious destabilization of a Muslim nation, which aroused in my interviewees some of their most dedicated support for the revolution.

To the end, Gadhafi’s treatment of Libyan anti-government forces was paternal. His son Saif too, made condescending arguments through the media, asking the revolutionaries to consider ‘the 200 billion worth of investments in infrastructure’ they were ‘needlessly’ endangering (Kirkpatrick & El-Naggar 2011). In this final commitment to the nobility of his cause, and what he considered the preposterousness of the war against him, Gadhafi and his followers clearly indicate the points I illustrated throughout this section. Namely, that there was a marked difference between the way Gadhafi talked about and organized popular democracy in Libya, and the way that the average Libyan experienced government. This divergence is fundamentally a divergence between the way Gadhafi and the new revolutionaries thought things ‘ought’ to be. Gadhafi and Saif’s paternalistic treatment of the Libyan revolutionary was also an indication of their ideal description of Libyan society, in which, as I have demonstrated, they figured as the ‘natural’ authorities within an extended family cum Libyan nation.

## Starting the Revolution

The reasons given for the Libyan revolution further illustrate the relationship between Gadhafi's ideal government, and the subjective experience of that government, as well as the role society played in Libya before the revolution. The primary subjective, or self-reported, reasons for the Libyan revolution identified in the literature, journalistic reportage and my interviews were: 1) Gadhafi's brutal attempts to quash the 'days of rage' protests held on February 17<sup>th</sup>; 2) The success of the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, which managed to depose those countries' leaders on January 14<sup>th</sup> and February 11<sup>th</sup>, respectively; 3) Libyan discontent over economic stagnation, and high unemployment<sup>10</sup>; 4) crumbling infrastructure (especially Health and Education); 5) furor over the nepotistic procurements of the Gadhafi family; and 6) latent discontent regarding Gadhafi's unfair distribution of state revenues. Salam told me that,

on the 20<sup>th</sup> [of February] in Tripoli was when seven hundred, [or] eight hundred people were killed. So there was no opportunity for peaceful protest. Because on the fifteenth when the families of the victims of Abu Salim massacre went out, and went out in front of the internal security [in Benghazi] to protest the arresting of the lawyer in charge of their case. I mean that's what they were doing, they were protesting; they started early because they were protesting that the guy was arrested, the guy who was in charge of prosecuting their case against the state [Fethi Tarbel]. They were protesting and they fired upon them then. So there was no opportunity for peaceful protest. Before the official start of the revolution he [Gadhafi] had already started shooting at people. So, I feel like it was a revolution from the get-go. That and given what was going on in the region, it kind of was the domino effect.

As far as Salam was concerned, the revolution was an automatic reaction to Gadhafi's response to the first protests. "There was no opportunity for peaceful protest", no chance for Libyan unrest to resolve itself except through armed conflict.

Dr. El-Faria thought that Gadhafi's response to protestors was inflammatory, but he also told me, "if you asked Misuraties before the

---

<sup>10</sup> Unemployment in 2011 was estimated to be 40% of Libya's employable population. The CIA world fact-book estimates that it was 30% in 2004.

revolution: ‘what are you worried about?’ It’s, to be honest, the two top [concerns] would be health and education... [If] you get sick, or you break something you fly to Tunisia” (Dr. El-Faria). Gadhafi’s decentralization of Libyan governance led to the uneven distribution of state funds for educational and medical facilities. Forte notes, for instance, how beautifully constructed Gadhafi’s hometown of Sirte was (2012). This was certainly not the case in Benghazi, and many other eastern cities, where forty years of underinvestment had turned the monarchy’s capital into a relatively decrepit city.

Many places in Libya also suffered from severe brain drain (Benamer et al. 2009; Gamaty 2012). I was told that professionals like doctors, lawyers, and teachers tried to leave the country throughout the eighties and nineties, and that Gadhafi was not committed to improving the quality of many of Libya’s institutions, even after he increased their enrolment by making them more accessible to the average Libyan. This combination of increased usage, decreased staff, and relatively static funding led to the gradual degeneration of Libyan health and educational capacities.

Marwan also complained about Gadhafi’s uneven application of his economic socialism:

I know someone... [whose] father, they took lots of buildings from him – for the government. And even in my family they took allot of them, like buildings and stuff. Gadhafi doesn’t want anyone to make money, like not dependent on him, not dependent on Gadhafi

Besides interpreting the state’s officially proclaimed ‘eminent domain’ over all private holdings as greedy acquisitions for one family (Gadhafi’s), Marwan also told me that private or even cooperative commercial efforts could be stymied without explanation from the state authorities. He said

If you make money in Libya it’s Gadhafi’s money. [But really] it’s not Gadhafi’s money, it’s our money it’s the people’s money. But he makes it like that. [Sarcastically] If Ghadafi is the one who makes us live; [if] Gadhafi’s the one who’s thinking about us, the one who cares about us, he’s the father he’s blah blah blah, everything! He’s the boss. Yeah Gadhafi and his sons too. They have mad money from the [Libyan] people and he gives nothing to the people he

just takes... he takes buildings and stuff like that and he doesn't give you money for it... [or at least] not even what it's worth.... [Marwan's family has] lands and stuff like that... he promised us [since 2000]... that he was going to make some changes in Libya... Sometimes you see a design [a development poster], and that says that there's going to be the building here in this place. And they [would] build some fences around the land, and after six months or seven months, you see that nothing's happened. It's still the same, they just took the land and nothing happened. It's empty; they didn't even change it or anything.

When land that was going to be developed was acquired by the government, and no development ever happened on the land, Marwan naturally supposed that, "[Gadhafi] doesn't want the people to have lots of money or investments... Because if you have this plan you will build something he will uh, you know he will do something in this land. He doesn't want you to do anything". Generally speaking Marwan interpreted these apparently anti-individual manoeuvres as attempts by Gadhafi to hoard power, influence, and wealth.

Points 3 through 6 on the list provided above were represented to me as failures on the part of Gadhafi's government to effectively manage hydrocarbon wealth. The people I spoke with said that Libya, like Dubai, should be extremely wealthy. It should glitter and possess the best services and institutions in North Africa. As Dr. El-Zabbia put it,

I don't know if you have seen pictures of Dubai back in the seventies? You should look at them. Nothing. Boats and huts. If you look and compare the pictures of Tripoli in the seventies or sixties it's a huge difference, a huge difference. You see actually a modern city. Being rebuilt, or starting [to be rebuilt], a population that's only about three million. Oil resources. Fully secure, easy market. Strategic location right? It had much more potential than the emirates to grow and to be better.

In reality though, Libya remained a country that people left to get a broken bone set properly. Understandably, this reality did not sit well with many Libyans, especially given the large sums of money Gadhafi spent outside of the country, like for instance the money he assiduously contributed to the

African Union<sup>11</sup>. Gadhafi also poured money and time into creating a pan-West African currency and central bank: “All his [Gadhafi’s] investment and everything was outside Libya, most of it was in Africa. But in Libya you know all that went outside” (Marwan). In this sense, Gadhafi’s regime was delegitimized by its failure to provide what Al-Werfalli called socio-economic legitimacy – namely, the provision of wealth and services for its citizens. Although it was also clear that the attention Gadhafi paid to non-Libyans had also been used against him during the revolution.

It would, however, be inaccurate to say that the people I spoke with thought of the revolution purely, or even primarily, as an economic opportunity. As Marwan put it,

From my opinion man, if he [Gadhafi] had mad’ money many, for like forty-two years man, he has the oil and you know how much rich Libya with oil? And we didn’t see that even. He didn’t use it for a good thing.... He [Gadhafi] doesn’t want anyone to be better than him you know? So [that someone else] can take the power after him or something like that. He doesn’t want the people to be educated. He wanted them to be always like... *fools, and think about just money and stuff like that, normal stuff like silly stuff* (emphasis mine).

Marwan emphasized, in this quotation and in others that it was ‘silly’ to allow oneself to be bought, or motivated by monetary concerns alone. Salam also told me that the revolution should be about creating a Libya that is not motivated by material considerations, with a government that was less corrupt than Gadhafi’s had been. Admittedly, the people I spoke with were excited about the opportunities presented by freer markets, and the sudden influx of foreign investment in Libya (the Libyan economy grew by some estimates over 100 percent in 2012, although this is a predictable aftereffect of the massive contraction of 2011’s wartime GDP) independent of Gadhafi’s revolutionary elite, but they were also, and I would say primarily, interested in developing a Libya that emphasized health, education, and political freedom (AFP 2013). In this sense, Libya’s revolution was partly

---

<sup>11</sup> Gadhafi was the AU’s chairman in 2009, and, along with Africa’s four other big economies (Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa) covered roughly 65% of the Union’s budget. In 1999 Gadhafi went so far as to have himself declared the ‘King of Kings in Africa’ (McElroy 2011).

characterized and possibly motivated by the desire for a more liberal capitalism, but it was also tempered by a strong sense of moral responsibility for the Libyan community. This moral sense, which I observed in all my interviews, is something that Lila Abu-Lughod also noticed in Egypt shortly after their revolution: "in Al-Tayeb's village, the youth speak the moral language of responsibility, selflessness and community welfare, the struggle against corruption and self-interest. It is a strong language of social morality, not of rights. They do not speak of democracy, but in tackling problems directly and personally, they are living it" (2012: 25).

Davis described a combination of capitalist and what he called socialist motivation in Libya during his research in the seventies and eighties. He tells us that a common business scheme involved two partners building wealth for the poorer partner, using the wealthier partner's capital. In this type of venture, a commercial freight truck might be purchased with the wealthier partner's money for around 70,000 dinars<sup>12</sup>. The truck was then driven by the poorer partner "for a wage" (Davis 1987: 229). This section of the deal was called 'the third' (*al-thalth*), and would continue until the profit generated from using the truck equalled the money spent on the truck (i.e. 70,000 dinars plus whatever had been spent paying the driver and refitting/refuelling the truck). After 'the third' was concluded, the driver (or poorer partner) became a third owner of the truck. He and the wealthier partner would then decide whether to continue their partnership or sell the truck, splitting the profits accordingly. If they continued their partnership the poorer partner would share future profits equally with the previous owner. Otherwise and, Davis tells us, more commonly, the two partners would sell the truck, thereby generating enough money for the poorer partner to buy his own vehicle (ibid: 230). This entire process could be completed inside of seven years. And, though it did produce new wealth for both partners, it is hard to call the procedure entirely capitalistic because it was not meant to

---

<sup>12</sup> The Dinar is the Libyan currency. It was first minted in 1971, and was indexed to the British pound. It currently trades at roughly 1.30\$ per US dollar.

maximize profit. Rather, this type of transaction was designed to generate wealth for the poorer members of a community. Davis tells us that, “most of the rich men of the Zuwaya managed their business in this way, getting a good return on money laid out, but creating wealth for poorer tribesmen and a few others in the process” (ibid).

It seems reasonable to argue, although I cannot say with certainty, that redistributive commerce is still valued in Libya today. And even though the Libyans I spoke with highlighted the failure of Gadhafi’s government to develop the economy they were not singularly, or I would say even primarily, concerned with Libya’s wealth. This is partly because Libyans managed to cultivate a second, non-state economy made up of transactions between pre-existing commercial networks, like the kind Davis observed (1987), even during the early seventies when the state attempted to control all of the nation’s commerce. This ‘black market’ likely helped the formal economic socialism encouraged by Gadhafi. As Zizek often points out, the black market in communist countries was not something that undercut the formal economy, but rather something that made it possible. In the former Yugoslavia – where Zizek spent part of his life – the black market obfuscated the failures of the formal economy to deliver necessary goods at an affordable price. If this second economy had been completely disbanded, the incapacity of the formal system to effectively supply the domestic market would have spelled its earlier demise (2004).

One might think that the inconsistency between party principles, in this case Gadhafi’s economic socialism, and behavioural realities would create tensions that would inevitably provoke change, but this is not always so. Often times the difference between ideals, and the behavioural realities that are supposed to be motivated by them is actually a practical solution to everyday problems. In cases such as these it is more important to investigate what having a particular ‘ideal’ accomplishes, rather focusing on the inconsistency itself. As Davis reminds us via Ernest Gellner:

what often appears to ethnographers and academic philosophers to be invalidating contradiction and ambiguity is an essential, functional feature of society. The inconsistency of Ajdabiyans [in Libya], who desire both personal sovereignty and the benefits of technology which seem to require hierarchy and representation, is not in any sense an incapacitating logical or political difficulty for real people in a real world, able to identify different situations in which different notions and actions are appropriate (1982: 79)

Similarly, I was told that Libyans had always worked around Gadhafi's economic theories. They built wherever they could, opened restaurants, and assembled factories without the appropriate licences. When these ventures succeeded the local councils charged with carrying out Gadhafi's revolutionary mandate often overlooked them, especially if they were the purview of well-respected local families. If the revolutionary cadres decided to crack-down on business people breaking the law, they often tore down the existing businesses, but made sure to compensate the people who lost property. When I asked Salam why these government agents compensated lawbreakers rather than fining them he told me that it was because,

there's business in compensation. If I'm given eighty million to compensate a neighbourhood, I'll compensate them twenty and forty million is gone between me and my cronies. You never want to punish people because then people just hate you and you don't get anything out of it. But if you compensate people, there's business there.

In this case, as in others, the Libyan political reality, namely a decentralized and largely atrophied state supported by a strong 'social' element, needs to be recognized in order to understand the revolution that overthrew it. Once one realizes that Gadhafi's government presented itself to the world as a socialist 'state of the masses', but ultimately negotiated its political ideals with local instances of society – as Gadhafi's *Green Book* suggests it should – the economic motivations of the revolution are transformed. Anger at the mismanagement of oil wealth is shown to be a sort of outrage at the distribution of income inequality within the Libyan nation, rather than a simple demand for more material wealth. This understanding is important for seeing why, after forty-two years of relatively stable economic

performance (and even a gradual economic liberalization under Saïff Al-Islam), there was a revolution in 2011. As Dr. El-Zarria put it,

This is a new generation, they don't want this. Their parents or grandparents, uh, they want something new. And I told her [the reporter] the average age of the fighter in the war, the freedom fighters, is about thirty-five. So these are people are individuals born during Gadhafi's power, regime whatever, and they don't like what they see. They're fighting. They have nothing, I mean when you go to fight that's it, you've given up everything. You have no hope.... So the last thing is you give up your life, you die or you succeed.

Gadhafi's failure to provide 'eudemonic legitimacy' needs to be understood in terms of a wider dissatisfaction that mobilized Libyans to move from the realm of economic discontent into the realm of political outrage. This dissatisfaction, I argue, is affected by the divergence between Gadhafi's rhetoric and practice, but not caused by the contradiction between them. Because the apparent differences between Gadhafi's rhetoric and practice are mediated by Gadhafi's belief that a natural society can replace the artificial divisions of class, political party and union with its own familial, and therefore permissible, inequalities, the revolution was reacting to Gadhafi's ideal configuration of Libyan society, rather than the difference between what he said and did.

Libyans were not responding to the contradiction or confusion of Gadhafi's rhetoric and practice, they were deciding that Gadhafi's violent repression of political dissidents was no longer suitable behaviour within the social realm in which he claimed paternal hegemony. In Davis' words, "real people in a real world" are, "able to identify different situations in which different notions and actions are appropriate" (ibid). Real Libyans were also deciding, it seems, that Gadhafi's practice of locating political power in the social realm was no longer tenable. This explains why, regardless of the age, background, or hometown of the person I spoke with, the fact that Libya would become a liberal democracy after the revolution was never questioned. Libya would have parties, it would encourage the growth of civil

society, media, and private enterprise, and it would have elections based on public campaigns rather than social influence.

## **Summary**

My argument is that Gadhafi separated society from government and located his power within the former. As a 'strong' and respected man, Gadhafi could issue what were effectively political edicts from his purely symbolic position as 'brother leader' or 'guide of the revolution', without couching them in the language or appearance of governmental tyranny. This politically efficacious power was transmitted through the informal mechanisms provided by the Revolutionary Committees, and the Popular Social Committees. These institutions formally existed, but operated in informal ways. In other words, the existence of these committees was formally inscribed into Libya's non-constitutional government – Gadhafi publicly announced them, and discussed their role openly – while the methods these institutions used were not discussed or publically scrutinized.

