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Author/s:
Pennell, CR

Title:
The Maghrib before Colonialism

Date:
2023-11-20

Citation:
Pennell, C. R. (2023). The Maghrib before Colonialism. Joffe, G (Ed.). Routledge Handbook on the Modern Maghrib, (1), pp.5-26. Routledge.

Persistent Link:
<https://hdl.handle.net/11343/338404>

ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK ON THE MODERN MAGHRIB

This comprehensive *Routledge Handbook on the Modern Maghrib* introduces and analyses the region in its full complexity, focussing on the countries of Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria and Libya, as well as the regions of the northern and western Sahara.

In addition to country studies that provide historical and geopolitical background, a series of thematic explorations engage with a range of social, linguistic, cultural and economic aspects, providing a rich mosaic of current scholarship on the region. Addressing important debates such as the volatile international relations among constituent states, the role of women in society and the environmental impact of climate change, the book considers natural resources, music, media and language, and revisits the history of borders and social tribal structures. What emerges is not only a variegated picture of the Maghrib as a complex and rapidly changing region, but one marked by stark contrasts and divergences among its constituent states based on their Ottoman and colonial experiences, their relationships with their Saharan and Mediterranean neighbours and their own political trajectories.

This *Handbook* fills an important gap in knowledge on a region increasingly significant in European and American affairs, and will appeal to anyone interested in the history, economies and societies of North Africa.

George Joffé was a Fellow at the Department of Politics and International Studies (POLIS) at the University of Cambridge and Visiting Professor at King's College London. He was the founding editor of the *Journal of North African Studies* and founder of the Centre of North African Studies in the UK. He served on the Board of the *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, and of *The Middle East in London* magazine at SOAS University of London. He published prolifically and widely on the geopolitics of North Africa and the Middle East, climate change, energy security, extremism and regional economics.

ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK ON THE MODERN MAGHRIB

Edited by George Joffé

Designed cover image: David Milson/Alamy Stock Photo. Image is of Ouezzane, Morocco, where George Joffé conducted his PhD fieldwork

First published 2024
by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
and by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-138-58529-4 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-49023-6 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-0-429-50535-5 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9780429505355

Typeset in Sabon
by Newgen Publishing UK

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1

THE MAGHRIB BEFORE
COLONIALISM*C. R. Pennell*

The Maghrib, historically, is a region of complex and contested identities. For Arabs, rooted in a culture from the East, the Maghrib is the ‘land of the setting sun’. For Europeans, Northwest Africa is based on the Roman culture that conquered it from the north. Both called an indigenous population that had preceded their discovery of the region ‘Berbers’, a name introduced by outsiders that in effect politicised linguistic identities. For Greeks and Romans, *barbaroi/barbari* or ‘barbarians’ were those who did not speak their language. Arab-speakers adopted the term, and so did the subsequent European colonisers of the region, as a means of defining socio-political distinction, often in pejorative terms. The ‘Berber’ language family was spread over northern Africa and today it is strongest in Morocco and Algeria, with smaller groups in Tunisia, Libya, western Egypt and among the Tuareg of the Sahara (Peyron 2021; Chapter 1).

The descendants of the indigenous people use variations of ‘Imazighen’ (sing. ‘Amazigh’), meaning ‘free’ or ‘noble’, to describe themselves. They had an ancient culture that used alphabetical scripts as far back as the third century BCE (Before the Common Era) and the *Tifinagh* alphabet of the Sahara that modern Amazigh nationalists have adopted is a descendant of these early alphabetical scripts. There were even earlier cultures during the warm temperate and semitropical era before the last ice age, but what they called themselves is quite unknown to us. The only substantial archaeological evidence they have left is the drawings on the stone walls of caves and stones across the Sahara (Pennell 2003; 2–3, Raven 1993; 31–32)

The physical environment of the region has also profoundly changed. Once, the Maghrib was a much better-watered region, but around 5,000 BCE it began to get drier and subsequently evolved into three regions. States developed very early on the Atlantic coast and the fertile plains behind it and on the plains and in the hills along the Sicilian channel, the seaway linking the western and eastern Mediterranean. In between was a narrow plain along the Mediterranean coast, with mountains behind, then the semi-desert and the Sahara. Yet, on its periphery, in geographic terms, the Maghrib was partly isolated, bounded by sea on two sides and the desert on the third.

