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A Tribute to Rifa'at Abou-El-Haj

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Post-Orientalism and Colonialism: A Critical Mapping of Maghribi Studies (1951-2000)*

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It should be known that the differences of conditions among people are the result of different ways in which they make their living.

Ibn Khaldun, a fourteenth century
North African historian

It is now possible for some to combine fundamental social criticism with a defense of non-modern cultures and traditions. It is possible to speak of the plurality of critical traditions and of human rationality. At long last we seem to have recognized that neither is Descartes the last word on reason, nor is Marx that on the critical spirit.

Ashis Nandy[1]

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1 Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

On November 30, 2005, French National Assembly passed a law hailing the "positive role of colonisation," especially in North Africa. This official French reproduction of colonial ideology is not an aberration, but a strong trend that dominates the field of Western scholarship on North Africa. In 1996 a British historian asked me a question that shocked me. "Why are Libyans so paranoid about Italian colonialism?" he said, following a presentation I had given at the London School of Economics on the social origins of Libyan resistance to Italian colonialism. My questioner was a fellow panel member specializing in Libyan colonial history, and I asked him what he meant by "paranoid." Somalians, Ethiopians, and Eritreans had a positive view of Italian colonialism, he claimed. The period of Italian colonialism represented a modernizing stage of Libyan history, despite the fact that half the Libyan population perished and thousands were displaced and pushed into exile. I answered that the Libyan people, like other humans oppressed by brutal settlers, had every reason to hate colonialism. That encounter, combined with my generation's disillusionment with the nationalist regimes in the Maghrib, led me to consider a critical examination of orientalist, colonial, and nationalist theories of the Maghrib.

Extending from the Atlantic to the Nile Valley and including the North African countries of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and Mauritania, the Maghrib constitutes the western portion of the Arab Muslim world. Its countries share a common natural environment, colonial legacy, Maliki Sunni Islam, and a blend of Arab, Berber, African, and European cultures. The main objective of this article is to present a critical, cross-disciplinary assessment and examination of mainstream orientalist, colonial, and nationalist elitist scholarship, offering an alternative theoretical approach to students of history, culture, and politics. First, the production of knowledge will be contextualized to understand the process behind the persistence of the mainstream models. Second, I will engage in a double critique of both the racism of the colonial and the orientalist models and the elitism of the nationalist model. It should interest readers specializing in African, Arab, and European social history, colonialism, nationalism, and gender studies.

The impact of orientalism, colonialism, and nationalism on Maghribi studies

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries politics and studies of the Maghrib were dominated by oreintalism, colonialism, and

nationalism, with their own categories and theories of legitimation. The reasons were obvious: colonialism dominated the region between 1789 until 1962. Egypt was first invaded by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1789, and then by the British in 1882. France claimed Algeria in 1830, Tunisia in 1881, and Morocco in 1912. Libya fell to the Italians in 1911 and did not gain limited independence until 1951. It was not until the mid-twentieth century that nationalist movements assumed power, producing their own nationalist historiography. While Egypt gained limited independence in 1922, Tunisia and Morocco remained under colonial control until 1956. Algeria was not free of official French control until 1962. Internationally the cold war (1945-1989) has shaped the production of knowledge as in the case of the dogmatic state Marxism in the USSR and Modernization theory in the USA.

In 1978, in his survey of scholarship on the Maghrib and the Middle East, British sociologist Bryan Turner decried the poverty of the literature compared with academic studies of other Third World areas. Turner also noted that scholarship typically focuses on the uniqueness of a region, especially the role of Islam, tribalism, sects, and national character, at the expense of such topics as social class, state formation, and the impact of the world capitalist market through either trade or the colonial state.[2] One would add to this critique that the scholarship on the Maghrib had a focus on French sources and displayed a lack of knowledge of native languages, especially Arabic, and local scholarship, and a static view of the civil society, even in works done by leftists scholars.