For the average Libyan, this coexistence of formal and informal methods of political coercion created a gap between what Gadhafi said about Libyan governance, and appeared to be doing about the same. This gap has been commonly identified as one that exists between Gadhafi's 'rhetoric and practice', or his 'theory and practice' (Anderson 1990; Davis 1982; El-Khawas 1986; St. John 1986). Though this type of governmental structure – namely one in which what is said and what is done appear different – seems unstable, Gadhafi's lasted for 42 years. The question then becomes: did the gap between rhetoric and practice contribute to, or even cause Gadhafi's undoing, or was it merely window dressing around more pressing issues?

My position is that the apparent differences between Gadhafi's rhetoric and practice did not undermine him. Gadhafi's conception and use of society legitimated, obfuscated and even perhaps resolved the apparent gap between his rhetoric and practice on the level of Leach's behavioural *ideal*. Revolution against Gadhafi was, then, a reaction to Gadhafi's societal

‘ought’, in conjunction, naturally enough, with actual socio-economic shortcomings experienced by the Libyan people. Which is to say that in actuality the gap between Gadhafi’s rhetoric and practice existed, but that it was not a cause for revolutionary alarm so long as it was justified by Gadhafi’s conception of society. In fact this actual gap between theory and practice gave Gadhafi’s dominance of Libya a degree of slippage and looseness that, coupled with conscious and unintended instances of misinformation, buffered his administration from the outrage of a united populace<sup>13</sup>.

The difference between Gadhafi’s rhetoric and practice, it must be remembered, cut both ways. Gadhafi was able to talk about the Libyan people as free citizens of a popular democracy while ordering executions with the impunity of a dictator (El-Khawas 1986; Mattes 2008). At the same time, however, a Zuwaya merchant in southern Libya could boast that he had not seen a police officer in twenty years (Davis 1987), and people in Tripoli could build on pieces of a major thoroughfare for their own private use, until the government decided to reproach them with compensation rather than a fine (Salam)! The gap between what Gadhafi said and did, as far as government was concerned, protected both him and the Libyan population. Because Gadhafi’s power needed to be located within the social sphere in order for it to be considered legitimate, it had to operate in, and therefore negotiate the Libyan social sphere.

Many commentators have observed what might be called the interpretation of Gadhafi’s ideals by local communities, but those commentators have generally described these interpretations or negotiations as unintended consequences of a poorly considered ideology, rather than as

---

<sup>13</sup> I say a ‘united’ populace because I was often reminded that until the revolution of 2011 Libya was not much of a nation. Indeed, until February 17<sup>th</sup> 2011, it seems, Libyans were not wholly convinced by the idea of national unity. By situating his role and influence within the ‘perpetual revolution’ as well as in Libya’s traditional society, Gadhafi tried to forge Cyrenaicans, Tripolitarians, Berbers, Bedouin, Taureg and Tebu into the families, clans and tribes that would grow into the nation of which he was the father.

the expected consequence of a specifically Libyan emphasis on personal sovereignty, and family. St. John, for instance, writes, "it is accurate to say that the balance between state and society [in Libya] is in the process of being fundamentally altered" (1983: 485). However based on this reality he concludes that the relationship between Gadhafi's rhetoric and practice is the accidental product of Gadhafi's incompetence: "Qadhdhafi has repeatedly addressed problems of overwhelming complexity with naive, simplistic solutions. As a result, his policies have been characterized by an ongoing compromise between ideology and social reality" (ibid: 485). Undoubtedly, derogating Gadhafi's political savvy was, for the better part of his tenure, common practice in the west, but such condescension does little to explain how he stayed in power longer than any other African leader, and how he weathered extended UN sanctions, several wars, at least four well-know coup attempts, a US aerial assault on his Tripolitanian compound in 1986, and eight months of concerted NATO and rebel action against him in 2011.

What helps to explain Gadhafi's remarkable longevity are his attempts to make unequal distributions of political power and wealth social rather than governmental issues. Because Gadhafi's dictatorial mandates were communicated through the channels provided by Revolutionary Committees, and the 'respected natural leaders' of Libyan communities, Gadhafi did not have to make himself a target for public acrimony. He was, after all, just another elder within a network of familial and geographic respect. Gadhafi was just another Libyan father and brother, though he happened to be 'brother leader'.

The distinction between society and government allowed Libyans, including Gadhafi, to approach political inequality and its effects, like for instance the death of soldiers sent to fight in Chad, within the social realm. In the Libyan case, this meant demanding compensation from the government when members of a particular family, tribe or city were killed, as if the government were a complementary social grouping, *not* a hierarchically superior entity (Davis 1987). Demands for compensation were, in these

cases, made directly from a family or city to Gadhafi, and not through the court system. Thus, we can see that they expressed the ideal that a higher governmental authority was not required to mediate disputes between families and the 'brother leader'.

For Gadhafi, locating the Libyan government within the social sphere had advantages and disadvantages. Advantageously, his family's extensive wealth and power was hidden from Libyan scrutiny. Gadhafi's unofficial and somewhat nebulous relation to the state obfuscated his stakes in Libya's state resources, as well as his own personal wealth. Disadvantageously, locating his power within the social realm meant that Gadhafi could not flagrantly use the Libyan state's military and security forces purposefully (not accidentally as he had before) against Libyans without eliciting widespread outrage. If, after all, Gadhafi was merely 'brother leader', or the 'guide of the revolution', then how could he use national security forces to suppress large protests? If Gadhafi were a symbolic paternal figure in the Libyan nation, why would specifically governmental forces support him rather than other parental figures?

This is where my discussion of the role of tribes, or lineal-descent groups, in Libya begins. Since Gadhafi saw the Bedouin-Libyan values of personal sovereignty, family (traditional), and religious respect as the cornerstones of his Jamahiriya nation, he attempted to derive the greater part of his popular support from them. To do so Gadhafi constantly played what some Libyans called the 'tribal game' (Kirkpatrick 2011). He attempted to pit families and regions off each other, and constantly stirred, or even created, historical animosities between lineages, not necessarily as a straightforward attempt to divide-and-rule by manipulating combative enemies into weakening themselves, but also to create situations in which he could play the role that the Senussi religious fraternity played during the resistance to the Italian colonialists in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Evans-Pritchard

1949)<sup>14</sup>. If Gadhafi could convince Libyans that civil war was inevitable without him, his role as mediator between cities, tribes, clans and families, and as arbiter, and protector of Libya against the world's divisive ideologies would lend his person the ultimate political legitimacy.

That Gadhafi attempted to work through Libyan society, rather than through Libyan government will be argued for more thoroughly in the next section. First, though, a brief presentation of the concept and historical use of 'tribe' is required, after which, the role of tribes during Gadhafi's reign is presented, followed by an analysis of the objective and subjective roles they played in the 2011 revolution.

---

<sup>14</sup> Gadhafi's first major public address was delivered on September 16<sup>th</sup> 1969, the 38<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Omar Mukhtar's death (St. John 1983). Mukhtar is still considered a national saint and led the Cyrenaican resistance to Italian colonialism.

## Part Four: On the role of Tribes in Libya's Revolution

"Tribe... is... a state of mind, a construction of reality, a model for organization and action" (Tapper 1990: 56)

Because tribes are, as Gadhafi's *Green Book* puts it "an outgrowth of the family" (1976: 81), they are generally conceived of as types of socio-political organization based on kinship existing in addition to, if not outside of, a state (Davis 1987). One of the most famous anthropological elaborations of 'tribal' social organization is lineage theory, which was first developed in Evans-Pritchard's work on the Nuer (1940), and in Meyer Fortes' analysis of Tallensi kinship (1945). Lineage theory, "posits total societal political systems based upon the balanced opposition of lineage segments related genealogically" (Salzman 1978: 54). In this understanding, genealogically equal segments – i.e. segments that are the same structural 'distance' from a shared ancestor – provide complementary opposition to one another in affairs involving their constituents. If competition with an agent beyond two structurally equal lineal opposites is required, then previously adversarial segments will unite in order to effectively counterbalance the new agency, which, in theoretically ideal circumstances is still part of the same system of genealogical reckoning as the two original lineages. Given that tribes are an outgrowth of the family, tribal segments can be called primary, secondary or tertiary based on their size and conceptual proximity to a common ancestor.

Tribe is a term originally taken from the latin *tribus*, which denoted the "three divisions of the population of Rome" (Essenova 2007: 443). Saulesh Essenova argues that '*tribus*' was a political term applied to the parts of ancient Rome's polity: Etruscan, Sabine and Latin. Livy's *History of Rome* supports this conjecture by describing Roman tribes as groups of soldiers concerned with matters of governance, rather than as ethnic or social divisions (1919). Since this original usage, 'tribe' has come to denote a greater variety of human and non-human groups.

As far as the anthropological etymology of 'tribe' is concerned, Essenova tells us that,

This originally political term, referring, let us note, to an urban society, was revived in English in biology (especially in botany), and finally adopted as a scientific sounding term for anthropology to describe kin groups in primitive societies (2007: 443).

The use of tribe to describe kin groups in so-called 'primitive' and usually rural societies originally came from Lewis-Henry Morgan's study of the evolution of juridical systems, and, more specifically, his distinction between Roman *affinitas* and *consanguinitas* (1877). Using the dichotomy between affinitive and consanguinial relationships – or relationships based on affiliations like marriage versus procreation – Morgan charted a historic progression from social solidarity created from kinship to contractual (affinal) relations, with the goal of explaining the evolution of human legal society. Morgan's evolutionism and its adherents placed 'tribal' groups at the foot of the human juridical-social ladder, because they were based on the 'simplest' of all forms of association, namely 'blood'. Northern European societies were placed at the opposite end of the evolutionary spectrum because they were constituted by the flow of contractual rather than biological issue between their members. Morgan is not alone in his use of the dichotomy between biological and contractual relationships. Gadhafi himself wrote on the origin of tribes using the same dichotomy,

Blood is the prime factor in the formation of the tribe but it is not the only factor because affiliation is also a factor in the formation of the tribe. With the passage of time the difference between the factors of blood and affiliation disappears, leaving the tribe as one social and physical unit. But it is a unit of blood more than any other (1976: 84).

Indeed, the debate regarding the relative import of 'blood' in kinship relations, and correspondingly in tribal relations, has a long history (Déchaux & Jacobs 2008). In the words of Malinowski: since Morgan, "Much ink has flowed on the problem of blood- 'blood' symbolizing in most human languages, and not only European, the ties of kinship, that is the ties derived

from procreation” (1930: 19). Likewise, a great deal of debate concerning the biological or constructed – which is to say social – basis of kinship has complicated the question of what tribes are<sup>15</sup>.

The significance of tribes being based on biological or social relations can be understood as a debate regarding whether tribes are ways of seeing the world, or actual things in the world. Using Geertz’s famous terms, the question is whether lineage theory provides a model for reality, of reality, or some combination of both (1973). In Radcliffe-Brown’s view, for instance, Kinship *terminologies* are signposts for interpersonal rights and obligations (1941). This means that while kinship terminologies are real, their reality consists in conceptually influencing the way that interpersonal relations are maintained and negotiated, but *not* in what might be called their ontological reality. People use kinship terms in order to understand how they should behave in the company of a father, mother, daughter, cousin or aunt, *not* to label an objectively real relationship. Kinship is, therefore, primarily a model *for* reality. Terms like ‘mother’ describe how one should approach and deal with a particular person, but they do not describe a human universal. In this regard, ‘mother’ helps to create interpersonal reality, and is part of a model for the way things ought to stand between individuals in a specific group.

Ernest Gellner provides a slightly different viewpoint. He argues that kinship terminologies must, for the anthropologist at least, have some relationship to a physical reality. Kinship is not, therefore, only a model *for* interpersonal rights and obligations, but also a model *of* biological realities:

the autochthonous (local/emic) term for the relationship is blip. The crucial question now is: Under what conditions will the anthropologist’s treatment of the blip-relationship fall under the rubric of kinship structure?... What, other than at least partial overlap with physical kinship, could conceivably lead a relationship to be classified as a part of ‘kinship structure’? (1960: 187)

---

<sup>15</sup> See, for instance, the Rodney Needham and Ernest Gellner debate on the basis of kinship (1960-61).

This debate has had, and will probably continue to have a great deal of importance to anthropology, because it poses the question of whether or not certain biological universals can be used to compare human behavioural differences relative to them. If kinship is a universal phenomenon akin to reproduction, which is of course common to nearly every human group (excepting particular non-reproductive communities like ascetic religious orders, and homosexual communities), then different conceptual and behavioural treatments of kinship are local interpretations of a universal theme, and can be analyzed as such (Levi-Strauss 1963). But the debate about the nature of kinship, and tribal relations has another dimension altogether. Namely, what the political significance and function of tribal groups has been, is, or even could be.

Tribes are not only conglomerations of kin. They are also political entities that can influence the way that larger corporate groupings interact with each other. Given that tribes may unite large groups and organize them into more or less genealogically related segments, intra-group relations based on kinship can have real political, which is to say inter-group, influence depending on whether or not groups ally with each other in ways that mirror their genealogical structure. As Evans-Pritchard wrote, "A tribe is conceived of as a huge family descended from a common ancestor, from whom the tribe generally takes its name. Hence its segments can be figured either as a series of political sections or as genealogical branches of a clan" (Evans-Pritchard 1949: 55).

This second understanding of tribes, i.e. the political, has led to several criticisms of the concept. As Essenova explains:

Until a better term is found, the terms 'tribe' and 'tribalism' are still in use to describe some contemporary societies. However, along the way the term has acquired a certain negative connotation, so that modern 'tribal' identities (and some of them are quite recent creations) are reduced to a sort of primitiveness and deviance (i.e. tribal identities are supposed to disappear as soon as the society reaches a higher stage of development). This negative connotation could be particularly relevant if the 'nation-state' based on the conceptions of citizenship and societal homogeneity proves to be the only acceptable model for the future development of society (2007: 443).

Tribes and tribalism have been, and sometimes still are, linked to backwards, or provincial politics. Take, for instance, Calestous Juma's<sup>16</sup> article titled *How Tribalism Stunts African Democracy*, where he writes that "tribal leaders are clever and calculating", and that, "Their sole mission is self-preservation, with the side effect of subverting democratic evolution" (BBC 2011).

Unfortunately the association of tribalism and primitivism is fairly obvious in a great deal of print-media, which, in Libya's case, often speaks about the 'tribal' aspect of that country in a pejorative manner. As if to say that non-tribal nations had better stay out of Libya's conflict lest they become embroiled in old parochial feuds and disagreements. Indeed, without undertaking too much discourse analysis, labeling the Libyan conflict a 'tribal' or 'ethnic' conflict often had the rhetorical affect of associating it with other bloody and protracted conflicts – the likes of which western electorates tend to avoid – such as the former Yugoslavia's civil war, the genocide in Rwanda, and sectarian violence in Iraq post 2003.

The pejorative deployment of the term 'tribe' has made its use in anthropology somewhat fraught. However, for the purposes of my project the term was inescapable, given that my informants used it themselves, and that the literature on Libya had no other term for the concept 'tribe' except unwieldy elaborations of the name like, for instance, lineal-descent group, or segmentary lineage. Perhaps I should have used these technical terms exclusively, and for the sake of variety I sometimes do, but they seemed to me direct translations of the same concept that tribe denotes.

Ali Abdullatif Admida provides an academic criticism of the concept 'tribe' that is closely related to the ethical argument raised above:

The most popular approach to modern North Africa has been, without a doubt, the segmentary model as articulated by E.E. Evans-Pritchard and Ernest Gellner. The segmentary model assumes the existence of a tribal society comprised of homogenous tribal segments. In the absence of state control, order was kept through mutually deterring tribal segments in any clan that threatened to disrupt the balance of power. This model was derived from colonial literature and official tribal ideologies (Ahmida 1994: 3)

---

<sup>16</sup> Juma is a professor of International Development at Harvard University.

Ahmida argues that the segmentary model depicts North Africans as “unruly, segmentary, traditional or Asiatic” as compared with “rational” Europeans (ibid: 4). However, by the end of his book Ahmida writes,

Non-state civil institutions in Libya were merchant corporations, guilds, Sufi orders, and tribal organizations. Yet colonial policies and transformations did not occur in a vacuum, but rather against a living and dynamic indigenous society... despite colonial policies and the collaboration of the upper elite, the hinterland tribes and peasants resisted colonialism and so delayed its penetration of the interior (ibid: 142).

Ahmida does not deny the existence of tribes in Libya. Rather, he rejects the association of segmentary social organization with primitivism. Without engaging in a protracted defence of Evans-Pritchard, or Gellner, it seems that what is fundamentally at issue here is not the formalized depiction of social structure undertaken by Evans-Pritchard, but the reception and interpretation of what that structure says about its adherents.