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Indeed, for much of Maghribi history, the Atlantic was as much a final frontier for its inhabitants as it was for Europeans, until the Spanish and Portuguese conquered their ‘New World’. The other sea, the Mediterranean, was a centre of trade and civilisation in the second millennium BCE. Around the end of the eighth century BCE, Phoenicians moved through the Mediterranean towards the Iberian peninsula, searching for silver and tin. Phoenician settlements lined the coasts between Cyrene in the east and the Strait of Gibraltar and followed the Atlantic coast southwards to modern Essaouira. The Phoenicians were maritime traders, who made no effort to control the hinterland, except around Carthage, which they had founded in the ninth century BCE. Carthage spread settled agriculture into its hinterland, which was one of the most fertile corners of North Africa, and built a great agricultural and trading economy (Raven 1993; 33–34).

A great city such as Carthage needed defending. Local semi-nomadic pastoralists attacked the settled farms and the Carthaginians could not control tribal confederations like the Massyli and the Masaesyli in northern Algeria, the Gaetules in southern Tunisia and the Garamantes in the oases and deserts of the Fezzan. There was, however, an even more potent threat on the northern shore of the Mediterranean. In the mid-third century BCE, Rome began fighting Carthage for control of Sicily and three successive Punic wars all ended in the defeat of the Phoenician city. After the Second Punic War ended in 202 BCE, a powerful Numidian kingdom under Masinissa ate away at settled Carthaginian territory. In the Third Punic War (149–146 BCE), the Romans defeated Carthage for a third and final time and laid waste to it (Raven 1993; 49, 51–59).

After their victory, the Romans left power in the hands of local rulers of the towns of the hinterland and the native kingdoms. Typically, as so often happens in such systems of indirect control, those rulers then tried to seize more power than the Romans wanted to grant, thus provoking a series of local wars. The Romans took six years (112–106 BCE) to crush Jugurtha in Numidia, while Julius Caesar abolished other native kingdoms when their rulers backed Pompey in the civil war. After Caesar’s murder in 44 BCE, the Romans tried ruling Mauritania directly but soon returned to relying on local surrogates. Volubilis, near modern Fez in Morocco, became an important city and remained loyally pro-Roman, but peace did not last. In the end, the whole of Mauritania was annexed to the Empire and divided first into two provinces, and later three (Raven 1993, 63–65).

The Roman provinces along the North African coast did not extend far inland. Military camps and, in places, ditches, ramparts and watchtowers ringed areas of Roman occupation. These North African limits of the Empire (the *limes*) stretched from the Atlantic coast to the deserts south of Tripoli. They separated the areas the Romans ruled directly from the interior by regulating movements and trade between settled agriculturalists, nomads and transhumants. The settled agriculture generated by these regions varied in output; the eastern provinces of Africa (modern Tunisia) or Numidia (contemporary Algeria) supplied Rome with huge quantities of olives and grain but the far west (now Morocco) was never as rich – Volubilis was a backwater compared with the great cities of El Djem or Leptis Magna (Peyron 2021; Chapter 2).

