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Julia Clancy-Smith, ed. *North Africa, Islam and the Mediterranean World: From the Almoravids to the Algerian War.* London and Portland, Ore.: Frank Cass, 2001. 202 pp. $41.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-7146-8184-9; $41.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7146-5170-5.

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North Africa was for generations a preserve of Francophone scholarship, with English writing on the area a *rara avis*. The situation has changed somewhat in recent years, and as a result British and American styles of constructing problematics and forging solutions have begun to penetrate the field. The present volume represents a special issue (itself growing out of a conference held in 1998) of *The Journal of North African Studies*, issued at the same time as the book in 2001. This format for publication leads one to ask why: Does its release as a book enhance the journal publication and does it have benefits for the world of learning and for readers more broadly, rather than just for publishers? In this case, one can give an affirmative, if slightly qualified, response to that question. There can be no doubt that such a publication will bring the book's contents to people who would not normally see the journal and thus to a wider readership. Moreover, the collection of studies presented here does have a certain unity, even given the variety of chronological and geographical topics it covers.

The authors are mixed. Three (including one of the women) are North African, working in the region. In this field, it is no surprise to find local scholars active and productive, alongside their western colleagues, but their presence here is no less welcome for all that. Unfortunately, this is not the case in other areas of Islamic and Near Eastern studies.

The book contains nine articles, together with an introduction by the editor, Julia Clancy-Smith. In the introduction Clancy-Smith emphasizes the importance of North Africa as a cross-roads. She points to the role played by North Africa in "myriad exchanges or subtle accommodations" (p. 2), both in terms of military and political conflicts and in terms of shared cultural-religious experiences, such as in the discovery of bodies of holy men in Christian Spain and in Merinid Morocco. The unifying thread which she identifies is the adoption of trans-national, trans-regional perspectives, comparative methodologies and the privileging of frontier histories. Some of these can be less than helpful, although not necessarily damaging to sound and interesting scholarship. The volume is mixed, with its strengths in the modern period rather than in the medieval. The privileging of theory does no harm to traditional story-telling.

Amira K. Bennison, in "Liminal States: Morocco and the Iberian Frontier between the Twelfth and the Nineteenth Centuries," tries to make a case for viewing her subject in terms of World History. She argues for a concept of "liminality," denoting "a permeable barrier across which peoples and ideas passed to and fro, creating a rich zone of transition" (p. 27). But she looks also at minority groups in Islamic Iberia in the middle ages, and here, speaking of "the religious secession of the northern kingdoms" (p. 16), she introduces notions which do not seem to be rooted in the sources; northern Christians did not secede from anything, while the southerners, for their part, changed their religious and socio-religious behavior, but also never seceded. Nor did Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile unite their kingdoms through marriage (p. 20). World History, or liminality, is all very well, but God is in the details.

James A. Miller writes on "Trading through Islam: The Interconnections of Sijilmasa, Ghana and the Almoravid Movement." Although this article has a couple of useful maps, it is marred by ignorance of Arabic and of the very history on which it seeks to write: the Almoravids are assigned to the fourth Islamic century, itself then defined as the tenth and eleventh centuries CE (p. 32); and Dozy was not a German, but a Dutch, orientalist (p. 55). More seriously, Miller suggests that "The Berbers' minority position in the greater Islamic world may well have been a point of attraction for them to Kharijism be-

cause they found themselves once again subject to outsiders who had for centuries wielded hegemony in the Maghreb" (p. 37). Perhaps the Berbers may have been a minority, but then so were all the other groups in the Islamic empire, who did not feel such attraction. Moreover, one wonders why the attraction to Kharijism, rather than to Shi'ism which was so attractive elsewhere. In fairness, Miller is not the first to offer this argument, but this does not make the argument any more persuasive. However, he also undermines his own position by not explaining why we find little Kharijism in Islamic Spain, where the circumstances were not all that different (p. 38). Miller also sees the spread of Kharijism as "provoking" the downfall of the Umayyads (which he seems to think is spelled with an 'ayn) (p. 38). His real subject, however, is the growth and significance of Sijilmasa, and when he writes on that topic, particularly in reference to recent archaeological work in the area, published and unpublished, he is able to cite much detail of economic life in the middle ages which is sure to enrich future work in the field.

Ronald A. Messier, in "Re-thinking the Almoravids, Re-thinking Ibn Khaldun," attempts, with the help of recent archaeological work that he has carried out in the area of Sijilmasa, to reject the model offered by Ibn Khaldun as applied to the Almoravids. He points to Ibn Khaldun's second phase in the cycle of dynastic rises and falls, when the second generation moves from the desert to the city, from privation to plenty. He argues this in the Almoravid case with the construction of Marrakesh–but that city was, as he himself points out, "little more than a nomadic encampment, a tent city" (p. 62-63). This is not a perfect fit. However Messier insists that the Almoravids "remained firmly rooted in desert civilization" (p. 75), and that it was this that enabled their Almohad rivals to defeat them in the end. His argument is based mainly in textual sources, which is a shame, for the most interesting part of this study is not the disagreement with Ibn Khaldun but the reference to the archaeological discoveries at Sijilmasa. Most of this is new and casts much light both on the urban development of the city and on the significance of architecture under the Almoravids; on both of these subjects we need more material, information, and analysis.