Besides railing against the prejudiced evolutionary attribution of ‘primitive thinking’ to tribal groupings and civilization to northern Europe, some anthropologists and political scientists consider tribes to be colonial constructions that enabled European policies of indirect rule (Grinker et al. 2011; Ranger 1993). As far as Libya goes, this critique has some validity. Ottoman authorities in the 19<sup>th</sup> century exalted specific sheiks – heads of particular lineal segments – over others in an attempt to rule Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and Fezzan’s hinterlands by proxy (Evans-Pritchard 1949). Likewise, the Italians supported certain Libyan families while devastating others, in the hopes that by “running furrows of blood” between Libyans they could more easily govern the non-Italian population (First 1974). King Idris also favored particular families, and even went so far as to institutionalize the ascendancy of the Cyrenaican Sa’adi lineages (or families that owned land through conquest) in the form of a royal household called the *Diwan*, as well as in administrative districts that mapped onto the economic boundaries of Sa’adi Bedouin pastoral-nomadic lineages (Benkhe 1980). All of these

measures, some of which are more obviously colonial than others, had the effect of 'creating' starker boundaries between tribes, while also projecting their lineal social formations onto the political sphere. That being said, in Libya the history of the Hilalian Bedouin immigration out of the Arabian Peninsula and into North Africa, as well as the history of pre-Hilalian Berber settlements attests to the prevailing distribution of political groups based on perceived kinship, and the affinitive bonds built around them (Najem 2004). From the historical perspective,

The actual as well as the legendary lines of descent from the original Arab invasions [of Libya] had become the structural basis of a tribal system that strongly influenced the economic and political processes of twentieth century Cyrenaica. The tribes divide between the Sa'adi and the Marabtin. The Sa'adi are the nine tribes which hold the country by right of conquest; the Marabtin are the modern descendents of Arabs of the first invasion, with some Berber admixture, who were subjugated by the new invaders and compelled to pay tribute (First 1974: 42).

While it is almost certainly true that North African governors since at least the Ottoman occupation have tried to exploit 'tribalism' for their own ends, thereby helping to create subsequent iterations of Libyan tribes, these 'colonists' or urban rulers of various other stripes are not sculptors working with air. The clay of lineal association, and what is generally called 'complementary opposition' between lineal segments is what various Libyan leaders and their administrations have worked with. If it is possible to mobilize support for your own needs by availing yourself of perceived or real kin connections, then it only makes sense that from time to time, given circumstances where that tactic appears most ideal, that people will be mobilized based on their shared kinship. Once this 'segmentary solidarity' occurs, it is equally likely that opponents of the original kin mobilization will avail themselves of similar structures to resist it, *unless* they have more effective ways of mobilizing their own supporters. As Davis points out, "it is the fact of opposition itself which calls forth segmentary solidarity" (1982: 73).

Arguing that colonialism created tribes in Libya therefore seems to undervalue the contribution that the Libyan people made to their own history by emphasizing instead the agendas of state-heads. Tribal political organization has been an effective way for people to care for themselves and their loved ones in North Africa and elsewhere. That Machiavellian leaders have used segmentary opposition for their own purposes is no more surprising than the fact that democracy is occasionally used for the purposes of a tyrant, though the effects of such political machinations should, of course, be recognized.

The debate concerning the effects of tribal political organization spills into economic, historic, and ideological considerations as well. If tribes are most basically understood as lineal groups united by their descent (mythical or otherwise) from an apical male ancestor, then what are the economic relations between segments (Marx 1979)? How are the historical genealogies of the tribe recorded or remembered, and how are those genealogies integrated into the tribe's contemporary existence (Evans-Pritchard 1990)? What is the ideological significance of the concept 'tribe' (Salzman 1978)?

Several theses could, and have been, written on such questions. For my present purposes, however, the most significant question regarding tribal organization is: in a primarily urban and sedentary population like Libya's what role do tribal affiliations play during a dramatic event like the 2011 conflict when populations become suddenly unsettled and insecure?

To answer this question one must note that Libyan tribes are fluid, and goal orientated, and that they are not static supra-individual groups even though the biological relations that play a part in their constitution technically are. Libyan tribes are essentially *relational*, they subsist in the bonds of affinity and kinship marked by shared names, or histories and in the actions motivated by such bonds. As Bedoucha puts it, "the effective *qabila* [tribe] is that of voluntary alliance, or brotherhood proclaimed, solemnly and in writing; sometimes temporary, sometimes lasting, it takes precedence

over the ties of blood, which slowly fade from memory, as if to open the way to elective kinship” (1994: 214).

Though it may be of utmost importance to establish the connection that Libyan tribes have to kinship, blood, or whatever else, it is not essential for this project. In Libya’s revolution tribes were talked about as groupings based on common interests and goals. And though my informants believed that genealogical reckoning was significant in the establishment of tribes, they did not emphasize the biological or genetic aspect of tribal ‘races’, but the social aspects of what Salam called the ‘tribal code’. Libya’s historical record echoes this conception of tribe. The Italian demographer of Libya, De Agostini, recognized almost ninety years ago that, “the tribal composition lost the concept of homogeneous racial sequencing, and the whole concept turned into an organizational structure and some sort of social bonding between the various tribes of Libya. This is ascertained by the variety of origins of many sections and families who intermingled in tribes beyond recognition” (as quoted in Najem 2004: 235).

In his analysis of complementary opposition, Philip Carl Salzman makes two similar points,

[in complementary opposition] brothers and cousins are involved in a more metaphorical than literal sense; what is actually at issue is the relationship between corporate groupings that stand to each other as brothers and cousins through the use of a genealogical idiom... [and second] none of the alliances are permanent and ongoing, but rather are contingent upon circumstances, being activated when required but otherwise having no independent existence” (1978: 54).

Tribes, it bears repeating, have no existence independent of the circumstances that foster them. This is not to say that Libyan tribes are completely constructed relations with no perceived basis external to their social context. Rather, as Salzman puts it, “what is actually at issue” is the system of conceptual reckoning, which can be used to understand how groups are related to each other *like* the individuals that compose them. Seen in this light, my original question: what role did tribes play in a primarily urban revolution? Can be refined into: is there evidence that the relationship

between Libyan corporate groupings during the revolution was metaphorically understood using genealogical reckoning? And, if so, what circumstances activated this method of reckoning? I attempt to answer these questions after presenting: 1) the apparent roles that tribes played in Gadhafi's government, and 2) the geographic and chronological distribution of the Libyan conflict and its relation to the geographic distribution of Libya's tribal homelands.

### **How did Gadhafi employ tribal connections?**

When Gadhafi came to power in 1969 he did so 'from the desert' literally and figuratively. He literally did so because Gadhafi was born in a Bedouin tent in Libya's Western Desert, and he did so figuratively because his family, the Gadhafa, were a relatively minor lineal segment that had historically been the client of the much larger Warfalla tribe (Ayoub 1987; Pargeter 2012). Though the Gadhafa had some saintly credentials their influence on the Senussi religious fraternity, and its concomitant monarchy, was immaterial (Obeidi 2001).

Ayoub argues that Gadhafi's modest origins had a significant impact on his ideological and practical development (1987). On the practical side, Gadhafi was enrolled in Sebha's military academy because his family was unable to secure him a berth in Benghazi's university. On the ideological side of things, Gadhafi appeared to resent Benghazi's traditional elite and the ideals they were associated with because of his family's comparative modesty, as well as because of the perception that King Idris pandered to western powers (First 1974).

Given that Gadhafi developed his revolutionary cells while training at Sebha and while briefly stationed in Britain he lacked the time or opportunity to cultivate ties with Libya's traditional elite before taking power (Ayoub 1987). For this reason Egypt's Abdul Nasser advised Gadhafi and the other members of what came to be known as the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) *not* to announce their identities to the Libyan public immediately after

the coup. Indeed, it was thirteen days before the names of the RCC were publicly revealed (Fethali & Palmer 1980) – a tactic that was repeated during the 2011 revolution when the NTC remained incredibly opaque about its membership.

Gadhafi knew that he would not attract many allies among Benghazi's established monarchical elite; an elite that effectively mapped onto the tribal boundaries existing between client and patron tribes since the Ottoman occupation of Libya (First 1974). Thus, as Fethali and Palmer tell us, one of Gadhafi's first acts in government was to abolish the traditional administrative districts drawn by the Senussi Monarchy, and to replace them with new bureaucratic districts whose lines cut across tribal *watan* (or homeland): "the first target of the revolution was the destruction of Libya's tribal system" (Fethali & Palmer 1980: 9). Gadhafi, relying on the strength of Libya's modernized army, immediately dismissed the sheiks whose positions as governors in the monarchy's districts had been formally legitimized by the state. In the Sheiks' steads were placed new 'revolutionaries' who recognized in Gadhafi's coup a chance for upward social mobility on an individual rather than a familial scale (First 1974).

Gadhafi was not altogether consistent in his attack on Libya's tribes however. Indeed, at the same time that Gadhafi was upsetting the tribal base of the Senussi monarchy he attempted to create new lineal alliances for himself. Gadhafi did this by appointing members of the RCC who came from powerful lineages to important posts within the new government:

It was important for the regime first of all, to protect the revolution by creating new tribal alliances against the large tribes in Cyrenaica, which had supported the Sanusi monarchy and rejected the revolution... The background of the members of the *Free Unionist Officers Movement* and the *Revolutionary Command Council* made an alliance possible between the influential Maqarha tribe from Fezzan (whose representative was Abd as-Salam Jallud) and the Warfalla tribe that had settled in west-Tripoltania (represented by Muhaishi) (Vandewalle 2008: 72).

Gadhafi also denounced the parochialism of tribes under King Idris' reign while praising the Bedouin family ideals that he proudly endorsed. As

Anderson tells us, "Early on he [Ghadafi] made it clear that he was simultaneously opposed to tribalism as a principle of political organization and proud of his own origins in a saintly, though not noble or wealthy tribe, the Qadadfa" (1990: 297).

In this regard, the role of Libya's tribes was already being contested and redeveloped by 1969. As I argued in the previous section, Gadhafi wished to garner popular support in Libyan society, and to use this popular support to change the governmental structure of Libya. Particular elements of Libyan society, most notably the Sa'adi lineages of Cyrenaica, were already firmly entrenched in Libya government when Gadhafi took power. Thus, his war against Libyan tribes was characterized by a nuanced attack on the formal significance of tribes, i.e. the "tribe as a legal institution" (El Fethaly & Palmer 1980: 58), *and* a reformulation of Libyan tribes as social mechanisms for the transmission of Bedouin Islamic values.

This movement is analogous to the attack made on Libya's traditional religious elite. Shortly after taking power, Gadhafi and the RCC reinvigorated Koranic laws that had been neglected by the Senussi administration. Article 1 of the first revolutionary constitution made Islam the official religion of the Libyan state, and named the Koran as "the ultimate source of Libyan law" (ibid). Alcoholic consumption, which had been allowed by King Idris was officially banned and those who imbibed could face prison time. Once Gadhafi and the RCC had established these basic religious credentials they began a direct attack on the religious *ulama*, or the educated class of Islamic scripturalists (Bluechot & Monastiri 1980). Gadhafi considered the group of established religious authorities, "a class of superfluous priests", unnecessary for a religion like Islam where the individual can directly communicate with God (El Fathaly & Palmer 1980: 58-59). Gadhafi even went, "so far as to suspend the Sunna (the codified traditions, as opposed to the Koran itself), and incidentally to reform the Muslim calendar, basing a new version on the Prophet's death rather than the Hijri [the calendar based on the date the

Prophet Muhammad travelled from Mecca to Medina in 622 AD]" (Gellner 1981:63).

There are two specific resonances between Gadhafi's attack on Libya's instituted tribes, and its recognized religious scholars. The first is that both tactics were justified by the needs of popular democracy, and the second is that both tactics directly contributed to greater political freedom for Gadhafi and the RCC. As Gellner explains, Gadhafi's substitution of the institutionally supported elite-hood of the *ulama* for the scripturalism of personal religion freed him from the clergy's oversight: "It is clear that, if such an extreme scripturalism were established, it would free the ruler... from the restraint imposed on him by the normal legal-theological corpus" (ibid). This lack of scholarly restraint was perfectly justified by popular democracy, "Participatory democracy in effect undermines their [the *ulama* class] standing; populism then becomes a kind of ultra-protestantism, which sweeps away not merely priests and saints but even the open class of representative scholars. 'Neither mufti nor marabout nor shaiks', proclaimed an article in the only Libyan daily" (ibid).

Gadhafi's popular democracy demanded a new form of interpersonal equality. If democracy in Libya entailed the 'supervision of the people by the people', the same naturally applied to religion. What need was there for priests to supervise, educate, and *represent* Libyans if there was no such need in the political sphere? Indeed, the fact that Gadhafi recognizes tradition and religion as the two sources for legitimate social control (1976: 32) perfectly matches his attack on both the traditional and religious structure of Libya under King Idris.

Both religion and government had become, in Gadhafi's view, the antiquated tools of imperial powers bent, as usual, upon the subjugation of Libya. The fact that institutionalized religious and tribal authority were crusted over with scholarly and traditional edifices of symbolic prestige, which Gadhafi could not hope to attain provided, I would think, all the more reason for him to distrust them. Thus, Gadhafi's initial approach to Libyan

tribes and the Libyan *ulama* shares the same objective: to turn the “highly elaborated body of scholarly [and traditional] consensus” of King Idris’ rule, into the “abstract and general, and hence in practice ambiguous, precepts and assertions of the Koran”, and *The Green Book* (Gellner 1981: 63).

Gadhafi’s attack on Libya’s *ulama* and the country’s tribal elite were proactive rather than reactive measures. Eliminating the legal role of Koranic scholars and tribes articulated nicely with the formal structures of Libyan popular democracy, and paved the way for other ‘revolutionary measures’. These attacks on traditional authority also increased Gadhafi’s ability to govern with impunity. It is not clear that Gadhafi endorsed these methods in order to increase his manoeuvring room within the political sphere. Nonetheless, reducing the resistance furnished by pre-established sources of legitimate authority had that effect. Thus, the changing and, in many ways, augmented role of tribes in Gadhafi’s new Libya were direct consequences of his attack on their formalized position under King Idris. By simultaneously expunging the vestiges of the Cyrenaican tribal aristocracy embodied by the *diwan* from Libyan government *while* relying upon a Bedouin ethos for his own interpretation of society’s primary role in the nation, Gadhafi changed, but did not eliminate, the role that tribes played in Libya. Given that King Idris’ institutionalized tribal network was the product of a rural agrarian economy, this change needs to be understood with respect to the conditions of economic production in Libya throughout Gadhafi’s early years.

During the preliminary period of regime consolidation, the discovery of oil began to have a massive affect on Libyan livelihoods. Between 1954 and 1972 the urban population of Libya grew from 22 percent of its total to 35 percent (El Fathaly & Palmer 1980, 28). By 2010 the urban population in Libya was estimated at 78 percent of its total (CIA World Factbook). At the same time, Libya’s labour force went from being primarily agricultural in 1969 to a service based economy. In 2004, 59 percent of the Libyan workforce was employed by the service sector, 23 percent in industry (mostly hydrocarbon extraction), and only 17 percent in agriculture (ibid).

For many political and development theorists, urbanization and economic 'modernization' are predicted to erode traditional structures of political organization (Al-Warfalli 2012; El Fathaly & Palmer 1978). In their stead a technocratic bureaucracy is expected to grow (Juma 2011). This new bureaucracy should ideally focus on the efficient delivery of standardized services, rather than the provision of goods and services along family lines (Breton & Wintrobe 2011). That Libya did not follow this pattern despite its massive urbanization and comprehensive redistribution of economic activities (away from pastoral-nomadism and agriculture, and towards government work, commerce and service provision) is, therefore, another factor in the 'Libyan paradox' (Martinez 2007). If economic modernization and urbanization generally erode the political and economic efficacy of tribal relationships, how did tribes still play significant roles in Libyan affairs despite Gadhafi's attack on their institutional positions, and the massive changes wrought on the Libyan social landscape by the development of the nation's hydrocarbon industry?

There are four answers to this question. The first is that urbanization did not happen one nuclear family at a time in Libya. Benkhe (1980), Davis (1982), Lacher (2011) and others all observed that lineal segments tended to move *en masse* into the municipal centers that became the central points for the distribution of Libya's newfound wealth. As Lacher tells us,

urbanization saw communities settle in cities according to parentage, with close relatives settling nearest to each other. While this pattern inevitably faded over the past decades, it remained sufficiently strong for districts of major cities to side with the regime or the revolutionaries, depending on the tribal community dominating the neighborhood. This partly explains the resistance of regime forces in the Tripoli districts of Hadhba and Abu Slim, where many Warfalla had settled, as well as in the Fateh district of Sabha, which is dominated by Qadhadfa (2011: 146).