The details of how it actually occurred are unclear, but the Roman Empire, despite its panoply of gods, helped spread monotheism in northwestern Africa. Judaism probably arrived from the east via Egypt and Cyrenaica and spread to Carthage in the second century CE, but it is hard to pin down. There are only scattered Jewish inscriptions to help because Judaism spread among illiterate indigenous tribes. Christianity may also have arrived from the east, or from Rome itself and it quickly took root. By the third century CE, what is now

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Tunisia had a flourishing Christian community, which the Romans tried to destroy. The persecutions under the emperors Septimius Severus (193–211), Valerian (253–260) and Diocletian (284–305) were vicious failures that did not silence but radicalised the Christians subjugated to them (Raven 1993; 148–161). After Constantine, who succeeded Diocletian in 306 CE, converted to Christianity, some Christians did compromise with Rome. But Donatus, the Bishop of Carthage, led the radicals to split away and reject both the state and their less-determined brethren. The Donatist schism, or rebellions, lasted nearly a century until St Augustine of Hippo (in modern Algeria) and Emperor Honorius combined to crush it in 411 CE. Thereafter, Catholic Christianity prevailed (Raven 1993; 167–189).

Another schism, affecting both Church and Empire, had only slight effects on North Africa. In the late fourth century, the Vandals, a Germanic people on the Danube frontier, rebelled when the Catholic Empire considered their interpretation of Christianity, Arianism, to be heretical. Arians moved quickly through Europe, conquered Spain and in 429 CE crossed the Strait of Gibraltar and invaded North Africa. The far northwest was not rich enough to attract them, so they moved eastwards into the Roman provinces of Numidia and Africa (today's northern Algeria, Tunisia and eastern Libya). In 442 CE the Romans ceded North Africa to them, from Tripolitania to eastern Numidia. The Vandals persecuted Catholics but otherwise quickly adopted Roman ways and took over the Roman economy. Yet Vandal rule did not last long, for surrounding Amazigh kingdoms began invading their territory, until the Emperor Justinian, who succeeded to the throne in Byzantium in 527 CE, rebuilt the Empire (Raven 1993; 196–208).

The arrival of Islam

The Islamic conquest of North Africa that began in the late seventh century was a peripheral experience, compared to the early struggles faced by the new religion as it emerged from Arabia. Persia and the Syrian and Egyptian provinces of the Byzantine Empire were more valuable prizes that gave the Muslims control of great cities. North Africa, on the other hand, was on the frontier of the Islamic Caliphates in the east and soon broke away. Even so, the Maghrib reverberated to the strains and processes of the Islamic heartland. Like the Arabian peninsula, much of Northwest Africa was arid, crossed by vital trade routes and had regions of settled agriculture along the coast. Its society was also organised along tribal lines, defined by agnatic descent, with local kingdoms that dominated the borderlands. And its population was basically polytheistic, notwithstanding a long Jewish and Christian presence. North African Christians spoke Latin (or perhaps Greek), as did the townsfolk of Syria and Palestine, and the people of the countryside spoke Amazigh languages rather than Semitic ones. The Muslim Arab armies, on the other hand, spread belief in a single god, as the inspiration of a new and triumphant state that had already destroyed the Sassanians in Persia and the Byzantines in Syria.

Yet, although Muhammad, a political leader as well as a religious prophet, had led a holy war against the polytheists of Mecca, he made no demand that Christians and Jews should convert to Islam. Provided they recognised Muslim rule and paid extra taxes, they were tolerated. However, Muhammad had no male heir and named no successor, and he came from a less powerful part of the great Quraysh tribe that had ruled Mecca before Islam. When he died, the Meccan elite split over who should lead the community as the caliph (*khalifa* – successor or deputy, to the Prophet). It was a split that was ultimately to have profound implications for the Maghrib.