One example of a historical-cultural approach is the classic work of H.A.R. Gibb and Harold Bowen, which argues that Islam was a self-contained, traditional belief system and that eighteenth century Islamic societies were in decline as a result of their prevailing beliefs. The impact of internal and external socioeconomic factors is completely ignored.[3]

2 Bryan S. Turner, *Marx and the End of Orientalism* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1978), 6-7.

3 For a classical critique of this type of orientalism, see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979). For a critique of H.A.R. Gibb and Harold Bowen's *Islamic Society and the West: A study of the impact of Western civilization on Moslem culture in the Near East*, vol. 1: *Islamic Society in the eighteenth century*, 2 parts (London: Oxford University Press, 1950-57), see Roger Owen, "The Middle East in eighteenth century: An Islamic Society in decline?" *Review of*

Similarly, the rise of "fundamentalist Islam" after the Iranian Revolution of 1979 was explained in the media, by orthodox orientalists and modernisation theorists as the resurgence of an idealised, pre-modern religious social movement. Questions concerning why such fundamentalist movements oppose or support their respective states—for instance, in Iran, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco—tend to be discussed only in terms of religious ideology and not as the responses of different classes and ethnic groups in different ecological and historical settings.[4] Two Western social science models—segmentary and modernisation—have been the most dominant forms of scholarship on the modern Maghrib.

Failures of the dominant theoretical approaches

The most influential approach to the Maghrib has been the "segmentary" theory articulated by British social anthropologists E.E. Evans-Pritchard and Ernest Gellner. The segmentary theory assumes the existence of a tribal society composed of homogenous tribal segments. In the absence of

Middle East Studies 1 (1975): 101-12. For a critique of Eurocentrism and the Colonial model, see Samir Amin, *Eurocentrism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1989); J.M. Blaut, *The Colonizer Model of the World* (New York: Guilford Press, 1993); and Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy*. For a review and a critique of French images of North Africa, see Abdelmajid Hannoum, *Colonial Histories, Postcolonial Memories* (Porthmouth: Heinemann, 2001), and Hannoum's recent essay, "Notes on the (post)colonial in the Maghreb," *Critique of Anthropology* 29 (2009): 324- 344; Mohamed–Saleh Omari, "History, Literature, and Settler Colonialism in North Africa," *Modern Language Quarterly* 66 (2005): 273-98; and Roger Benjamin, *Orientalist Aesthetics: Art, Colonialism, and French North Africa, 1880-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

4 See Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981); Michael Gilsenan, *Recognizing Islam* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982); and Sami Zubaida, *Islam, The People and the State* (London: Routledge, 1989). See also an excellent review by the late Egyptian anthropologist Abdul Hamid el-Zien, "Beyond Ideology and Theology: The Search for the Anthropology of Islam," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 6 (1977): 227-54; and Marnia Lazreg's critique of some Western idealist and ethnocentric feminist studies of gender in the Middle East and North Africa, "Feminism and Difference: The Perils of Writing as a Woman on Women in Algeria," *Feminist Studies* 14 (1988): 81-107; Fadwa El Guindi, *Veil: Modesty, Privacy, and Resistance* (Oxford: Berg, 1999), and Ferzaneh Milani, "On women's captivity in the Islamic world," *Middle East Report* 246 (Spring 2008): 40-46.

state control in pre-colonial Maghrib, mutually deterring tribal segments maintained order among any clans threatening to disrupt the balance of power. This static view of Maghribi societies fails to acknowledge how "tribal society" reflects other dynamic social institutions and history.[5]

In the 1950s and 1960s US social scientists applied structural-functionalist concepts to studies of the Middle East, as well as to scholarship on other Asian, African, and Latin American societies. "Modernization" scholarship tended to perpetuate some of the earlier orientalist assumptions, including an emphasis on traditional religious beliefs and the mosaic of sects, tribes, and ethnic groups. Modernization literature is best characterized by *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernization in the Middle East* by Daniel Lerner, who describes Maghribi societies as traditional and self-contained, although in the process of transition to modernity. Modernization, to Lerner, is achieved as a consequence of the diffusion of US capital development assistance along with American cultural and political values, to be carried out by a Westernized middle class. Lerner dismisses anti-colonial nationalist movements as expressions of negative xenophobia hindering rational planning and modernization.[6]