Furthermore, much of Libya's urban population maintains ties to rural family members, or lived at one point in rural communities. As Al-Tir explains,

according to official data, about (80%) of Libya's population live in urban areas, but still the vast majority of Libyans speak of tribal affiliation. The reason for this phenomenon is that the major urban areas have grown as a result of migration from the countryside, and not because of natural increase, and it can be said that the majority of residents of major cities are not born in the city. So still the tribe is present today in the memory of a large proportion of urban population" (2011, translated from the original Arabic).

This movement pattern helps to explain why tribes still had influence in municipal centres. Neighbourhoods in Libyan cities were, and still are, populated by specific families and groups of families. Because of this, tribes, and their segments, had an influence on local economies – who got what jobs where – local social welfare, local policing, and local elections. Davis found that Libyan police were, for instance, attached to the geographic and familial background in which they worked (1987). The Libyan government made sure to rotate high-ranking police officials throughout the country in order to keep them loyal to the government itself rather than particular communities, but this was not the case for the majority of the force: “policemen shared the loyalties of their population, and had a position which was independent of their membership of the force and their rank in it” (1987: 218).

The second reason that particular lineages maintained their influence in Libya is their role in Gadhafi's security forces. As Blink writes,

Urbanization admittedly has worked to attenuate individual loyalties among better-educated Libyans toward the formerly monolithic tribal unit. This group in particular recognizes that professional growth derives from personal abilities, not from tribal patronage networks. Nonetheless, their devotion to the family and in many cases the clan remains strong, and they continue to evaluate professional interlocutors partly on the basis of tribal histories that are honed from adolescence. Hiring practices based on merit may have supplanted parochial interests where teaching, engineering, and other critical skills are needed, but, as this discussion intends to show, traditional recruitment methods prevail where regime security is concerned (*Qadhafi's Tribal Woes* 2001).

Beginning very early in his regime Gadhafi shrunk Libya's formal security institutions in favour of parallel informal mechanisms. He eliminated the ministry of defence in 1969 after, “the minister of defence of that time, Colonel Adam al-Hawaz, was involved in an attempted putsch” against him (Mattes 2008: 73). Without a ministry to manage military affairs,

Gadhafi promoted himself to the position of, “Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces”. In 1977, when Gadhafi reorganized the state a propos *The Green Book*, he adopted the slightly less grandiose title of, “Highest [but not the only] Commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces”. Meanwhile Gadhafi was staffing his army with “Blood Relatives... In-Laws of the Qadhafi Family... Members of Qadhafi’s Tribe... [and] Members of Tribes Allied to Qadhafi’s Tribe” (for a complete list of the individuals employed see Mattes 2008: 74-76). After the coup attempt in 1993, Gadhafi’s use of tribal allies to staff Libyan security forces was further exacerbated (Obeidi 2001). Ahmida writes that,

From 1975 until 1993, the regime sustained itself by creating a military force that recruited officers from three important tribes: the Qadhafa [Gadhafa], Migarha [Magarha], and Warfalla. When a plot to overthrow the regime was discovered in 1993, Qaddafi reduced the size of the Libyan army to 50,000 men, with only 10,000 fully trained and equipped soldiers. Instead of strengthening a central army, the regime increasingly relied upon security brigades that were trained, equipped, and financially backed by Qaddafi. These brigades and security forces were led by Qaddafi’s brother-in-law General Abdullah al-Senusi; his sons Khamis, Sa’adi, and Mu’tassim; and his cousins Mus’ud Abd Hafidh, Mansur Dhawu, Ahmad al-Dumm, and Sayyid Qaddaf al-Dumm. In addition, Qaddafi created an Islamic African legion made up of two thousand recruits from Chad, Niger, Mali, and Sudan. Finally, Qaddafi’s second wife, Safiyya Farkash, came from the powerful Bra’ssa tribe, which gave him additional support from the home region of the Sanusi monarchy (2012: 79).

This all goes to show that Gadhafi’s reaction to the aggression from Libya’s military towards him was to curtail its official capacities in favour of unofficial, or informal capacities. Mattes argues that this led to the re-tribalization of “Libyan Society”, or the “intensified reversion to members of one’s own tribe in order to shore-up the regime” (2008: 81).

The third way in which lineages had influence during Gadhafi’s tenure is related to their articulation with popular democracy. Davis observed several local elections in Ajdabiya, a city south of Benghazi, during his fieldwork. He wrote that, “the protagonists in elections are the main groupings of the population which are qaba’il (roughly, and henceforth, ‘tribes’)” (1982: 67). Davis also noted that several features of Libyan popular democracy actually contributed to the importance of tribal alliances during

elections. For instance: "In the Libyan system there is no formal campaign with a beginning and a pre-announced end. As a result the agonistic element in the election is concentrated in the ballot, which becomes more a contest between voters than one between candidates" (ibid: 72). Political campaigns were not allowed in Gadhafi's Libya because campaigning effectively consists in one person attempting to convince others to vote for him or her. To campaign treads dangerously close to being either a representative of the people you have convinced, or to forming a political party. As Davis writes, "to choose a man on the ground that you agree with him more than his rivals is quite clearly to choose a representative; moreover, the set of people who agree with a candidate comes to look very like a party as soon as they concert their actions" (ibid: 71). Thus, campaigns themselves were banned. Furthermore, in a popular democratic election during Gadhafi's reign, "each citizen is answerable for his performance of his democratic duty. In an election, therefore, there is no secret ballot and Libyans vote as members of parliament or congress do - publicly and in theory answerably" (ibid: 71). These two features created 1) ideologically undifferentiated opponents, and 2) publicly decided contests where, as Davis says, the election was influenced more by who was voting for whom, then what the candidates did or said. As such very few people participated in the elections at all.

The Libyans that did participate had ways of choosing between political adversaries without hearing any campaign promises. Davis explains that in Ajdabiya's election the contest was between the Zuwaya lineage, and the Magarba: "The turn-out in the election was about sixteen percent. No women voted at all... it is very difficult for unaligned voters to participate. A number of merchants and shopkeepers... have no affiliation with Magarba or Zuwaya... Ajdabiyans who are, so to speak, not segmentarily minded, stay away from elections" (ibid: 72). In this regard, we can see that lineage sections existed in urban centers and that they had real influence on local politics.

The final way that tribes had influence within Gadhafi's regime was through the Popular Social Committees (PSCs), which I described in the last section. These committees were instituted in 1993 at the beginning of the UN sanctions on Libya, and shortly after a failed but dangerous coup attempt against Gadhafi. The PSCs were unusual with respect to Gadhafi's other political machinations because they attempted to make official what was generally unofficial and social. Unlike Gadhafi's approach to security forces, i.e. his forced de-institutionalization of the army, the PSCs attempted to publicly and officially recognize a community's 'natural leaders'. Rather than obfuscating hierarchy, as Gadhafi did in the army by eliminating the ministry of defence, the PSCs made authority *more visible*. But what sort of authority was this? I wrote earlier that the PSCs were meant to make lineages responsible for the anti-regime behaviour of their members. In this respect, the PSCs effectively institutionalized Gadhafi's theoretical ruminations about the ability of tribes to create for their constituents a 'behaviour pattern'. We can therefore see that any authority the 'natural' community leaders might wield through the PSCs was *social* authority, rather than governmental authority of the type held by a minister of defence, for instance.

None of this is meant to say that Libyan cities were universally tribal. In Davis' research, for instance, he makes very clear that Ajdabiya is not Tripoli or Benghazi. First off, Ajdabiya is much smaller than Benghazi and Tripoli, and much less likely to attract Libyans from all over the country. It should also be noted that since election turnouts were so small in Ajdabiya, "only the segmentarily minded" even bothered to show up. In other words, only those who were actually able to mobilize a large group of people for non-explicit – i.e. undeclared – reasons had any stake in the elections. Thus,

It would be absurdly wrong to maintain that Ajdabiya and towns like it are in any formal sense segmentary societies. On the other hand, they do seem to accommodate segmentary notions, and on not wholly infrequent occasions people seem to use such notions to concert action. The segmentary notions include an obligation to solidarity among such lineage or section men as happen to be present and willing. They include relatively developed notions of individual worth, of personal sovereignty and independence, in which men try to gain support on a reciprocal basis (ibid: 85-86)

The same can be said for the other three instances I provided where tribes had a role in Gadhafi's Libya. In all of these cases what is at stake is not a concrete and unchanging 'blood' allegiance between members of Libya's ruling elite, but 1) a metaphorical relation of kinship between the main tribal groupings that Gadhafi was able to incorporate into his regime and 2) a familial system of identifying who 'ought' to support you in cases where an opponent is marshalling their lineal resources. These two points do not imply that Gadhafi's politics were backward and provincial, but that in a social scenario wherein a population can be conceptually reckoned using a genealogical model, certain patterns emerge when individual actors, like Gadhafi, attempt to exploit their own lineal connections. As Davis wrote, "to say that Ajdabyiyans are segmentary from time to time does not imply that they are in the grip of some atavistic and tribal ideology which determines their every thought and reaction. On the contrary, such an idiom of action is one among several at their disposal, and it is invoked in circumstances locally defined as appropriate" (ibid: 87).

### **Geographic and temporal distribution of the conflict**

Over and above the instances where tribes were explicitly recognized as actors in the Libyan revolution (Al Jazeera 2012; Reuters February 20<sup>th</sup> 2011), the geographic and temporal distribution of the conflict illustrates a correlation between the distribution of tribes and the balance of anti and pro-Gadhafi forces. Libya's first uprisings in February of 2011 were unambiguously centered in the country's east, most obviously in Benghazi, followed shortly by Derna, Tobruk and Baida<sup>17</sup>. The only western city that shirked this pattern was Zintan, whose residents rebelled after the first protests in Benghazi on February 15<sup>th</sup>. As I wrote earlier, Zintan's rebellion was reportedly a reaction to an attempt made by the government to levy 1000 men to fight in Benghazi (Abdul-Ahad 2011). When Zintan's residents

---

<sup>17</sup> I left this section largely unreferenced because all of the dates and locations come from the sources referenced in my "Revolutionary Setting" section.

refused the draft they clashed with the government security forces sent to conscript them. Gadhafi's recruiters were expelled from Zintan, which remained largely uncontested until early April 2011 when Gadhafi loyalists from Tripoli shelled the city (Reuters 2011). The difference, then, between Zintan's rebellion and the rebellion in the eastern cities was its motivation. In the east, regime security forces attacked 'day of rage' protests, whereas in Zintan the residents refused to fight other Libyans for the government but did not participate in the initial 'days of rage'.

Libya's east fell to the rebels by early March and, despite Gadhafi's determined advance towards Benghazi in the later part of that month, it was never retaken. In contradistinction, Libya's west, particularly the territory surrounding Tripoli, Sirte, and Bani-Walid, was the last place to succumb to rebel soldiers. The protests that occurred in Tripoli and the dissent recorded in Bani-Walid did not lead to armed uprisings.

Although Mohamed Abdulmalek, "the chairman of Libya Watch – a human rights group that monitors abuse in the country - said the delay of protests in the west was due to the heavy presence of security forces there, 'not because the people did not want to go out'" (Al Jazeera 2012), it is worth noting that resistance to Gadhafi in Tripoli was demographically different than in eastern Libya. Like I mentioned in the 'revolutionary setting' section, Tripoli's protestors were primarily young. Indeed, Salam referred to them as "boys", and indicated that they were generally men under the age of 25 who were either unemployed or underemployed. Indeed, an entire 'youth movement' consisting of groups of covert activists had percolated in Tripoli for several years before the 2011 revolution (see, for instance, the "Free Generation Movement"). Nada told me that these youth organizations played Libya's monarchical national anthem from speakers hidden in trashcans along Tripoli avenue (one of the city's main thoroughfares), raised King Idris' flag, and ran illegal publishers and radio stations that railed against Gadhafi in the months immediately before and after the uprising in Libya's east.

By contrast, the fight against Gadhafi in the east was initially motivated by the families who had lost loved ones in the Abu Salim prison massacre and the 2005 protests against Gadhafi in Benghazi (Hilsum 2011; McQuinn 2012). Because of this, Libya's eastern protestors were comprised of a wider age and gender demographic than their western counterparts.

Meanwhile, the Western Mountains, a traditionally Berber enclave, were fiercely contested during the revolution but ultimately became the second region to be held by the rebels (NY Times 2011). Besides Tripoli, Sirte and Bani-Walid, only Libya's central west, centered around Sebha, the home of the military academy where Gadhafi had first created his group of 'young officers', remained loyal to Gadhafi (Ahmida 2012).

Misurata, a city near Libya's center, was one of the most significant battlegrounds during the revolution. Located just 209 kilometers east of Tripoli on the main coastal highway that connects Libya's largest cities, Misurata, despite its early support of the revolution, was too close to Gadhafi's power base, too important for the illusion of national unity, and too tactically significant – given its position between Tripoli and the oil shipping harbours in the Gulf of Sirte – for it to be easily held by the rebels among its population (McQuinn 2012).

Geographically, the Libyan war progressed from the east to the southwest, and ended in Tripoli and Sirte. The main areas of rebellion were Libya's east, the Western Mountains, and Misurata, whereas the main areas of resistance to the revolution were Tripoli, Sirte, Bani-Walid and Sebha; or Libya's centre west, and southwest (see figures 3-5).

Figure 3 below provides a representation of the major tactical divisions in Libya. Large Libyan cities are marked with squares and named. The map's blue squares were the centres of revolutionary activity, red squares were the most contested cities throughout the revolution, and green squares indicate the cities that supported Gadhafi. The numbers next to certain squares illustrate the order in which the indicated cities first rebelled.



Figure 3: Map of the major tactical divisions during the revolution



Figure 4: Map representing the dates of rebellion

Figure 4 provides the date of 'liberation' for Misurata, Benghazi and Derna. Misurata is starred because it was first liberated from Gadhafi forces

on February 24<sup>th</sup>, but was a contested city for most of the rest of the revolution.



Figure 5: Map of the dates that cities were finally 'liberated'

Figure 5 indicates the dates when each region finally fell to revolutionary forces. As one can see, the chronological distribution of the war maps onto the geographic distribution of the conflict, with cities in Libya's east falling quickly to the rebels and never being retaken, and the cities of Sirte, Bani-Walid, Sebha and Tripoli experiencing some dissent but not being taken except by forces external to them (although in Tripoli a number of residents participated in the rebel offensive). Cities in the Western Mountains were, on the whole, a little slower to commit to the revolution than Libya's east, and were often retaken after their initial liberation.

When these geographic and temporal realities are juxtaposed with the recorded history of tribal distribution in Libya (figures 6-7) a rudimentary pattern emerges. We can see that the homelands of the Gadhafa, Warfalla and Magarha tribes were the last places to be conquered by rebel forces, while the homes of Sa'adi tribes were the first to rebel.

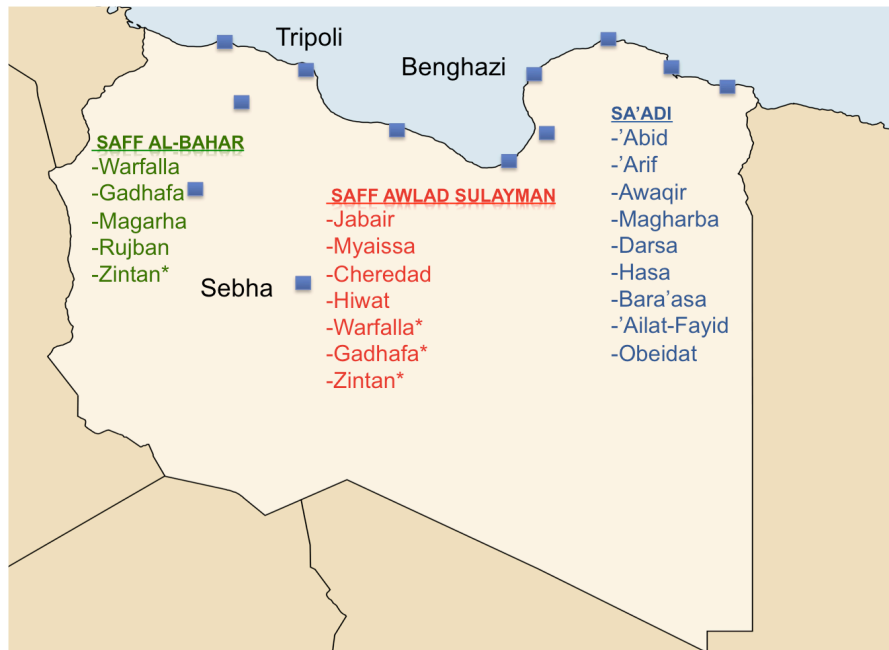


Figure 6: Map of the major tribal federations



Figure 7: Map of the distribution of some of Libya's main tribes

This is not altogether surprising given that, "the notables of the tribes that constituted the foundations of Sanusi power in the Jebel Akhdar [a

forested area running from the northeast of Benghazi to south of Baida]: principally the Barassa [Bara'asa], but also the Ebedat [Obiedat], the al Hassa [Hasa], the al Derisa [Darsa], and al Awagir [Awaqir]" (First 1974: 78) were "systematically marginalised" during Gadhafi's regime (Brahimi 2011: 613). Whereas members of the Gadhafa, Warfalla and Magarha lineages had been regularly favoured with government posts and expensive additions to their towns and cities throughout Gadhafi's tenure (Forte 2012; Martinez 2007; Vandewalle 2008).