With Mohamed El Mansour's sensitive and imaginative "Maghribis in the Mashriq during the Modern Period: Representations of the Other within the World of Islam" we move forward in time. El Mansour points to the regional identity of the Maghrebis, over easterners, in particular the Egyptians. This regional identity was fostered by such habits as the *hajj*, which carried large numbers of pilgrims eastwards, often leaving them there for long periods of time. Maghrebi identity was characterized by, among other things, adherence to a shared, single *madhhab*; the practice of Sufism; and a feeling of being more Islamically learned than the Easterners, who appeared to the Maghrebis as feeble in comparison. On the other side, Egyptians looked on the Maghrebis as uncouth and frontier-like, even violent at times. The model of center and periphery is considered here and rejected as unsuited to the facts on the ground.

Dalenda Largueche writes on "The Mahalla: The Origins of Beylical Sovereignty in Ottoman Tunisia during the Early Modern Period." (This and the following paper were translated from French by Julia Clancy-Smith and Caroline Audet. Their versions are generally good and flow well.) Largueche traces the development of the *mahalla* from a royal progress-cum-military camp into a mechanism for the transmission of legitimate power and sovereignty, in the process of developing Tunisian independence. Along the way, she shows how a sedentarised monarchy was able, via the use of this mechanism, to expand into areas outside the towns–even among pastoral-nomadic people–and strengthen the idea of a Tunisian state.

The next three contributions are the most exciting of the volume's contents. Abdelhamid Largueche writes on "The City and the Sea: Evolving Forms of Mediterranean Cosmopolitanism in Tunis, 1700-1881." Largueche draws attention to the fact that many, perhaps at times even most, of the privateers were (former) non-Muslims, often enslaved victims of other privateers, rather than native Muslims. Privateering or corsair activity is presented as a "Mediterranean-wide system of economic exchange" (p. 119). One can see one side of this exchange, but the benefits for the other side are not so obvious. Largueche shows that Tunis was a pivotal commercial hub in the Mediterranean, not just for geographical reasons, where in the seventeenth century Jewish and Muslim refugees from Spain acted as a "vector of modernity" (p. 120). Cosmopolitanism there was encouraged by a rising population, ethnic diversity, and toleration of variety; an open city without walls reflected the new and unusual situation. The production of the *shashiya*, a type of felt hat entailing a complex and extensive manufacturing process as well as a large export market, was a major economic activity, even a proto-capitalist enterprise. Edmund Burke III writes about "The Mediterranean before Colonialism: Fragments from the Life of 'Ali bin 'Uthman al-Hammi in the Late Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries." The article ends with the sentence, "In the end, all we have are questions," which is correct for, as he shows, most

of what we appear to know about this intriguing character cannot be confirmed by outside sources (p. 140). Nonetheless, his detective work, if unsuccessful, is entertaining, and he also knows how to extract real historical meaning from what is possibly, but not probably, fiction.

The real prize, however, must go to Jonathan G. Katz, writing about "The 1907 Mauchamp Affair and the French Civilising Mission in Morocco." This is a detailed description and analysis of an affair which led to the French protectorate in Morocco. In 1907, Emile Mauchamp, a French doctor who had spent some time in Jerusalem, was murdered in Marrakesh, under circumstances which remain obscure. Although he had written a book, published posthumously, on La Sorcellerie au Maroc, linking "the alleged moral and racial degeneracy of the Moroccans to the effects of Islamic culture and the desert environment," he was a devoted physician who had a large local clientele (p. 147). His death appears to have been unrelated to the politics of French penetration in Morocco or to anything beyond interpersonal rivalries among the Europeans in the country. Katz displays resourcefulness in his research, readability in description, and skill in analysis to make this more than just a good story. He shows how the uses made of Mauchamp after his death go far beyond mere politics, to the construction of ideas and identities for the mission *civilisatrice* of France in North Africa.

After this, it is a little disappointing to come back to the quarrels of French intellectuals in their reactions to France's Algerian War of 1954-62, in James D. Le Sueur's "Decolonising 'French Universalism': Reconsidering the Impact of the Algerian War on French Intellectuals." How French intellectuals reacted to the war, and their problematic attitudes to the Russian invasion of Hungary soon after, have a wearyingly familiar ring to anyone who reads the French press regularly. But the link with the previous paper, in the discussions of French identities which the two papers share, makes this a useful contribution to the volume.

As can be seen, this collection is a mixed bag. But most collections are, and this one has a number of very entertaining or useful papers in it, which is more than we might expect. There are quite a number of misprints, surprisingly many of them in French for a volume devoted to what used to be known as French North Africa.

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