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Under the first three caliphs, the boundaries of Islam had expanded to include Syria and Iraq and Egypt. But new converts soon resented the fact that the Meccan elite garnered power for itself. Muslims split three ways over who should lead Islam. The old elite backed a Qurayshi successor and formed the mainstream; they were to become the Sunni faction in Islam. Another group declared that his successor should be a man in the direct line of descent of the Prophet, through his daughter Fatima and her husband Ali. Ali himself briefly became caliph, but the Meccan elite struck back and ousted him, and Ali's party, the Shia't Ali (the 'party of Ali') or Shi'is, were to become a focus of permanent dissent. The line of Shi'i imams continued until the ninth century when the twelfth imam disappeared. His followers believed he had gone into 'occultation', disappearing from human awareness, and would only re-emerge to lead a revolutionary period of justice and truth that would finally prevail over the Muslim world. The Isma'ilis, supporters of an alternative vision, believing that it was the seventh Shi'i imam who ended the legitimate line-of-descent from Ali, held a similar view of his occultation. The third group rejected the argument of endowment as caliph by descent altogether: the leader of the community should only be chosen according to his piety and probity. They opposed both Sunnis and Shi'is and were described as Kharijis, 'those who go out' (leave). Typically, they sought refuge in the desert, from where they fought for a society based on equality and justice.

The Shi'is and Kharijis plagued the mainstream Sunnis in the early eighth century, but in the east the Sunni Umayyad dynasty prevailed. From Damascus, its original capital, the Umayyad caliphate spread westwards into North Africa and Spain and eastwards to India. It was not a stable regime and by the mid-eighth century, succession disputes had so undermined it that another branch of the Quraysh, the Abbasids, overthrew it. The Abbasids founded a new dynasty, whose capital was Baghdad and it survived in various forms until 1258 CE, when it was destroyed in the Mongol invasions of the Middle East. It was to prove the longest-lasting Arabic caliphate, but it never included the whole of the Islamic world and the Maghrib and Spain soon broke away. Alexandria in Egypt was occupied in 643 CE, and Cyrenaica in 644 CE, but when the second caliph, Umar, died in 644 CE, there followed half a generation of factional fighting between Sunnis, Shi'is and Kharijis. In 647 CE, Muslim armies routed Byzantine forces at Sbeitla (in modern Tunisia), but no permanent occupation of the region followed the victory, so Byzantine rule struggled on in the coastal plains of North Africa and the Amazigh tribes blocked the Muslim-Arab path to the hinterlands.

The conquest of Northwest Africa restarted under the Umayyad dynasty. In 674 CE, Uqba ibn Nafi' had founded a new base at Kairouan, in what is now southern Tunisia, even though the Muslim victory at Sbeitla was not further exploited. This, the first new Islamic city in Northwest Africa, began as a military camp, but soon became a great centre of learning. In 682 CE, Uqba resumed the campaign, moving westwards towards the Atlantic. The details are vague, but he apparently struck inland from Kairouan, outflanking the coastal garrisons of the Byzantines. According to legend, on reaching the Atlantic coast, he charged his horse into the surf, crying, "Oh God! If the sea had not prevented me, I would have coursed on forever like Alexander the Great, upholding your face and fighting all who disbelieved!"

The legend symbolised his belief that the Arabs were a chosen people that only nature, not any human force, could withstand (Pennell 2003; 24). Yet Uqba's triumph ended disastrously. Led by a Christian Amazigh king named Kusayla, the tribes rose against Uqba. For a while, the Muslims were even forced to abandon Kairouan. Kusayla was succeeded

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by a legendary warrior-queen known as al-Kahina (the priestess). The Muslims eventually defeated her after retaking Kairouan in 691 CE. The city then became the headquarters of the province of Ifriqiya, recreating the old Roman province of Africa. Musa bin Nusayr, its first governor, set about extending effective Arab rule over the whole of the Maghrib north of the old Roman *limes* and sent reconnoitring armies southwards into the desert (Perkins 1986; 28).

The Arab-Muslim objective was trade and settlement, booty and the proclamation of a new divine revelation, yet they did not force the Jews and Christians of the coast to convert. Some of the Amazigh tribes were Jewish and a few were Christian, and only those who followed animist religions could be forced to submit to the new religion, although the Muslims did not find it easy to break Amazigh resistance. The details are cloudy because Arab sources generally date from a much later period. However, tribal structures on both sides seem to have been similar enough to allow local leaders to become clients of Arab tribes; otherwise the Arabs held the sons of powerful chiefs hostage until their families submitted. Other tribesmen simply joined the Muslim army willingly as it advanced across North Africa and eventually into southern Spain. Tariq bin Ziyad, an important Amazigh convert, became governor of Tangier and in 715 CE led a largely Amazigh army across the Strait of Gibraltar to Spain. Gibraltar was named after him (Jabal-Tariq, the ‘mountain of Tariq’) (Pennell 2003; 27).