This is not to say that the Libyan revolution was motivated by tribal grudges or allegiances. As I have already argued there are many proximate and ultimate reasons for the revolution. These reasons include Gadhafi's failed economic and infrastructural plans, as well as the Abu Salim massacre and the Benghazi protest killings. Showing that the chronological and geographic sequence of the war maps onto the distribution of tribes that Gadhafi favoured and disfavoured merely suggests that the genealogical system of reckoning in Libya provided by tribes played a role in the history of Gadhafi's government, and that this history therefore naturally affected the way that the revolution transpired. As Brahimi writes,

From the early defection by an army unit in al-Bayda which provided the rebels with access to military hardware including tanks, RPGs, M-16 rifles and AK-47s, to the reformist [NTC] technocrats who were available to fill the governance void, to the civic spirit which motivated hundreds of volunteers to sweep the streets, direct traffic and run power plants, the culture of independence in Cyrenaica is an important factor in explaining the emergence and resilience of the rebellion. This is not to say that anti-Qadhafi sentiment did not exist in Tripolitania, or that regime supporters have not merely melted into the revolutionary crowds in the east. Rather, the rebellion mapped onto pre-existing patterns of opposition, and indeed patterns of support, to allow for the emergence of two distinct and entrenched 'sides' – and the subsequent wholesale victory of one (2011: 619).

In figure 6, I represented three main coalitions of Libyan tribes. These coalitions are based on geographic and genealogic affinity, the first of which are the Sa'adi, who, "claim that they are all descendants of a unique ancestress, Sa'ada" (Peters 1960: 29). Though it may seem somewhat

counterintuitive for a patriarchal system of genealogical reckoning to use a female name for its primary segment, Peters explains that since the Bedouin of Cyrenaica were polygamous, Sa'ada's name was used to differentiate between half-brothers from the same father.

The second confederation is the Saff Awlad Sulayman, who "claim descent from the Banu Sulaym" of the Hilalian migration in the eleventh and twelve centuries AD, by way of Egypt (Cordell 1985: 324). This confederation is a loose grouping of tribes that have traditionally controlled Libya's Fezzan region, moving nomadically throughout southern Libya and Northern Chad (Cordell 1972), Saff meaning simply 'side', and Awlad meaning descendants from (Najem 2004).

The final grouping can loosely be termed the Saff Al-Bahar, or simply the side close to the sea. Blink argues that the,

Tribes that form the Saff al-Bahar Confederation are historically bonded by the caravan trade stretching from the African interior to distribution points along the Tripolitanian coast. In the past, its members cooperated with Turkish rulers based in Tripoli who sought to extend their authority to the interior. The confederation is comprised of three groupings: the Saff al-Bahar, Magarha, and Mahamid al-Sharqiyyin (Blink 2001).

This confederation was the hardest to define genealogically, and seems to combine a number of Berber groups from the Western Mountains north of Nafussa with the Arabic Magarha, and a few other Tripolitanian tribes who have long histories of urbanization (Cordell 1980). I included the Warfalla and Gadhafa segments with the Saff Al-Bahar and the Saff Awlad Sulayman because of their history of collusion with both groups.

Tribal confederations like the three listed above are unwieldy organizations consisting of a great variety of practical interests. Because of this, even though the Sa'adi and the Saff Awlad Sulayman are theoretically<sup>18</sup> united by 'blood', their grouping is only a reality in times when it is practically desirable. As Cordell, speaking of the *Saff* arrangement, writes, "it is more likely that these alliances represented groupings of tribes who

---

<sup>18</sup> Najem shows that even the noble lineages of the Sa'adi are probably not all related to a common ancestor (2004).

shared common long-term but not 'eternal' strategic and economic interests" (1985: 324). Indeed, in many historical cases members of Libyan lineal groupings have been enemies or allies depending on the situation, and not solely thanks to an *a fortiori* appeal to kinship. For instance,

The most famous of all raids in Cyrenaican modern history, was during the reign of Yūsuf Pasha al-Qaramānli in 1811 (1227H) and the consequent famous battle of Zughba where the Murābitin fought for the Sa'adis against some Tripolitanian tribesmen. It is also known as the "War of Saff" which basically meant that the Tripolitanian tribes stood on one Saff (side) dubbed Saff al-Gharb (Western side), and the Cyrenaicans stood on the opposing side known as Saff al-Sharq (Eastern side). In this war, the Tripolitanian tribes such as al-Ilṣūn, al-Firjān al-M'adān and al-Zuwāwāt encroached into Cyrenaica and were stopped by the Sa'adis who were mostly Alāya-Jabārna tribes (Awāgīr and Maghārba) in the decisive battle of Zughba. The 'Alāya won the battle and the war due to the substantial support received from their confederates such as the Harābis (al-Brā'asa and al-Drusa) and Murābitin (al-Zuwayya and al-Qbāyil) (Najem 2004: 249).

In the 'War of Saff', which Najem describes, the Sa'adi lineages united with their client tribes the Murabitin. Of special importance were the Awaqir and the Magarba of the areas around Ajdabiya and Benghazi. These two Sa'adi lineages fought alongside the Murabitin tribe called al-Zuwayya. However, in Davis' work on Ajdabiya's municipal elections the Zuwayya and the Magarba were fierce competitors (1982; 1987).

There are many other examples like this where individual tribes became the enemies of their previous allies and vice versa (see for instance Ahmida's account of the Awlad Sulayman 1994: 54-55). Many of these instances corroborate the theory of complementary opposition, wherein smaller lineal segments compete over limited local resources until a larger enemy motivates them to unite (Salzman 1978). This complementary mechanism is often characterized in the literature on Libya as a movement from alliances based on lineage, to alliances based around residency in villages, towns, or cities. As Fathali and Palmer, speaking of popular democratic elections during Gadhafi's tenure, record, "The saying *weld kapeletna* ("the son of our tribe") will be the slogan of the supporters. *Weld bladna* ("the son of our village") will be the slogan when the range of competition is wider" (El Fathaly & Palmer 1980: 25). My interviewees

roughly corroborated this scalar movement from lineage to village. Marwan, for instance, told me that Benghazians fought Gadhafi based on their neighbourhood, which was largely populated by close family when the fighting was inside the city, but made fighting groups based more on tribes after the fighting spread outside the city. Further, the injured militiamen I interviewed in Toronto all told me that when the rebel offensive had reached its climax the revolutionary brigades were organized into geographic axes based on their city or region.

Because of the size of the Libyan conflict and because of its primarily urban character, the principle of complementary opposition does not, however, fully characterize the overlapping allegiances and animosities of the pro and anti-Gadhafi forces. This is partly because some of Libya's tribes had grown to such a size as to be completely unwieldy as political groupings. Members of large lineages inevitably become more dispersed than their historically small counterparts. It is similarly likely that the constituents of Libya's largest lineages develop a very wide range of practical interests, which are sometimes opposed to each other.

For example, the Warfalla number close to one million (Obeidi 2001). Mobilizing every Warfalla to fight for or against Gadhafi would be a singularly challenging task, requiring, no-doubt a degree of recognized leadership in the lineage that, as we have already seen, does not exist in Libya. This creates a situation wherein even though the Warfalla lineage has strong conceptual-historical ties with Gadhafi's lineage – indeed, the Gadhafa tribe is originally a client lineage of the Warfalla (Evans-Pritchard 1949) – expecting all Warfalla members to be pro-Gadhafi is somewhat naïve. On the other hand, Warfalla members did appear to provide more support to Gadhafi than eastern Libyans, and the Warfalla's geographic homeland – Bani-Walid – was one of the fiercest Gadhafi holdouts during the war. As Brahimi writes,

In the opening stages of the 2011 uprising Ban Ulid [Bani Walid] itself was taken over by protesters, with slogans such as 'Kill Qadhafi' spray painted on buildings. A statement was released by 'the Warfalla tribal elders' in which they denounced and renounced Colonel Qadhafi, calling on Libyans to 'fully rebel against the enemy of God and his regime who

murdered their own people in cold blood'. However, some Warfallis were clearly fighting on in Qadhafi's militias and it seemed that there had been no mass defection. A month later, the regime was able to stage a press visit to a recaptured Bani Ulid, though it seemed likely to some correspondents that the men coming forward to express their unwavering support for the regime 'had been coerced or bribed'. After the collapse of the regime in Tripoli, Ban Ulid came to the fore again as a Qadhafi stronghold – members of his family were believed to have sought refuge in the town and, knocking back the NTC's offer of negotiations, his supporters there 'were raring to fight for their deposed leader' (2011: 613).

Thus, a middle ground between saying that the revolution's tactical divisions are explained by the theory of complimentary opposition, and the alternative of ignoring the overlap of tribal homelands and the geography and chronology of the conflict, is desirable. Drawing on my arguments from the last chapter regarding the role of society under Gadhafi, I try to offer just such a middle ground in the next section.

### **Tribes During the Revolution**

As relational phenomena, Libyan tribes 'grow-out' of familial relationships and the affinitive bonds developed alongside them. Given that the concrete reality of tribal affiliation is imagined to exist thanks to intergenerational connections established between supposedly biological lineages, addressing what influence they have on Libyan politics is difficult because the concrete reality of the tribe is ultimately a recognized convention and not an institutionalized organization (except in the case of Gadhafi's Popular Social Committees). Tribes are not political parties, labour unions, or even clubs that could be classified as parts of Libya's civil society. They are conceptual systems used to label and organize Libyan individuals that become reified in particular situations.

The Libyans I spoke with had no trouble telling me that tribes existed in Libya, but they were reluctant, for the most part, to address their significance. Eventually, it became clear that my informants were sometimes reticent to discuss Libya's tribes because Gadhafi had promised to use tribal ties against the revolutionaries (Gardham 2011) and because in the 'west'

tribalism was sometimes associated with primitivism (Juma 2011). As Dr. El-Faria told me, speaking of tribalism,

Yeah, so it does exist. And Gadhafi, that's what he played on during the revolution. He called upon tribes to, to stand by his side. And he, he kind of, he kind of sort of emphasized the differences we have between tribes, just to sort of okay, you know remember, remember the other tribe what they did? So to bring back revenges, to bring back old history.

Libyan tribalism was associated with the possibility of civil war between rival segments after the revolution. My interview with Dr. El-Zabbia illustrates this much. Dr. El-Zabbia gave many interviews during the revolution to western journalists. Because of his position within the Libyan Canadian Friendship Association, as well as his attachment to a Canadian university, Dr. El-Zabbia was not only easy to access, but also well informed about the ongoing conflict. Referring to those interviews he told me that,

There aren't quarrels between you know,... well they call it a tribal system. In fact, this is a distinction that people fail to make. Libya is not in the sense of a *tribal*, a tribal system. It's like isolated communities, isolated not because of their... It's just because there are thousands of kilometers between the cities, so every city became, in a way, self-sustaining and but the... So there are elderly people in that city or town or whatever they're not rulers, they have no power in a sense, they have more of a social thing, you know? [They] look over the social thing, making sure, you know... people come to them for advice. But it's not like a political agenda; it's not like, for example, tribes in Saudi Arabia or Yemen where you have [a case where] whatever this guy says everybody has to follow. You see [in those places] groups fighting. It's not the same in Libya, and I was trying to tell people this thing [to journalists and others]. And... [people asked] 'no civil war in Libya how come'? I mean this country... if the amount of weapons you see in Libya now, was present in any [other] country in the world, you would have seen a major, major war. I mean, I wondered in May [2012], I was surprised: people with anti-aircraft guns in their backyard, you know? But you know people can actually come home at four in the morning and no-one's going to bother them [in other words it is safe]. It's a, and this is because the nature of the people. They're different. Socially they're different than, than I'll say from Egypt and Tunisia. And that goes back to the history of the people.

Often times when I explicitly asked, "what role do you think tribes played in the revolution?" my informants told me that tribes did very little during the conflict. I was told that Libyan tribes were "not like North American Tribes" (Salam), because they do not have recognizable leaders crystalizing their agency into specific policies, and political stances. Nor do Libyan tribes have 'band houses' or community centers that could serve as

material markers of their existence. When tribal meetings occur, which they often did during and after the revolution – sometimes attracting several thousand people at a time – they were held in convention centers, and hotel lobbies, not in their own buildings (Khalil 2012). For the most part, my informants told me that relations between tribal segments were negotiated within the home, between people who knew each other well. As Hüsken puts it, “The physical place of tribal politics [in Libya] is the Marbua (the men’s room and guestroom of the house) (2012: 7). Without prompting them, five out of seven of my interviewees that I spoke to in English specifically said that tribes were social, not political things. Again, this was mainly because tribes did not have leaders that everyone in a lineage listened to. As Salam said,

Eastern Libya is a lot more tribal, same with southern Libya but did tribal loyalty play a role in the revolution? No,... I mean yes and no. How do I say this? Okay if we talk about Warfalla, which is one of the biggest tribes in Libya. You have people from Warfalla in Benghazi, in Misrata and in Ben Walid itself, which is I guess their home, and also in Tripoli. They didn’t all move as a unit. They didn’t all have “oh tribal loyalty got to do what the head of the tribe says, because there isn’t really a head of the tribe”.

That said, being born the son or daughter of a respected tribal segment in Libya is not without its advantages. As Dr. El-Faria, and El-Zaria told me, many Libyans use tribal affiliation in order to get a job, or to secure special treatment in other domains such as education and healthcare. Dr. El-Faria told me that people might use lineal connections to “get a position somewhere you know get this, but it’s not a, not in a way of building up a country” (Dr. El-Faria). In this regard, the relations that constitute tribes, whether biological or affinitive, were used for the sake of jobs or special treatment, but they were not used authoritatively, “go and kill with honour if you’re a tribe, I don’t think so” (Dr. Mahandri). One might call on a cousin, aunt or grandfather for an opportunity, but my interviewees told me that Libyans would not follow their aunts, cousins or grandfathers into battle *just* because of their position within a lineage. After all, “there isn’t really a head

of the tribe”, so how could someone know *which* of their lineal ‘obligations’ to prioritize in a nation-wide conflict (Salam)?

Nonetheless, tribes were sometimes used to organize revolutionary brigades: “It’s very true, the militia are mostly organized geographically and tribally. That’s very very much true. Even with Tripoli you have Sugagema [my spelling here is probably wrong] which is an area in Tripoli, they have their own militia versus Gigeshe has their own militia” (Nada). Foraq also told that that militia he fought with first recruited people known by the brigade’s commanders, usually neighbours and tribe members. And Sariq told me that he fought in a militia named after the dead member of a well-known lineage. Furthermore, during her extended stay in Libya Hilsum wrote that,

if the revolution was going to succeed in Tobruk [eastern Libya] they needed more than cellphones and flags, so their cousin started to smuggle Kalashnikovs over the Egyptian border and to distribute them to fighters across eastern Libya. Others pulled out the weapons they had in their cupboards. Every Libyan boy learned how to use a Kalashnikov at school, and it was not uncommon to keep firearms at home. Tawfik laughed as he told the story. ‘Tobruk is full of guns’, he said. ‘We don’t respect the law in Tobruk. We have thousands of guns for shooting birds. The tribe controls everything.’

Tribe and family, Tawfik explained, mattered more than anything else. It was not dissimilar in other Arab countries, but in Libya tribe had grown more important as power was increasingly concentrated in the hands of one clan, one family [Gadhafi’s]. Many families had eight or ten children, so Tawfik numbered his cousins in the hundreds. He trusted them all. This was how the uprising gained momentum - networks of family members working together (2011: 23-24).

