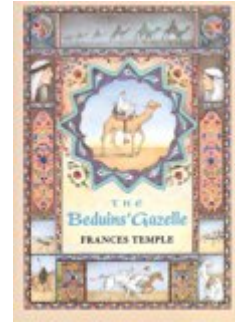


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Frances Nolting Temple. *The Beduins' Gazelle*. New York: Orchard Books, 1996. 150 pp. \$15.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-531-09519-5.

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The Beduins' Gazelle

THE BEDUINS' GAZELLE

Few books for adolescents portray Islamic culture. And fewer books describe the struggles of adolescents of the fourteenth century (i.e., Middle Ages) in North Africa. This period of intellectual inquiry among the Arabs occurred at a time when Europeans were languishing in disease, poverty, and war.

In *The Beduins' Gazelle*, Frances Temple describes the academic world in Fez, Morocco at the Kairouan (Qayrawan) University. This university was founded by a woman in approximately 890 AD in recognition of immigrant scholars from the Tunisian university of the same name. City officials built secondary schools or *madrasas* where young men could study and live in preparation for the university.

Today, Fez remains the intellectual capital of Morocco, comprising a center for Islamic and Arabic scholarship as well as a center for secular education. Recently, the last of these madrasas has been closed to become a tourist site and art center. [The African Literature Association will hold its annual meeting in Fez (March, 1999) in cooperation with faculty members from Sidi Mohammed ben Abdellah University among other institutions.]

The Beduins' Gazelle, as a love story, contains all the elements of a triangular situation of romance and power. As the book opens, Atiyah prepares to leave the desert life of south eastern, Berber Morocco (near the present

Rissani and ruins of Sijalmassa) for academic life of Arab Morocco in the Atlas Mountains. Despite his efforts to stay with his extended family, Atiyah must bid his beloved cousin Halima farewell. She will remain in the village to learn domestic activities. In Fez, Atiyah will study Arabic, jurisprudence, and Islam in preparation for becoming the next leader of the Beni Khalid. While his family continues to move through the desert with their herds of goats and camels, Halima becomes lost in a sandstorm. She is found by men of the family's rival Beni Shummar. By chance Atiyah returns from Fez to find Halima on the day of her engagement to the old sheikh, Raisulu. Atiyah negotiates her release from this engagement, and then marries her as they had agreed prior to his departure.

This book is the second of a planned trilogy about youth of the early 1300s from Europe, West Asia, and North Africa. It brings to light the interaction of leaders from countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. *The Beduin's Gazelle* also provides insights into the current struggles for political and linguistic power between Berbers and Arabs in Morocco such as the battles with the Polisario in Western Sahara and with school curricula. The book further introduces some of the traditions which are still practiced such as the moussem, the taskiouine, the fantasias, and the ghiatas.

As the daughter of an ambassador, the author, Frances Temple, traveled widely and later when writing she drew on her overseas experiences. Unfortunately,

Temple died of a heart attack the day that she mailed the manuscript for this book to her editor. As a result, *The Beduins' Gazelle* was published posthumously and without further author revisions. Consequently, this book ends Temple's advocacy for justice and compassion.

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