The Muslims’ Amazigh allies, however, were unreliable because the Maghrib was remote from the Umayyad Empire. From Kairouan, Musa bin Nusayr’s local Arab commanders could call on small Arab contingents, but, more generally, had to rely on Amazigh soldiers who often resented how their Arab rulers behaved. Islam proclaimed the equality of all believers, but Amazigh converts paid higher taxes and saw their womenfolk lost to the harems of the east. So Kharijism, with its doctrine of legitimacy based on religious commitment rather than birth or racial origin, became attractive to them. And the far-off Maghrib also attracted other Kharijis from the east, once the Umayyads had defeated them there. In 739 CE or 740 CE a tax revolt in Tangier became a Khariji insurrection. Its Amazigh leader declared himself caliph and his followers justified themselves in the religious language that their oppressors had taught them. The rebellion was put down, but the Umayyads and their successors had more important rebels to deal with much closer to Damascus, and, when the Abbasids replaced them, the authority of the east ebbed away from the Muslim west (Pennell 2003; 28). Al-Andalus separated completely from the Arab heartland in the east, ruled by the only Umayyad prince who had escaped the Abbasids’ slaughter of his family in the wake of their victory.

In Ifriqiya (modern Tunisia) a local hereditary principality, the Aghlabids, developed under Ibrahim ibn al-Aghlab (184-197 Anno Hegirae [AH]/800-812 CE). He proclaimed formal allegiance to Baghdad and paid tribute to the Abbasid caliph, but otherwise he was left to his own devices. With the elaborate court structure and powerful army that it then developed, Ifriqiya remained stable well into the ninth century. Agriculture and trade flourished and the infrastructure of Kairouan is still impressive today – there is the Great Mosque that the Aghlabids rebuilt in the mid-ninth century and the huge water cisterns that the modern Ben Ali regime restored in concrete in the late twentieth century. With its robust minaret, its external wall and its tower bastions and massive buttresses, the Great Mosque of Kairouan resembles a fortress, but it was to become one of the most prestigious places of worship for Muslims in the Islamic world. Along the coast of Ifriqiya the Aghlabids also built *ribats* (the term is sometimes translated as ‘fortified monasteries’) that combined

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military and religious functions. The *ribat* in Sousse was a little fortress next door to the great mosque that also had guard posts on its corners. It took almost a century to build the Great Ribat at Monastir, begun in 796 CE.

The Aghlabids also came to control Sicily and Malta, and had influence in southern Italy as well. Their high point came in the mid-ninth century during the reign of Abu Ibrahim Ahmad, who personified the ideal ruler as described in the mediaeval ‘Mirror of Princes’ literature of the principles of statecraft. But in 875 CE, Ibrahim II took power and he embodied the opposite qualities from those recommended: he was a tyrant, an aesthete of murder who enjoyed torturing his victims to death. After spending a fortune on a new palace at Rakkada outside Kairouan, he was forced to abdicate. As a result of his depredations, however, the dynasty collapsed at the beginning of the tenth century (Perkins 1986; 30–34).