All of this information suggested that tribes were significant during the revolution. But how could I square this data with what many of my informants told me? Namely, that Libyan tribes were without leaders and did not have the ability to put ‘boots on the ground’, as the military adage would have it. I was further puzzled by that fact that tribes were given social significance, but that a tribe’s social influence was difficult to speak of in terms of the revolution. This predicament forced me to ask how Libyan tribes had social significance, and how this social significance was connected with the revolution? How, in other words, could Salam tell me that tribes both played and emphatically did not play a role in Libya’s 2011 conflict?

I believe I found at least a partial answer for these questions in my analysis of the conceptualization of Libyan society during Gadhafi's tenure. If Gadhafi believed that ultimately the strong in society always rule and that the social - and not the political - "factor" was the important one, he would try and create a nation wherein the official apparatuses of government were shirked in favor of unofficial social mechanisms of control. By tracing the ways that Gadhafi approached Libyan society, and by conceptualizing his approach as an attempt to cultivate what Leach called an 'ideal' behavioral pattern, I argued that the 2011 revolution was both affected by the social role of tribes, *and* fighting to change that role by substituting a new type of behavioral ideal for Gadhafi's. This answer is not, however, complete. It presents my findings on how Libya's recent past articulated with its revolutionary present, but it does not fully address the practical significance of tribes during the revolution. Luckily, my informant's responses also reminded me of some notable literature on Bedouin society in Libya that provides an interesting insight into the unofficial, i.e. non-governmental creation of leadership in Libya.

Emyr Peters writes that, "leaders [among the Libyan Bedouin] exist but the tribal structure is not the instrument for identifying them: power is present and it has a distribution amenable to characterization, but this distribution shows little consistency with points of division in the tribal structure" (1990: 119). Peters argues that understanding Libyan tribes as lineages whose political efficacy revolves around the structures created by complementary genealogies is incompatible with the actuality of Bedouin life. He tells us, "power does not reside in the apical points of the structures referred to as tribes" (ibid: 118). Instead, "men became leaders by astute accumulation of resources such as material goods (grains and animals), a following of men, networking of relationships and obligations, and their purposeful application throughout many years" (ibid: 120). According to Peters, individuals (male in this case) became powerful in rural Libya by gradually procuring the material necessary to win the respect of their peers,

and by making themselves into centres for the type of economic venture I discussed in the previous chapter, not simply by virtue of their family name and its respective position within a tribal network. In this sense, Peters' analysis of power among the Bedouin of Cyrenaica agrees with what my informants told me about the lack of centralized, or identifiable political leadership among Libya's tribes.

My interviews did, however, suggest that tribal connections were used for the sake of opportunity, even though most people would not follow a tribal dictate propounded by Gadhafi or any other lineal sheik. It therefore stands to reason that members of well-respected lineages would, over time, accrue jobs, positions and material at a greater rate than members of less respected lineages. As Najem, speaking about Libya's tribes in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries argues, "The tribes that occupy good geographical and strategic location usually reap the economic benefits of such location, and consolidate their political standing in the area. Such standing could only attract more recruits to join the tribe and allies that would only add to their prosperity and status" (Najem 2004: 234). What seemed to be happening before and during the revolution is that individuals occupying good positions vis a vis their local *urban* communities were reaping "the economic benefits of such location, and consolidat[ing] their political standing in their area". In a scenario such as this, the genealogical bonds of tribal affiliation would no doubt be ameliorated and changed by the developing bonds of geographic proximity and economic venture. However, the genealogical system of reckoning one's social world would still be used as an ideology for orientating one's basic preferences between two or more business or political partners. This is especially the case during times of upheaval like 2011's revolution when there are very few mechanisms available to enforce the type of social compacts that are essential for corporate action. As Anderson argues, "Family relations may represent a conceptual bridge and social insurance policy in transitions from exclusive or nearly exclusive

reliance on kin to participation in the more complex webs of commercial and political relations of commercial and administrative life" (1991: 295).

It is clear that Gadhafi's government exacerbated the potential for tribal networks of this sort – namely ones that acted as conduits of opportunity more than authority – by consistently favouring some families over others (Hweio 2012). As Salam told me,

there was a definite pitting of tribes against each other, or people from different regions against each other, as a source of divide and conquer. I mean, especially in the western mountains. Like if you look at Nafussa, there were cities and towns that were flooded with money and services and cities next to them that were neglected

Thus, even though influence in rural Libya and, I would argue, urban Libya too, is *not* a function of someone's apical point atop a lineage, the "astute accumulation of resources and material goods" and even more so the, "networking of relationships and obligations" is naturally affected, if not solely channelled, by the conceptual system of allegiance and obligation provided by tribal history.

There is a great deal of anecdotal and taped evidence supporting this conjecture. For instance, after the revolution was finished thousands of hours of taped phone conversations – artefacts of Gadhafi's paranoia – were unearthed, many of which detail the tactics of the Gadhafi administration throughout the conflict. These tactics revolved around distributing opportunity to particular lineages in a strategic fashion, rather than commanding lineage members to attack Gadhafi's enemies. The following excerpts from these recordings was translated and introduced by *Al Jazeera* (for ease of reading I have italicized the parts of the conversation that were actually recorded):

Several of the recordings deal with the Awageer, one of the most powerful tribes in eastern Libya. Gaddafi and his inner circle knew they needed the Awageer's support to put down the uprising. On February 28, Tayeb El Safi learned that the Awageer felt left out of the nascent National Transitional Council.

**Caller:** *The Awageer are angry because they didn't get a position in the council [NTC].*

**El Safi:** *Okay. Deepen the divisions between them. Who are the leaders of the Zuwayya tribe? Not just any leaders, they might be with us.*

Several days later, one of Gaddafi's sons - Saif al-Islam Gaddafi - also stressed the importance of building support with the Awageer.

**Saif al-Islam:** *The Awageer are crucial. If they join us, we are set.*

**El Safi:** *Their position is still with us. If we had both the Awageer and Obeidat tribes, we could shake the situation [in the east].*

Ultimately these efforts were futile, as significant members of both the Awageer [Awaqir in my map] and the Obeidat, like General Fatah Younis, fought against Gadhafi:

*"There were three situations,' said Yousef al-Abbar, a member of the Awageer tribe. 'Gaddafi first talked about us, and our resolve to fight him became stronger. Then he asked us to march towards Benghazi, and we refused. Finally, he called on us when the army was approaching Benghazi, and we decided to fight.'" (translated by Al Jazeera 2012).*

General Younis' defection also dealt a crimping blow to Gadhafi's support in eastern Libya: "Abdel Fattah [Younis] had three roles: minister of interior, head of the special forces, and member of the Obeidat tribe,' Ali al-Obeidat told Al Jazeera. 'His defection affected all these things, and it meant that the Obeidat tribe had switched sides" (ibid). So Gadhafi was forced to turn his attention westward,

where... [he] still enjoyed a strong base of tribal support. A March 25 conversation between Tayeb El Safi and an informant suggests that the regime was marshaling thousands of tribal fighters.

**Caller:** *There are 3,000 gathered in Sirte. Tonight there will be 4,000, and then we can start our work.*

**El Safi:** *Let's use the media. Bring someone from the Warfalla tribe to call upon his brothers in Benghazi for the march.*

They went on to discuss the Marharba tribe, also near Sirte, described as "flexible" by El Safi's informant. *"They agree with us and don't support [the revolution],"* he said.

But preserving this tribal support was expensive, especially for an embattled government facing international sanctions. The prime minister, Al-Baghdadi Al-Mahmoudi, on several occasions lamented the mounting costs of tribal meetings. In a May 2 conversation, a caller told him that a single meeting cost the government more than one million dinars.

**Al-Mahmoudi:** *Whoever wants to help is welcome, but we are soon going to beg.*

**Caller:** *The hotels, cars, drinks, media and expenses [for the tribal meeting] have reached 1.1 million dinars.*

Several weeks later, Abdullah Senussi, the Libyan intelligence chief, urged Al-Mahmoudi to send money and weapons to tribesmen in Zliten. His response suggested that the government was simply running out of resources to buy tribal support.

**Senussi:** *I have a fax from Mr. Ambairish, those in Zliten are in poor conditions. They have not been given food, or money to buy it. They haven't been given weapons, just small pistols, some have been attacked, and policemen were injured. This could make many people return home. Those who stay will have two choices: either join the armed gangs or be killed.*

**Al-Mahmoudi:** *I have sent them one million; what else can I do? Tonight they will get everything, but you need to arm them (ibid).*

In these recordings tribes are not only referenced, but also used to mobilize support for Gadhafi's dying regime. One can see that the main ways of mobilizing tribal support appear to have been largesse, social pressure and equipment. By showing generosity towards the right people Gadhafi's government hoped to win their personal support. The backing of these leaders could then be parlayed into popular support using the much-referenced state media. If people saw influential members of their own tribe like, for instance the Obeidi's general Younis, supporting Gadhafi (which in the end he did not do) they were more likely, Gadhafi seems to have thought, to support his government. After the decision to remain loyal to Gadhafi's government had been made, the government only needed to arm their supporters, rather than command them to behave as a formal army. This was a task they managed with remarkably alacrity. As Marwan told me: "in Tripoli and Sirte they had mad [a great many] guns". Indeed, Gadhafi explicitly recognized this tactical sequence when, "Speaking from the old city ramparts looking over Green Square [in Tripoli]... wearing a winter jacket and a hunter's cap that covered his ears, said when necessary he would open Libya's arsenals of guns to the tribes" (Saleh et al. 2011). In this case and others, Gadhafi was not commanding an army, but arming a social element that he hoped would remain loyal to him.

## Summary

Near the beginning of this chapter I asked if there is evidence that the relationship between Libyan corporate groupings during the revolution was metaphorically understood using genealogical reckoning? And, if so, what circumstances activated this method of reckoning? I have since argued that the chronological and geographic progress of the revolution suggests that Libya's cities and regions either allied themselves with, or attacked Gadhafi based in some part on the adversarial relationship between tribal corporate groupings that are united by a metaphorically kin-based relation. The genealogically united Sa'adi lineages rebelled against the government and were fought by the geographically united Saff Al-Bahar. In the course of this analysis I have also argued that in such a large conflict, involving hundreds of lineal sub-segments, and a great number of non-tribal actors the principle of complimentary opposition between corporate groupings that have a metaphorical relation to one another is muddled, if not altogether superfluous. Taking this into account, tribes had an influence on the revolution because of the political reality created by Libya's history.

Because Gadhafi worked for 42 years to eliminate government in favour of the 'natural' mechanisms for organization provided by the familial model, official Libyan institutions became atrophied by disuse and underfunding. Thanks to this, the Libyan revolution did not have as its target the Libyan 'president', or the Libyan army because those institutions did not exist in any recognizable form, "The political view was to get rid of Gadhafi, that's the common goal for everybody, and that's the denominator between all of them" (Dr. Mahandri). As Brahimi argues, "Because executive authority did not exist in the Jamahiriya theory, Qadhafi himself had no official role within the system. Thus, the Libyan state was very quickly characterised by an enormous gulf between formal and informal power structures. In fact, the formal administrative structures merely served as vehicles for executing the policies that emerged from the informal ones" (2011: 607).

Gadhafi's unofficial administrative mechanisms were the Revolutionary Committees, and the informal social connections that he attempted to cultivate by spending money on some communities and lineages and not others. These networks were unofficial because they were not regulated. As Davis writes,

as the police and the army had no place in the formal structure of government, they had greater autonomy than in ostensibly centralized states... the apparatus of state power was hidden from view, and this provided the Revolutionary Command Council with an unregulated instrument of policy (1987: 217)

Given that the Popular Social Committees and the Revolutionary Committees reported to no authority besides Gadhafi, and remembering that Gadhafi had no formal position within the Libyan government, these mechanisms were, by definition, unofficial.

Gadhafi justified these unofficial mechanisms by saying that they protected the revolutionary goal of making Libyan families, and tribes into the Libyan nation, or the only social structure that has any natural legitimacy. Once the Libyan nation had been forged into a single natural community, there would be no need for any type of oversight besides the supervision provided by the community itself. Thus providing a teleological endpoint where true democracy could reign, and where the "people" would "supervise themselves". This imagined utopia was not an ideological smokescreen for Gadhafi's more Machiavellian policies. Gadhafi also acted on these ideology commitments, and appeared to believe in them. As Hüsken writes,

In his [Gadhafi's] speeches he portrayed the nation as a big tribe rather than a society organised and structured by the state. It is no accident that the most important informal circle around Gaddafi was known as the Rijal Al-Kheima (the men of the tent) and thus carried an explicit tribal connotation (2012: 4).

Thus, the difference between Gadhafi's rhetoric and practice is the result not of duplicitous prevarication, but his own understanding of society.

Gadhafi 'portrayed' the nation as a big tribe, but he also channeled his power through informal relationships like the 'men of the tent', and his nebulous association with the Popular Social Committees. Using these

informal relationships to prosecute his mandates had a real influence on the mandates themselves. Coming from the social sphere, Gadhafi's prerogatives were perceived not as the altruistic mandates of an ideologue, or as the disinterested rulings of a bureaucratic official, but as the strategic machinations of a powerful member of society. In other words, Gadhafi's means were not perceptually divorced from his ends. Because Gadhafi's Libya was without a constitution, and he had attacked the religious authority embodied in the Libyan *ulama*, governmental action was perceived as flowing from only one source: Gadhafi and his family, "[everything Gadhafi did] was for the power. It's to be the boss, and the power all the time. He has never been down. He likes to be in power" (Marwan).

Whether or not Gadhafi actually ordered the soldiers guarding Abu Salim to open fire on their prisoners, and whether or not he explicitly ordered security forces to fire at Benghazi protestors in 2005, Gadhafi was held personally and not just officially responsible for both actions. Similarly, when the supposedly non-representative, i.e. natural authorities loyal to Gadhafi's government attacked the protestors in 2011's Benghazi protests, Gadhafi was held accountable.

The form predicted by the theory of complementary opposition, if not the content, was therefore expressed by the revolution. By this I mean that Libyans had a wide range of discontents. Such a wide range of grievances, in fact, that their decision to mobilize against Gadhafi was not only, or even mainly the effect of tribal fealty. My argument is not, therefore, that tribal allegiances can be used to reductively explain the Libyan revolution. No categorically stable fracture lines existed between Libyan lineages before the revolution. Instead, I argued that the revolution put Libyans into a position where the horizon upon which they make decisions – the same thing that Leach called the 'ideal' behavioural pattern, or the description that someone makes of their society and their place within it – was both demonstrated and contested.

That horizon was demonstrated, or brought into starker relief, by the basic pattern of support for the revolutionaries and for Gadhafi. That Sirte, Bani-Walid, and Sebha were the principal centers of Gadhafi's support outside of his capital, and Benghazi, Derna, Tobruk and Baida were the primary and first centers of rebellion against him, is not simply the result of tribal-historical animosities between eastern and western tribes. It is, however, the result of the consistent patrimony Gadhafi supplied members of western tribes versus eastern ones. As Brahimi writes,

Tribalism, then, becomes relevant because the peculiarities of the Jamahiriya theory reflected a tribal ethos; because Qadhafi perpetuated a patrimonial system based largely on tribal lines which, in the end, afforded him a surprisingly robust support base; and because, crucially, when the system was threatened militarily, the regime could call upon a complex of irregular military units responsible directly to Qadhafi's blood relations. Yet it was also on account of these tribal politics that vast swathes of the country had been systematically disenfranchised in the first place (Brahimi 2011: 614).

It therefore becomes reasonable to say that tribes had a role in the revolution not as static political units with sheiks, and kinsmen bound by honour to one another, but as a conceptual system of reckoning potential allies and enemies. The middle ground between reductively attributing the Libyan revolution to tribal divisions and ignoring the influence of tribes altogether is to see that tribes are made up of relationships that can be activated or ignored based on the circumstances. Throughout Gadhafi's long reign he cultivated relationships with members of the Gadhafa, Warfalla, and Magarha tribes. These relations were *actually* between him and other more or less qualified adult Libyans, but Gadhafi wanted them to be considered *ideally* as relationships between two or more lineages, namely his own and the Warfalla or the Magarha. Towards the end of his tenure Gadhafi even tried to enshrine these unofficial relations in the Popular Social Committees in order to force the social relationships he had cultivated into the relative stability of the institutionalized 'public'. During the revolution against Gadhafi some of these relations were activated in support of him, but the greatest irony is that by playing the 'tribal' game Gadhafi had, as Davis puts it, called forth the

segmentarily minded in Cyrenaica as well. By trying, in other words, to have relations between himself and many of his commanders or top politicians regarded as social, and not political relations, Gadhafi motivated his enemies to do the same. In a related fashion, Gadhafi's attempts to cultivate lineal alliances for himself also motivated those, like Tripoli's youth, who were tired of Libyan politics being prosecuted on the social scale. As Salam told me, "I'd like to see Libya be a democratic country based on the rule of law. Somewhere where connections and strings and families and heritage and things like that don't determine your economic or political power... a meritocracy, if you will".