5 For the classical formulation of the segmentary model, see E.E. Evans-Orichard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949), 59-60. The most prominent advocate of this model was the late Ernest Gellner in his *Saints of the Atlas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 35-70. For the application of this model in political science, see John Waterbury, *The Commander of the Faithful* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970). For a summary of the major critiques of the segmentary model, see David Seddon, "Economic anthropology or political economy: approaches to the analysis of pre-capitalist formation in the Maghrib," in *The New Economic Anthropology*, ed. John Clammer (London: MacMillan, 1978), 61-107. For a critique of the field of anthropology's use of kinship, see, David Schneider, *A Critique of the Concept of Kinship* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984). Also see, Mohamed El Mansour, *Morocco in the Reign of Mawlay Sulayman: Society, State, and Religion, 1792-1822* (Wisbeck: Menas Press, 1990). One has to recognize some original new scholarship in Arabic on the pre-colonial history of the Maghrib, such as the works of Moroccan historian Rahma Burqiyya on Morocco, the Algerian historian Nasirudin Sa'iduni on Ottoman Algerian history, the late Tunisian historian Rashad El Imam on Hamuda Basha in Tunisia, and the fine edited book by Libyan historian Muhammad Tahir al-Jerary on Libya, *Libyan Society: 1835-2000* (Tripoli: Center of Libyan History of Jihad Studies, 2000).

6 Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East* (New York: Free Press, 1958), 76-101. Also see Manfred Halpern, *The Politics of*

While Lerner and others from the modernization school ignored the socioeconomic and economic impact of colonialism, they simultaneously furthered the foreign policy goals of the US government—a focus that hampered their ability to explain why modernization did not lead to development, pluralism, and democracy.[7] The shortcomings of modernization literature became clear even to some of its own scholars when, in 1976, Leonard Binder admitted that the literature was mainly descriptive and did not explain state-society relations.[8] L. Carl Brown in 1985 explained the historical context of the official US view of the Maghrib since the 1940s, as mainly based in geopolitical competition with the Axis powers during the World War II, and later with the Soviet bloc in the Cold War. Thus, Morocco and Tunisia were viewed as modernizing, "moderate" allies, Algeria as militant, and Libya, after the 1969 military takeover, as a hostile, pariah state.[9]

Social Change in the Middle East and North Africa (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 51-78, and Monroe Berger, "The middle class in the Arab world," in *The Middle East in Transition*, ed. Walter Laqueur (New York: Praeger, 1958). For an alternative scholarship of North African civil society, see the edited book in Arabic by Abdellah Hammoudi, *Society Becoming Aware of Itself* (Dar al-Bayda: Dar Tubqal Lilnashir, 1998).

7 For a critique of Lerner's book, see Irene L Gendzier, "Notes towards a Reading of the Passing of Traditional Society," *Review of Middle East Studies* 5 (1978): 32-47. On the influence of government policy on some Middle Eastern specialists, see Peter Johnson and Judith Tucker, "Middle East Studies Network in the United States," *MERIP Reports* 5 (1975); and Lisa Hajjar and Steve Niva, "(Re)Made in the USA: Middle East Studies in global era," *Middle East Report* (October-December 1997). See also Ali Ahmida, "Colonialism, state formation and civil society in North Africa: Theoretical and analytical problems," *International Journal of Islamic and Arabic Studies* 11/1 (1994), as well as A. Escobar, *Encountering Development: The making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); and Harry Harootunian, *The Empire's New Clothes* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2004).

8 See the essays by Binder and Zartman in *The Study of the Middle East*, ed. Leonard Binder (New York: Wiley, 1976), and Mark Tessler (ed.), *Area Studies and Social Science: Strategies for Understanding the Middle East* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

9 L. Carl Brown, "U.S.-Maghribi relations: Model or muddle?" in *Contemporary North Africa: Issues of Development and Integration*, ed. Halim Barakat (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, 1985), 38-39.

Marxist scholars such as Yves Lacoste and Ahmad Sadiq Saad, who still use the classical "Asiatic mode of production" analysis are also guilty of Eurocentrism. The Asiatic mode of production assumes the existence of a strong state and self-sufficient village communities.[10] Marx, however, not only relied on a sketchy orientalist image of India for his understanding of Third World countries, but seemed to abandon his dialectical method when he assumed that change came mainly from outside in the form of European capitalist colonization. Engels, in fact, hailed the French conquest of Algeria in 1830 as a victory of civilization over barbarism.[11]

The dominant scholarship on the Maghrib suffers from two major deficiencies. Eurocentric studies view Maghribi societies as unruly, segmentary, traditional, patrimonial, or Asiatic, assuming a model of sixteenth century Western Europe is universally applicable. This reasoning ignores the diverse traditions of state formation in the region. Modernization theories, the second deficiency, fail to explain social transformation and today's politics in Maghribi societies. It is notable that non-capitalist relations of production, such as sharecropping, communal ownership of land, and self- sufficiency in household production, persisted as late as the 1970s. Further, instead of the secularization predicted by modernization scholars, social and political Islamic movements emerged as the main oppositional forces in Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, and, more recently, Libya and Morocco. Yet, despite the poverty of orientalist, colonial, and nationalist scholarship, there have been alternative critical scholarships which have challenged and overcome some of the pitfalls of the literature on North Africa.