## Conclusion

In the course of this thesis I have: 1) presented a rough chronology of the 2011 Libyan conflict; 2) introduced and tried to justify why my interlocuters and I refer to it as a revolution; 3) demonstrated that Gadhafi located his power in the social sphere, which ameliorated the apparent difference between his rhetoric and practice; and 4) I indicated how Gadhafi's configuration of social power was both present in the revolution and contested by it. My overall intention was to display how Gadhafi's 42-year tenure constructed an ideal standard of behaviour for Libyans, which, though not the only thing attacked by the revolution, was a motivating factor for it, and partly efficacious of the form the revolution took.

I began investigating the Libyan revolution in order to discover what role 'tribes' played in it. That meant attempting to understand what tribes are in Libya and how they operated in the past and present, as well as how my interviewees thought they are likely to operate in the future. The main problematic generated by my research question was: why is it so difficult to see what influence tribes have on Libyan politics? The answer I produced for that problematic is that Libya's tribes are *social things*. Tribal influence on Libyan affairs was, therefore, intimately bound up with a particular conception of the role and function of society in Libya.

Coming from a background of social science this answer was both tantalizingly *a propos* and awkwardly abstract. What was I to consider the 'social?' How did my informants consider the social? How could the social role of tribes be different than their political role, and how might this difference articulate with my original problem?

I found a partial answer for these questions in my analysis of Gadhafi's ideology, which is based around a historically particular understanding and use of 'society.' While I am aware that many researchers, including McGill's own Tobias Rees, have argued that the concept of 'society' is a historically contingent one whose political dimension was arguably developed during the

French revolution (2011: 16), I did not create a Foucauldian genealogy of Libyan society. This is because my methodology was inspired more by the articulation of Gadhafi's ideas regarding the 'social' with his use of Libyan tribes rather than by the careful documentation of the changing use of the word 'society' in the written record. Thus, my analysis of Gadhafi's understanding of society was more of a 'social' than it was a 'conceptual' history (Koselleck 2002). I focused, in other words, on the *intention* behind the deployment of the word 'society' in Gadhafi's *Green Books*, his speeches, and in the words of my informants, rather than the changing conceptual content of the word society. This allowed me to ask why Gadhafi spoke about Libyan society in the way he did, and what purpose his rhetoric served. A conceptual history of Libyan society would, I think, have focused more on the implicit semantic content of the word society instead of the implicit motivations behind the use of the word.

Gadhafi did not possess a great deal of recognized authority when he took power in 1969. He attempted to create revolutionary, charismatic and socio-economic legitimacy for himself, and sometimes succeeded. However, his long reign was repeatedly punctuated by coup attempts against him. Gadhafi reacted to these attempts on his life and leadership by relying ever more upon the non-state bonds of family and tribe. His ideology perfectly echoes this practical course of action. Gadhafi did not wish for instruments of government to exist at all. Indeed, what he identified as instruments of governing – the officer core of the army, bureaucratically empowered tribes, labour unions and the Libyan *ulama* – were the sources of rebellion against him. The ties of patrimonial obligation he established between himself and the western Libyan lineages of the Gadhafa, the Warfalla and the Magarha were, on the other hand, bastions of relatively stable support. It is not therefore surprising that Gadhafi hoped the social and not the political would become the predominant factor in Libya.

There is a great deal left unexplored by this thesis. Indeed, it seems as though more rather than fewer questions present themselves at the end of the paper than at the beginning. Having written a thesis that is mainly populated by historical analyses, I did not prosecute a narrow field of inquiry with a specific theme. I have instead attempted to follow a basic question through the various materials 'recruited' by it. By this I mean to say that posing the question: "what role did tribes play in the revolution?" to my interviewees and the academic and journalistic information on Libya generated incongruences that motivated further research. These incongruences, or puzzles, are the following: 1) all of my interviewees emphatically called the war a revolution, but many journalists and academics disagreed with this designation; 2) My interviewees figured Gadhafi as the sole enemy of the revolution, but Gadhafi's position within Libya at the time of the revolution was officially 'symbolic'; and, 3) most of the academic literature on Libya espouses the role that tribes play in Libyan politics, but my informants said that Libyan tribes were mainly social things that had an indirect or even non-existent relationship to the revolution. These differences motivated the last three chapters of my thesis.

My attempt to mediate these incongruences, or to answer these puzzles was to propose that: 1) Libya's war may not have looked like a revolution, but this was a consequence of the decentralized nature of the conflict and of the type leadership suited to such a conflict, 2) That Gadhafi's position in Libya may have been officially symbolic at the time of the revolution, but his unofficial position within Libyan society was very powerful, and that 3) Libyan tribes did not atavistically mobilize tribesmen and women intent on fulfilling a moral obligation to kin, but that Libyan tribal genealogies provide a way to cognitively organize Libya's interpersonal space. This conceptual form was used to distribute patrimony and opportunity during and before Gadhafi's tenure.

Resolving these incongruences suggested a singular thread. Namely, the difference between how relationships between people are officially

presented and the way they are unofficially presented; or the difference between describing 'ideal' and 'normative' interpersonal relations. To take just one example of this thread, Gadhafi's government was officially represented as a popular democracy. Within this official system Libyans were related to each other based on a theoretical maximum of personal equality. No Libyan had more political say than any other, because no Libyan stood as a representative for another. This representation was a model for how Libya should function if Libyans acted in an ideal way, as far as Gadhafi was concerned. The way that my interviewees and many literary sources described the government's 'actual' working was, on the other hand, an unofficial representation of the perceived average of Gadhafi's governmental acts. This normative account represented Gadhafi's government as dictatorial. In this 'actual' presentation of relationships, Libyans were often forced into relations characterized by inequality, which were sometimes based on their position within a lineal segment or their position with respect to Gadhafi's Revolutionary Committees. I argued that this disparity between theory and actuality was mediated by Gadhafi's conception and use of Libyan society. Gadhafi's use of society mediated the difference between the ideal relationship of absolute equality between Libyans and the actual or normative relations of inequality by assuming that the family provides a model for 'fair' and just relations of economic and political disparity.

Exploring how people's conceptions of actual, normative and ideal relationships interact requires much more research. As a final conclusion, then, I will briefly suggest two research programs that will build on the ideas presented here. The first asks: "what is the relationship between normative and ideal descriptions, and how does one affect the other?" And the second question regards scale, that is, the ratio between the observed and the represented, which as Marilyn Strathern writes, "has been a headache for anthropology" (1995: 15).

This first inquiry builds on Salzman's work with 'asserted ideologies' (1978). In this work, Salzman argues that patterns of significance made up

from the “specification of [behavioural] alternatives, and through definition of desiderata” can have an effect on people’s actions even in situations where there appears to be a difference between a community’s stated ideology and its normative actions (1978: 635). If communities are able to provide relatively consistent ‘idealized’ descriptions of the relationships that ought to constitute their political system, while at the same time maintaining relationships that cannot be explained by that idealization, then what role do idealizations play, and how are they maintained in situations of chronic disuse?

The second research question plays on the scalar movement between the numbers of related individuals, which lineal political organizations adroitly facilitate. As I argued in chapter four, Libyan tribal relations provided one stop in a spectrum of political relations during the revolution. When the fighting was on their proverbial doorstep, Libyans rebelling against Gadhafi first organized themselves by allying with their families and close neighbours, then by doing the same with extended family members and other lineal associates when the fighting reached a city-wide scale and finally revolutionary Libyans joined geographic and lineal amalgamations when the scale of the conflict was nation-wide. This movement from membership in a small familial organization to large groups based on geographic solidarity is worth studying further because it highlights the abiding difficulty of establishing the anthropological ‘object’.

To put this point another way, it has always been difficult to know where the anthropologists should observe, where he should put himself and his eyes and ears. Should anthropologists be concerned, for instance, with describing the relationships between groups, describing the relationships within groups, describing an individual’s relationship to the group, or describing an individual’s relationship with himself? Unlike, for instance, sociology whose name at least suggests the ‘object’ of larger societies, and psychology whose object is – for better or worse – humanity’s relationship with its own psyche, anthropology (once again, at least in name) suggests the

broad object of study called *anthropos*. However, it has never been clear where *anthropos* resides, or can be found. Examining the nature of the relation itself, and the capacity it has for motivating some behaviours while discouraging others, may help find anthropos in the metaphorical conjunction of human entities, rather than in the specificities of the conjoined entities themselves (whether they be small or large groups, one individual or many).

I believe that investigating political groupings that are theoretically, if not always genuinely, based on kinship provides a unique opportunity for asking questions about anthropological scale. This is because when the metaphorical relationship between corporate groupings within a society is conceptually reckoned using a genealogical model individuals can understand the scaled-up space of political interactions with the same conceptual tools as they would the scaled-down space of interpersonal relations. In this regard, elective or actual kinship is a powerful metaphor used to understand how politics should work based on how families work. Kinship therefore provides a type of relation that can be scaled up or down, and can include many or very few individuals. Studying kinship as a particular type of relationality will help determine whether there is something about relations themselves, rather than just the entities they conjoin, which shapes our perception of the world we live in.

## Bibliography

“AFP: Libya Economy Surges Following Revolution: IMF.” 2013. Accessed May 24.

[http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5h\\_C5Ryg83KcuAmIBCQpCcgXXVZCg?docId=CNG.3a635db5d2d0f73d03ce6e322e80f461](http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5h_C5Ryg83KcuAmIBCQpCcgXXVZCg?docId=CNG.3a635db5d2d0f73d03ce6e322e80f461).201.

Al-Tir, M.‘U. 2011. “Taḥaddiyāt al-Taḥawwul ilā al-Dimuqrāṭi yah fi Libyā.” *Ṣaḥīfat al-Waṭa n al-Libiyā al-’Iliktruṇiyah [on-line]*. 23 September. Available from: <http://www.alwatan-libya>.

Abu-Lughod, Lila. 2012. “Living the ‘revolution’ in an Egyptian Village: Moral Action in a National Space.” *American Ethnologist* 39 (1): 21–25.

Ahmida, Ali Abdullatif. 1994. *The Making of Modern Libya : State Formation, Colonization, and Resistance, 1830-1932*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

— — —. 2012. “Libya, Social Origins of Dictatorship, and the Challenge for Democracy.” *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 3 (1): 70–81.

Al Jazeera. 2013a. “Gaddafi Spent Millions for Tribal Support.” Accessed February 19.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/spotlight/libyaontheline/2012/05/201251191747457398.html>.

— — —. 2013b. “Libyan Town of Derna Battles Suspicions - Africa - Al Jazeera English.” Accessed February 19.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2011/08/20118414123916790.html>.

Al-Werfalli, Mabroka. 2011. *Political Alienation in Libya: Assessing Citizens’ Political Attitude and Behaviour*. Reading, UK: Ithaca Press.

Allan, J. 1981. *Libya: the Experience of Oil*. London; Boulder Colo.: Croom Helm; Westview Press.

American Ethnological Society. Spring Meeting, edited by June Helm. 1968. “Essays on the Problem of Tribe : Proceedings of the 1967 Annual Spring Meeting of the American Ethnological Society.” In *The Society*: Distributed by University of Washington Press.

Anderson, Lisa. 1990. *Tribe and State: Libyan Anomalies*. From, “Tribes and state formation in the Middle East” edited by Philip Khoury and Joseph Kostiner. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles California: 288-302.

“AU: Libya Rebels Killing Black Workers.” 2013. *CBS News*. Accessed May 13. [http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-202\\_162-20099014/au-libya-rebels-killing-black-workers/](http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-202_162-20099014/au-libya-rebels-killing-black-workers/).

Ayoub, Mahmoud. 1987. *Islam and the Third Universal Theory: the Religious Thought of Mu'ammār al-Qadhafi*. London; New York; New York NY USA: KPI; Distributed by Methuen Inc. Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Barakat, Halim Isber. 1993. *The Arab World: Society, Culture, and State*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Barfi, Barak. 2011. "Why Are Qaddafi's Backers Refusing To Surrender? An Exclusive Look at the Career of a Top Lieutenant." *The New Republic*, August 31. <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/world/94412/libya-gaddafi-war-lieutenants>.

Barry, Malone. 2011. "WRAPUP 4-NTC Forces Celebrate Capture of Gaddafi Bastion Bani Walid." *Reuters*, October 17. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/10/17/libya-idAFL5E7LH3NI20111017>.

Beaumont, Peter. 2011. "The Truth About Twitter, Facebook and the Uprisings in the Arab World." *The Guardian*, February 25, sec. World news. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/feb/25/twitter-facebook-uprisings-arab-libya>.

Behnke, Roy. 1980. *The Herders of Cyrenaica: Ecology, Economy, and Kinship Among the Bedouin of Eastern Libya*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Benamer, Hani TS, Amin Bredan, and Omran Bakoush. 2009. "The Libyan Doctors' Brain Drain: An Exploratory Study." *BMC Research Notes* 2 (1) (December 8): 242.

Blink, David. 2013. "Libya's Tribal Landscape." Accessed February 13. <http://www.davidblink.com/QTW/pages/landscape.aspx>.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1990. *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford University Press.

Brahimi, Alia. 2011. "Libya's Revolution." *The Journal of North African Studies* 16 (4): 605–624. doi:10.1080/13629387.2011.630880.

Breton, Albert, and Ronald Wintrobe. 2008. "The Logic of Bureaucratic Conduct". Cambridge Books. Cambridge University Press.

Brown, G. Gordon, and James H. Barnett. 1942. "Social Organization and Social Structure." *American Anthropologist* 44 (1): 31–36.

Castells, Manuel. 2000. *The Rise of the Network Society*. Oxford; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers.

- Chersitch, Igor. 2013. "Libya's Revolution: Tribe, Nation, Politics | openDemocracy." Accessed February 1. <http://www.opendemocracy.net/igor-cherstich/libyas-revolution-tribe-nation-politics>.
- Chorin, Ethan Daniel. 2012. *Exit the Colonel: The Hidden History of the Libyan Revolution*. New York: PublicAffairs.
- Cordell, Dennis D. 1972. *The Awlad Sulayman of Libya and Chad: a Study of Raiding and Power in the Chad Basin in the Nineteenth Century*. University of Wisconsin.
- — —. 1985. "The Awlad Sulayman of Libya and Chad: Power and Adaptation in the Sahara and Sahel." *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne Des Études Africaines* 19 (2) (January 1): 319–343.
- Cowell, Alan, and Steven Erlanger. 2011. "France Becomes First Country to Recognize Libyan Rebels." *The New York Times*, March 10, sec. World / Europe. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/11/world/europe/11france.html>.
- Creswell, John W. 2008. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 3rd ed. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Cristiani, Dario. 2013. "The Jamestown Foundation: Hot Issue — The Zintan Militia and the Fragmented Libyan State." Accessed February 19. [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=38899](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=38899).
- Davis, J. 1982. "Qaddafi's Theory and Practice of Non-Representative Government." *Government and Opposition* 17 (1): 61–79.
- — —. 1987. *Libyan Politics: Tribe and Revolution*. London: Tauris.
- El-Khawas, Mohamed. 1986. *Qaddafi : His Ideology in Theory and Practice*. Brattleboro Vt.: Amana Books.
- El-Kikhia, Mansour O. 1997. *Libya's Qaddafi: The Politics of Contradiction*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
- Essenova, Saulesh. 1998. "'Tribalism' and Identity in Contemporary Circumstances: The Case of Kazakhstan." *Central Asian Survey* 17 (3): 443–462.
- Evans-Pritchard, E. 1949. *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- — —. 1990. *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People*. Oxford University Press.
- Fahim, Kareem, and David D. Kirkpatrick. 2011. "In Libya's Capital, Qaddafi Masses Forces." *The New York Times*, February 23, sec. World / Africa. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/24/world/africa/24libya.html>.