10 Yves Lacoste, "General characteristics and fundamental structures of medieval North Africa," *Economy and Society* 3 (1974): 10-11; and Ahmad Sadiq Sa'ad, *Tarikh Misr al-Ijtimai wa al-Iqtisadi, fi dawu al Namat al-Asyawi lil Intaj* [Egypt's Social and Economic History in light of the Asiatic Mode of Production, in Arabic] (Beirut: Dar Ibn Khaldun, 1979).

11 See Karl Marx, "The future of the British rule in India," and Friedrich Engels, "Algeria," in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *On Colonialism* (New York: International Publishers, 1972) 81-7, 156-61. See also Immanuel Wallerstein, "Eurocentrism and its avatars: The dilemma of social science," *New Left Review* 226 (1997): 2-9; and William A. Green, "Periodization in European and world history," *Journal of World History* 3 (1992): 13-53.

Moving beyond orthodoxy, alternative critical scholarship

Despite "Westernization," contemporary Maghribi societies have not achieved industrialization, development or a high degree of political participation. Instead, these societies face economic dependency and authoritarian regimes ruled by dynasties and the military. Such characteristics beg for a fresh explanation. Socioeconomic and historical factors, such as modes of production, moral economy, social classes, state formation, and the impact of world economy, suggest new avenues for explaining dependency, authoritarian regimes and social diversity.

The 1970s witnessed the growth of critiques on the work of culturalist orientalists and modernization theorists. Authors included young liberal scholars such as Michael Hudson and Dale Eickelman, but were primarily neo-Marxists. Two journals were influential in shifting the focus of scholarship: the *Review of Middle East Studies* published in England, starting 1975, and *Middle East Report* (originally *MERIP Reports*) published in the USA since the late 1970s. While the *Review of Middle Eastern Studies* was discontinued after three excellent issues, *Middle East Report* came to resemble the *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* (BCAS), which emerged in 1969 after the start of the anti-war movement in the USA. Both were independent and critical forums but lacked a theoretical interpretation of the field. The publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) further pointed to the limits of the orientalists' epistemology and approach to Maghribi societies and opened the debate about the role of theory and epistemology.[12]

12 Michael C. Hudson, *Arab Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927); and Dale Eickelman, *The Middle East: An Anthropological Approach* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1981). See also the fine collections of essays in *Theory, Politics, and the Arab World*, ed. Hisham Sharabi (New York: Routledge, 1990). On French colonialism in the Maghrib, see Jean-Claude Vatin et al. (eds), *Connaissances du Maghreb: Sciences Sociales et Colonisation* (Paris: Editions du Centre National, 1984); Philippe Lucas and Jean-Claude Vatin, *L'algerie des anthropologie* (Paris: Francois Maspero, 1975), Benjamin Stora, *Histoire de L'Algerie* (Paris: La découverte, 1994); Jonathan K. Gosnell, *The Politics of Frenchness in Colonial Algeria, 1930-1954* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2002); Abdelmajid Hannoum, "The historiographic state: How Algeria became French," *History and Anthropology* 19 (2008): 91-114; Patricia Lorcin, *Imperial Identities* (London: IB Tauris, 1995); C.R. Pennell, *A Country with a Government and a Flag: The Rif War in Morocco, 1921-1926* (Wisbech: Middle East and North Africa Press, 1986); and Moshe Gershovich, *French Military Rule in Morocco*

Despite Said's critique, the study of the Maghrib and the Middle East is still dominated by the orientalism and modernization theories. Modernization theory is, in fact, resurging under the banners of neoliberalism, especially after the end of the Cold War and collapse of the USSR in 1989. Said's critique itself ignores the infrastructure and the material production of orientalist knowledge, and provides no alternative, as Sadiq al-Azm, Aijaz Ahmad, Yahya Sadwosky, and Rifa'at Abou-El-Haj have pointed out.[13]

Despite the general stagnation of mainstream scholarship on the Middle East, a new trend of studies has begun to recognize socioeconomic forces in the Maghrib. Some of the best examples include Rifa'at Abou-El-Haj on Ottoman social history; Abdullah Laroui's seminal review of the historiography of the Maghrib; Abdelmajid Hannoum's critique of the hegemony of French colonial ideology and historiography on North Africa; Edmund Burke III and David Seddon's works dealing with the impact of trade and colonial rule on local governments and rural communities in Morocco; Peter Gran, Abdellah Hammoudi, and Julia Clancy-Smith's studies of Islam, capitalism, and resistance; Marnia Lazreg and Mahfoud Bennoune's on the role of women and the impact of French colonialism on Algerian society; Lucette Valensi's on Tunisian peasantry; Angelo Del Boca's on the myth of benign Italian fascism and colonialism; Abdal Molla El-Horeir's on the social transformation of Barqa (Eastern Libya) under the Sanusiyya; and Roger Owen's and Eric Davis' work on the incorpora-

(London: Frank Cass, 2000). On Italian colonialism see Ruth-Ben Ghiat and Mia Fuller (eds.), *Italian Colonialism* (New York: Palgrave Press, 2005), and Nicola Labanca, "Italian studies of Italian colonialism in Libya," *Journal of Libyan Studies* 2 (2001): 69-79.

13 Sadiq Jalal al-Azm, "Orientalism and orientalism in reverse," *Race and Class* (Autumn 1985); Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (New York: Verso, 1992), 183-85; Yahya Sadowsky, "The new orientalism and the democracy debate," *Middle East Report* (July-August 1993): 14-21, 40; Rifa'at Ali Abou-El-Haj, Preface to the Arabic translation of Ali Abullatif Ahmida, *The Making of Modern Libya: State formation, Colonization and Resistance, 1830-1932* (Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 1995), 11-16; and an expanded chapter by Abou-El-Haj, "Historiography in West Asian and North African Studies since Sa'id's orientalism," in *History After the Three Worlds*, eds. Arif Dirlik et al. (Boston: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 67-84.

tion of the Egyptian economy into the world capitalist system and the role of the national bourgeoisie.[14]

The contemporary Maghribi state has been going through a crisis of legitimacy and relevance. The food riots and social protests that began in Egypt in 1977 spread to the rest of the region—Morocco in 1981, 1984, and 1990-91, Tunisia in 1984, and finally Algeria in 1988. Each case reflected popular dissatisfaction with the ruling nationalist elites and an end to the era of nationalist euphoria. The challenge is not unique in that established

14 Aside from a common critical focus on socioeconomic developments, there are many methodological differences among the following scholars: Rifa'at Ali Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991); *idem*., "The social uses of the past," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 14 (1982): 185-201; Abdallah Laroui, *The History of the Maghrib* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977); Hannoum, *Colonial Histories, Post colonial Memories*; Edmond Burke III, *Prelude to Protectorate in Morocco: The Pre-Colonial Protest and Resistance 1860-1912* (Kent: Dawson, 1981); David Seddon, *Moroccan Peasants: A Century of Change in the Eastern Rif 1879*-1970 (Kent: Dawson, 1981); Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1993); Peter Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism* (Austin: Texas University Press, 1977), Abdellah Hammoudi, *Master and Disciple* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997); Julia Clancy-Smith, *Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial Encounter* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Marnia Lazreg, *The Emergence of Classes in Algeria* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1976); Marnia Lazreg, *Torture and the Twilight of Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Mahfoud Bennoune, "Socio-economic changes in rural Algeria, 1983-1945: A diachronic analysis of peasantry under colonialism," *Peasant News Letter* 5 (1975): 11-117; Bennoune, "The origins of the Algerian proletariat," *Dialectical Anthropology* 1 (1976): 201-224; Angelo Del Bocca, *Italiani, Brava Gente?* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 2005); Del Bocca, *Gli Italiani in Libia*, 2 vols. (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1988); Ali Abdullatif Ahmida, "When the subaltern speak: Memory of genocide in colonial Libya, 1929 to 1933," *Italian Studies* 61 (2006): 175-190, which is a review of Western scholarship on Italian fascism and colonialism; Lucete Valensi, *Tunisian Peasants in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Abdalmolla S. El-Horier, "Social and economic transformation in the Libyan hinterlands during the second half of the 19th century: the role of Sayyid Ahmad al-Sharif al-Sanusi," Ph.D. dissertation (UCLA, 1981); Roger Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy, 1800-1914* (London: Methuen, 1981); and Eric Davis, *Challenging Colonialism: Bank Misr and Egyptian Industrialization, 1921-1941* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953).