- Fathali, `Umar Ibrahim, and Monte Palmer. 1980. *Political Development and Social Change in Libya*. Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books.
- — —. 1980. "Opposition to Change in Rural Libya." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 11 (2) (April 1): 247–261.
- Fathali, `Umar Ibrahim, Monte Palmer, and Richard Chackerian. 1977. *Political Development and Bureaucracy in Libya*. Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books.
- Foran, John. 1997. *Theorizing Revolutions*. London; New York: Routledge.  
<http://site.ebrary.com/id/10098667>.
- Fornaji, Hadi. 2013. "New Law Will Exclude Half a Million Libyans: Mahmoud Jibril." *Libya Herald*. Accessed May 13.  
<http://www.libyaherald.com/2013/05/07/new-law-will-exclude-half-a-million-libyans-mahmoud-jibril/>.
- Forte, Maximilian. 2012. *Slouching Towards Sirte: NATO's War on Libya and Africa*. Baraka Books.
- Fortes, Meyer, International African Institute, and E. E. (Edward Evan) Evans-Pritchard. 1950. *African Political Systems*. London : Pub. for the International African Institute by the Oxford university press.  
<http://archive.org/details/africanpolitical00fort>.
- "Gaddafi Hiring Tuareg Warriors as Mercenaries in Libya: Reports." 2011. *International Business Times*. March 4. [http://www.ibtimes.com/gaddafi-hiring-tuareg-warriors-mercenaries-libya-reports-273593?utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=editorsfeed&utm\\_content=Gaddafi hiring Tuareg warriors as mercenaries in Libya: reports&utm\\_campaign=World](http://www.ibtimes.com/gaddafi-hiring-tuareg-warriors-mercenaries-libya-reports-273593?utm_source=google&utm_medium=editorsfeed&utm_content=Gaddafi+hiring+Tuareg+warriors+as+mercenaries+in+Libya:+reports&utm_campaign=World).
- Gamaty, Giuma. 2012. "Management of the Brain Drain and Its Relationship with Democratisation and Human Development in Libya". Phd, University of Westminster. <http://westminsterresearch.wmin.ac.uk/12193/>.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. Basic Books.
- Gellner, Ernest. 1957. "Ideal Language and Kinship Structure." *Philosophy of Science* 24 (3) (July 1): 235–242.
- — —. 1960. "The Concept of Kinship: With Special Reference to Mr. Needham's 'Descent Systems and Ideal Language'." *Philosophy of Science* 27 (2) (April 1): 187–204.
- — —. 1981. *Muslim Society*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Gertler, Jeremiah. 2011. "Operation Odyssey Dawn (Libya): Background and Issues for Congress." *UNT Digital Library* (March 30). Libya. <http://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc99034/>.
- Ginsberg, Marc. 2011. "What Comes Next in Libya -- With or Without Gadhafi." *Huffington Post*. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/amb-marc-ginsberg/burn-qadaffis-green-book\\_b\\_826323.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/amb-marc-ginsberg/burn-qadaffis-green-book_b_826323.html).
- Gledhill, John. 2009. "Power in Political Anthropology." *Journal of Power* 2 (1): 9–34.
- Grinker, Roy Richard, Stephen C. Lubkemann, and Christopher B. Steiner. 2010. *Perspectives on Africa: A Reader in Culture, History and Representation*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Gumuchian, Marie-Louise. 2012. "Rivalry Between Libyan Cities Sharpens over Rebel's Death." *Reuters*, October 5. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/05/us-libya-tensions-idUSBRE8940FR20121005>.
- Hatitah, Abdulsattar. 2013. "Libyan Tribal Map: Network of Loyalties That Will Determine Gaddafi's Fate Asharq Alawsat Newspaper (English)." Accessed February 1. <http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?id=24257>.
- Hill, Evan. 2011. "The Day the Katiba Fell - Libya - Al Jazeera English." <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/spotlight/libya/2011/03/20113175840189620.html>.
- Hilsum, Lindsey. 2012. *Sandstorm: Libya in the Time of Revolution*. New York: Penguin Press.
- Hinnebusch, Raymond A. 1984. "Charisma, Revolution, and State Formation: Qaddafi and Libya." *Third World Quarterly* 6 (1) (January 1): 59–73.
- Hüsken, Thomas. 2012. "Tribal Political Culture and the Revolution in the Cyrenaica of Libya" Paper presented at "Libya from Revolution to a State Building: Challenges of the Transitional Period" Conference.
- Hüsken, Thomas, and Georg Klute. 2010. "Emerging Forms of Power in Two African Borderlands A Theoretical and Empirical Research Outline." *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 25 (2) (June): 107–122.
- Hweio, Haala. 2012. "Tribes in Libya: From Social Organization to Political Power." *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review* 2 (1) (April): 111–121. doi:10.2979/africonfpeacrevi.2.1.111.

- “IMF Survey: July 10, 2006 - 071006.pdf.” 2013. Accessed May 14.  
<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/survey/2006/071006.pdf>.
- Joffé, E. George H., and Keith Stanley McLachlan. 1982. *Social & Economic Development of Libya*. Middle East & North African Studies Press.
- Johnson, Chalmers A. 1964. *Revolution and the Social System*. Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, Stanford University.
- Juma, Calestous. 2012. “Viewpoint: How Tribalism Stunts African Democracy.” *BBC*, November 27, sec. Africa. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-20465752>.
- Kalyvas, Stathis N. 2003. “The Ontology of ‘Political Violence’: Action and Identity in Civil Wars.” *Perspectives on Politics* 1 (3) (September 1): 475–494.
- Karadesh, Jomana. 2012. “Libyan Troops Surround pro-Gadhafi Stronghold in Wake of Fighter’s Death - CNN.com.” *CNN*. Accessed October 7.  
<http://www.cnn.com/2012/10/05/world/africa/libya-bani-walid/index.html>.
- Khalidi, Ismail R. 1952. “Constitution of the United Kingdom of Libya: Background and Summary.” *Middle East Journal* 6 (2) (April 1): 221–228.  
doi:10.2307/4322384.
- Khalil, Andrea. 2013. “Libyan Eastern Tribal Chiefs, Population, and Government (Part 1 of 2).” Accessed February 1.  
<http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/7514/libyan-eastern-tribal-chiefs-population-and-govern>.
- Khoury, Philip Shukry, Joseph Kostiner, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Harvard University. 1990. *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*. University of California Press.
- Kirkpatrick, David D. 2011. “Libyan Tribal Alliances Could Be Qaddafi’s Undoing.” *The New York Times*, March 14, sec. World / Africa.  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/15/world/africa/15tribes.html>.
- Kirkpatrick, David D., and Mona El-naggar. 2011. “Son of Qaddafi Sees Civil War Peril in Libya.” *The New York Times*, February 20, sec. World / Africa.  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/21/world/africa/21libya.html>.
- Koselleck, Reinhart. 2002. *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*. Stanford University Press.
- Kroeber, Clifton B. 1996. “Theory and History of Revolution.” *Journal of World History* 7 (1): 21–40.

Lamloum, Imed. 2013. "AFP: Libya Lawyer Recalls Arrest That Sparked Uprising." Accessed February 11.  
<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5jKKflfLdhpXiBtZ4NrGdIVIp6tfw?docId=CNG.3b6af75a730047c02c96f63e3f5ab348.791>.

Lacher, Wolfram. 2011. "Families, Tribes and Cities in the Libyan Revolution." *Middle East Policy* 18 (4): 140–154.

Latour, Bruno. 2005. *Reassembling the Social : an Introduction to Actor-network-theory*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

Leach, Edmund Ronald. 1966. *Rethinking Anthropology*. London; New York: Athlone P.; Humanities P.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1963. *Structural Anthropology I*. Basic Books.  
— — —. 1966. *The Savage Mind*. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

"Libya Revolt Spreads to Tripoli - Africa - Al Jazeera English." 2013. Accessed May 13.  
<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2011/02/201122131439291589.html>.

"Libya's Economy Grows More Than 100% in 2012, IMF Says." 2013. *Arabian Business*. Accessed March 10. <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/libya-s-economy-grows-more-than-100-in-2012-imf-says-492423.html>.

"Libyan Town of Zintan Hit by Shell-fire: Resident." 2011. *Reuters*, April 3.  
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/04/03/us-libya-zintan-bombardment-idUSTRE7320X120110403>.

Livy. 1919. *Livy: History of Rome, Vol. I, Books 1-2*. Translated by B. O. Foster. Loeb Classical Library.

Maclean, William. 2011. "Analysis: In Libya's New Politics, Localism May Trump Tribes." *Reuters*, September 23.  
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/09/23/us-libya-tribes-idUSTRE78M34920110923>.

Martínez, Luis. 2007. *The Libyan Paradox*. New York ;Paris: Columbia University Press; In Association with the Centre d'études et de recherches internationales.

Marx, Emanuel. 1979. "Back to the Problem of Tribe." *American Anthropologist* 81 (1) (March 1): 124–125. doi:10.1525/aa.1979.81.1.02a00300.

McQuinn, Brian. 2012. "After the Fall; Libya's Evolving Armed Groups." *The Small Arms Survey*. Small Arms Survey, Graduate Institute of International and

Development

Studies, Geneva.

— — —. 2013. *The Libyan Revolution and Its Aftermath (Hardback)*. Accessed January 26. <http://www.bookdepository.co.uk/Libyan-Revolution-Its-Aftermath-Peter-Cole/9781849043090>.

Morgan, Lewis Henry. 1877. *Ancient Society: Or, Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery, Through Barbarism to Civilization*. H. Holt.  
— — —. 1997. *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Needham, Rodney. 1960. "Descent Systems and Ideal Language." *Philosophy of Science* 27 (1) (January 1): 96–101.

Needham, Rodney, and Association of Social Anthropologists of the Commonwealth. 1971. "Rethinking Kinship and Marriage." In London; New York: Tavistock Publications.

Obeidi, Amal. 2001. *Political Culture in Libya*. Richmond, Surrey [England]: Curzon.

Otman, Waniss A, and Erling Karlberg. 2007. *The Libyan Economy Economic Diversification and International Repositioning*. Berlin; London: Springer.  
<http://site.ebrary.com/id/10181005>.

Pan, Chia-Lin. 1949. "The Population of Libya." *Population Studies* 3 (1) (June 1): 100–125.

Pargeter, Alison. 2012. *Libya: The Rise and Fall of Qaddafi*. Yale University Press.

Pelham, Nicolas. 2013. "IISS The Battle for Libya's Destiny: Nicolas Pelham." Accessed February 16. <http://www.iiss.org/events-calendar/2012-events-archive/december-2012/the-changing-dynamics-of-middle-east-economic-relationships/papers/the-battle-for-libyas-destiny-nicolas-pelham/?locale=en>.

Peters, Emrys. 1960. "The Proliferation of Segments in the Lineage of the Bedouin of Cyrenaica. Curl Bequest Prize Essay, 1959." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 90 (1) (January 1): 29–53. doi:10.2307/2844217.

— — —. 1967. "Some Structural Aspects of the Feud Among the Camel-Herding Bedouin of Cyrenaica." *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 37 (3) (July 1): 261–282.

— — —. 1990. *The Bedouin of Cyrenaica : Studies in Personal and Corporate Power*. Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Press, Associated. 2012. "Libyan Tribal Leaders Declare Semi-autonomous Eastern State." *The Guardian*, March 6, sec. World news.  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/mar/06/libya-benghazi-state-of-barqa>.
- Qaddafi, Muammar. 1976. *The Green Book*. London: Martin Brian & O'Keeffe.
- Qaddafi, Muammar, Hamid Barrada, Marc Kravetz, and Mark Whitaker. 1984. *Kadhafi: "je suis un opposant à l'échelon mondial"*. P.-M. Favre.
- QawalishLibya, Mathieu von Rohr. 2011. "Tribal Rivalries Complicate Libyan War." *Spiegel Online*, July 26, sec. World.  
<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,776695,00.html>.
- Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. 1941. "The Study of Kinship Systems." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 71 (1/2) (January 1): 1–18. doi:10.2307/2844398.
- Rees, Tobias. 2011. "As If 'theory' Is the Only Form of Thinking, and 'social Theory' the Only Form of Critique: Thoughts on an Anthropology BST (beyond Society and Theory)." *Dialectical Anthropology* 35 (3) (September 1): 341–365.
- Rettman, Andrew. 2013. "European Mercenaries Fighting for Gaddafi, Expert Says." Accessed May 13. <http://euobserver.com/news/32228>.
- Roumani, Jacques. 1983. "From Republic to Jamahiriya: Libya's Search for Political Community." *Middle East Journal* 37 (2) (April 1): 151–168.
- Saleh, Heba. 2013. "Militias Drain Libya's Coffers." *Financial Times*, April 10.  
<http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/be1fe01c-9fab-11e2-b4b6-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2Q4jADeC8>.
- Salzman, Philip Carl. 1978a. "Does Complementary Opposition Exist?" *American Anthropologist* 80 (1) (March 1): 53–70. doi:10.1525/aa.1978.80.1.02a00040.  
 — — —. 1978b. "Ideology and Change in Middle Eastern Tribal Societies." *Man* 13 (4) (December): 618. doi:10.2307/2801253.
- St John, Ronald Bruce. 1983. "The Ideology of Mu'ammār Al-Qadhafi: Theory and Practice." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 15 (04): 471–490. doi:10.1017/S0020743800051394.  
 — — —. 1998. *Historical Dictionary of Libya*. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press.  
 — — —. 2011. *Libya : Continuity and Change*. Abingdon Oxon; New York: Routledge.
- Stephen, Chris. 2011. "Abdul Fatah Younis Ambush Killing Blamed on pro-Gaddafi Forces." *The Guardian*, July 29, sec. World news.  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jul/29/abdul-fatah-younis-killed-libya>.

Strathern, Marilyn. 2012. *The Relation: Issues in Complexity & Scale*. "The Prickly Pear Periodical."

Szakolczai, Arpad. 2010. "Liminality and Experience: Structuring Transitory Situations and Transformative Events." *International Political Anthropology* 16 (39): 141–173.

Tapper, Richard. 1990. "Anthropologists, Historians and Tribespeople on Tribe and State Formation in The Middle East". From, *Tribes and state formation in the Middle East* edited by Philip Khoury and Joseph Kostiner. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles California: 48-75.

Tarkowski-Tempelhof & Omar, Susanne & Manal. 2011. "Stakeholders of Libya's February 17 Revolution | United States Institute of Peace". Special Report. United States Institute of Peace.  
<http://www.usip.org/publications/stakeholders-libya-s-february-17-revolution>.

Tawil, Camille. 2013. "The Jamestown Foundation: Mapping Qaddafi's Tribal Allegiances in Libya: An Overview." Accessed February 10.  
[http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=37858](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=37858).

The US State Department. 2013. "1997 Global Terrorism: State-Sponsored Terrorism." Accessed April 30.  
<http://permanent.access.gpo.gov/lps14740/www.state.gov/www/global/terrorism/1997Report/sponsored.html>.

Thomassen, Bjørn. 2012. "Notes Towards an Anthropology of Political Revolutions." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54 (03): 679–706.

Thorne, John. 2012. "Neighbor Against Neighbor: A Story of Libya's Lingering Divides." *The Atlantic*. August 16.  
<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/08/neighbor-against-neighbor-a-story-of-libyas-lingering-divides/261201/>.

Trautmann, Thomas R. 1992. "The Revolution in Ethnological Time." *Man* 27 (2) (June 1): 379–397. doi:10.2307/2804059.

"Tuaregs 'Join Gaddafi's Mercenaries'." 2011. *BBC*, March 4, sec. World.  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-12647115>.

"US Court Orders Libya to Pay \$6bn." 2008. *BBC*, January 16, sec. Americas.  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7191278.stm>.

- Vandewalle, Dirk. 1998. *Libya Since Independence : Oil and State-building*. Ithaca N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- — —. 2006. *A History of Modern Libya*. Cambridge ;New York: Cambridge University Press.
- — —. 2008. *Libya Since 1969 : Qadhafi's Revolution Revisited*. 1st ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- — —. 2011. "Rebel Rivalries in Libya." *Foreign Affairs*, August 18.  
<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/68198/dirk-vandewalle/rebel-rivalries-in-libya>.
- Warshel, Yael. 2012. "Political Alienation in Libya: Assessing Citizens' Political Attitude and Behaviour." *The Journal of North African Studies* 17 (4): 734–737.
- Willimott, S. 1960. *Field Studies in Libya*. [Durham Eng.]: Dept. of Geography Durham Colleges in the University of Durham.
- Wright, John L. 1982. *Libya: a Modern History*. London: Croom Helm.
- Zizek, Slavoj. 2006. *The Parallax View*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- — —. 2012. *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously*. 1st ed. Verso.