nation-states such as the USA and European countries are also facing their own crises of race, citizenship, and identity. Eric Hobsbawm and David Held, among others, point to the historical mythology of nation-state nationalism and the boundaries transcending global capitalism. The crisis of the nation-state in Maghrib suggests that Middle Eastern scholars have taken the claims of the nation-state and Arab nationalism for granted.[15]

Redefining 'Nationalism'

A distinction must be made between nationalism as an ideology of resistance and liberation from colonial oppression, and the ideology of state nationalism, which emerged in the 1960s and excluded women, Islamists, leftists, liberals and independent associations. It should also be noted that modern social science developed at a point in history when Europe dominated the world, including the Maghrib.[16] Thus, it is inevitable that Western social science reflects European choices of subject, categories, and epistemology. A Maghribi nationalist historiography may challenge French, Spanish, Italian, and British colonialism, but accept the pattern set by colonial scholars such as definitions of the Maghrib, historical periods, the definition of modernization, the model of the nation-state, the Sahara as an empty divide between the North and the South, and the idea of progress.

The very definition of Maghrib illustrates the pattern set by French colonialists, who redefined the larger Muslim Maghrib to include only former French colonies of Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco. A careful reassessment of regional unity requires a broader analysis of political traditions—that is, the Muslim world of Maghrib stretches from Western Egypt to the Atlantic and to the Sahara frontiers of Bilad al-Sudan.[17] Here Egypt is included as

15 Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

16 Abedlkader Zghal, "Marxist and Weberian intellectual traditions and the social structures of the Middle East," *International Review of Modern Sociology* 12 (1982): 15-38; and Abdelkebir Khatibi, "Double criticism: The decolonization of Arab sociology," in Barakat, *Contemporary North Africa*, 9-19. For a critique of colonial Francophone ideology, see the book in Arabic by Tunisian sociologist Mahmoud Dhaouadi, *The Otherside of Tunisian Society* (Tunis: Dar Tibr al-Zaman, 2006).

17 Maghali Morsy, "Maghribi unity in the context of the nation state: a historian's point of view," *Maghrib Review* 8 (1983): 3-4, 70-76; John Dunn (ed.),

part of the Maghrib for several reasons: it is located in North Africa; its capital is Cairo, where al-Azhar University was founded by a Maghribi dynasty (the Fatimid); and thousands of Maghribi immigrants settled in Egypt and contributed to its development.[18]

While researching Libyan social history between 1830 and 1932, I discovered two alternative trends to nationalism. The first was the ability of regional tribes and peasant to oppose the power of the central state in Tripoli, derived from both their distance from the central government and from strong socioeconomic ties with regional markets and neighboring tribes in other countries. Before the colonial conquest in 1911, strict borders were nonexistent, encouraging local ties to more than one state. The tribes of western Tripolitania and southern Tunisia had strong confederations and were linked with the larger Muslim community of the Maghrib and the Sahara. For example, the state of Awlad Muhammad in Fezzan (1551-1812) was not only linked to the Lake Chad region for trade and the recruitment of soldiers, but also formed a strategic refuge from the Ottoman state in time of war. Equally important were strong socioeconomic relationships between the tribes of Barqa and western Egypt. Barqawi

Contemporary Crisis of the Nation State (London: Blackwell, 1995); and Clement M Henry, "North Africa's desperate regimes," *Middle East Journal* 59 (2005): 475-84; and Ali Abdullatif Ahmida (ed.), *Beyond Colonialism and Nationalism in the Maghrib: History, Culture, and Politics* (New York: Palgrave, 2000). See also the recent studies in *Nation, Society, and Culture in North Africa*, ed. James McDougall (London: Frank Cass, 2003).

18 Maghali Morsy, *North Africa: From the Atlantic to the Nile Valley* (London: Longman, 1987). Arabic scholarship on the North Africa is often overlooked in western scholarship because of the latter's Eurocenentric view and lack of knowledge of Arabic. The Egyptian historian Abdalrahim Abdulrahman Abdalrahim has published three books of documents on the role of al-Magharibah or Maghribis in Egyptian society between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries, all published by Dar Al-Tamimi of Tunis in 1982. In addition, see Muhammad El Memnouni, *Arabic Sources of the History of the Maghrib* (Rabat: Muhammad V University Press, 1983); Hadi Timumi (ed.), *The Forgotten ones in Tunisian Social History* (Tunis: Bait al-Hikma, 1999); Abderrhman Mu'athan et al. (eds.), *North African Historical Writings on the History of the Maghrib* (Rabat: Muhammad V University Press, 2007); Muhammad Elbaki Hermassi, *State and Society in the Arab Maghrib* (Beirut: Center of Arab Unity Studies, 1987); and the original book by Mehmmad El-Malki, *Nationalist Movements and Colonialism in the Arab Maghrib* (Beirut: Center of Arab Unity Studies, 1993).

tribes viewed western Egyptian cities and desert as sanctuaries to escape wars and as markets for agricultural products. The rise of the Sanusiyya, with its Pan-Islamic ideology, between 1842 and 1932 deepened these ties.

The question of whether there was co-operation among Maghribi nationalist movements is still undetermined. To discover alternative historical possibilities requires looking beyond the contemporary nationalist state and its linear view of the past. One of the most promising approaches is provided by Ibn Khaldun's fourteenth century interpretation of the role of moral and political economies. This approach calls for analyzing the relationship of ecology, production, and the land tenure system to legal, political, and social structures. E.P. Thompson's approach to class as a political and cultural formation in *The Making of the English Working Class* provides a useful way of understanding the links between the labor process, culture, and ideology.[19] Thompson's powerful analysis shows how English workers in the nineteenth century used traditional institutions and culture to resist the pressure of the capitalist market. The larger world political economy in the Wallersteinian sense, especially as revised by Eric Wolf and Janet Abou-Lughod, is important in describing how local forces must be seen as the real agents of change.[20]

Finally, the theories of Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm, and Ian Lustick's theories of nationalism are helpful in understanding the formation of the Maghrib. Anderson's view of nationalism as imagined political communities is brilliant, but his analysis ignores what Hobsbawm calls the mythologies, contradictions, and conflict associated with producing nationalism. Peasants and tribesmen vigorously resisted efforts to make them nationalist citizens of a nation-state. Further, as Partha Chatterjee points out, Anderson does not define the content of his imagined communities.[21]

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19 E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966).

20 See Immanuel Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1983); and Janet Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); and EricWolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

21 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983); Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and Colonial World* (London: Zed Press, 1986); and Ian Lustick, "Hegemony and the riddle of nationalism," July 1997, at wwwc.

My own research on the social history of colonialism and nationalism in modern Libya has led to three major findings. First, colonialism not only had a major impact on the Maghrib but on France, England, Italy and Spain. As Edward Said has pointed out, imperialism connects and shapes the cultures of both colonizers and colonized societies.[22] In addition, history, culture, and politics form part of a process that involves the entire society, not just the ruling institutions.

Second, before the nation-state was established, social groups such as merchants, peasants, and tribal peoples in the Maghrib acted in their own self-interest when forming alliances with or resisting the Ottomans, the Alawi states of the Maghrib, or colonial rulers. A nationalist historiography redefined this self-interest to dichotomies of collaboration, treason, or heroism. Finally, while written records of the colonial and nationalist states are important sources of information, scholars should keep in mind that they reflect the racism of the colonial state and the elitism of the nationalist state. These sources are silent about key events and groups. To gain a comprehensive understanding of a region, scholars must listen to the voices of peasants, tribesmen, minorities, women, and unpopular elites, as well as to the voices to be found in alternative sources such as literature, films, oral traditions, music, songs, and poetry.

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cc.Columbia.edu. On the crisis of the North African regimes, see the book in Arabic, *The Algerian Crisis* (Beirut: Center of Arab Unity Studies, 1996); and Henry, "North Africa's desperate regimes."

22 Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993); and Immanuel Wallerstein, "Open the social sciences," *Items: Social Science Research Council* 50 (1996): 1-7.