No matter how distant Andalusia and Ifriqiya were from Baghdad and relatively isolated from Abbasid influence, they were still part of the Sunni mainstream, but the far west of the Maghrib was the land of the heterodox. After their defeat in Tangier, the Kharijis moved down into the desert, latching on to trade in gold and slaves across the Sahara. They built a new town at Sijilmassa and constructed a prosperous kingdom that lasted for two centuries. From Awdaghust, on the southern side of the desert, it imported gold and slaves. In return, Sijilmassa sent it wool, copper from the nearby mines in the Sous and, above all, salt from the abundant salt mines at Taghaza, 20 days’ travel into the Sahara. Islam spread along the trading routes, but central Morocco and the Atlantic plains, areas of agriculture and pasture, produced in the mid-eighth century a state so heterodox it might hardly be called Muslim at all. The Barghawata seem to have mixed elements of Christianity, Judaism and animism, but they were based mainly in Shi’i Islam. They were so heterodox that the details were hardly recorded by pious Muslims. Statelets like these, clustered around the edges of the desert and the seas, were an Amazigh rather than an Arab expression of Islam, for religion spread more quickly than language and the Amazigh populations were Islamised before they were Arabised (Pennell 2003; 29, Peyron 2021; Chapter 3).

Idris bin Abdullah founded the most important state of all these new creations, near the ruins of Volubilis in modern-day Morocco. He claimed descent from Ali and Fatima and had fled to the Maghrib when the rest of his family was massacred at the end of the eighth century. So by ancestry he was a Shi’i, although the Amazighs around Volubilis may also have been exposed to Khariji influence. But they made him welcome and, after taking a local woman as concubine, he established yet another petty state. In 789 CE he built a base a little to the east of the old Roman city, on the banks of the River Fez, controlling the main road. The Abbasid caliph, Harun al-Rashid, then sent an assassin to poison him. Idris died, but his unborn son survived and received his father’s name. In 803 CE, when he was 11, the Amazigh people of the area proclaimed him sovereign. In 809 CE, Idris II moved his capital to a site beside his father’s old settlement on the Fez River and, from there, Idrisid rule spread along the main roads to Andalusia and the Arab east. By the time he died in 829 CE, it extended from the Rif mountains in the north, across the Middle Atlas and the central plateau towards the valley of the Sous. Trade made Fez rich and these obscure events in the early ninth century are claimed by some modern Moroccan nationalists as the origins both of Fez and the Moroccan state (Pennell 2003; 30–32).

Quite apart from that claim, Fez, given its founding history, was the enemy of the Abbasids and their Aghlabid vassals in the east and of the Umayyad amirs of Andalusia to the north. So it became an asylum from both. Religious scholars fled there after a rising in Córdoba in 814 CE; and in 824 CE, refugees from Kairouan joined them after a brief civil

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war in Ifriqiya. These were more sophisticated places than Fez, and the refugees brought mercantile skills and religious knowledge with them so that the city prospered from trade, and scholarship flourished. In both communities, religious women endowed great mosques in their new residence: the Andalusiiyin was begun in 857 CE and the Qarawiyyin in 859/60 CE. This premium on learning and scholarship made the Idrisid capital a great centre of Sunni Islam. The Qarawiyyin, now the main university of Fez, claims to be the oldest continuously functioning university in the world (Pennell 2003; 32–33).

Idris II's numerous children divided the state between themselves when he died. The Idrisid state slowly wound down but it survived until a new challenge emerged to Sunni orthodoxy in the early tenth century. As usual, this originated in the Arab east, in Syria, headed by Ubaydallah, a self-proclaimed descendant of the vanished seventh Shi'i imam, Isma'il. He sent propagandists out across the Islamic world and one of them, Abu Abdullah, reached the Maghrib in 893 CE. He defeated the last Aghlabid ruler and occupied Raqqada in 909 CE. After the main revolt in Syria collapsed, Ubaydallah joined him there, and declared himself caliph and the head of a new dynasty, the Fatimids, named after its supposed origins through the marriage of Fatima, the Prophet's daughter, and Ali, his short-lived caliphal successor. The Fatimids were to be the only important Shi'i caliphate in the history of Islam, and their eventual aim was to conquer the Arab east, so they built their Tunisian capital, Mahdiyya, on a peninsula facing eastwards into the Mediterranean. Eventually, in 972 CE, they did conquer Egypt and moved the seat of the caliphate to Cairo.

The Fatimids had two important enemies – the Abbasids in Baghdad and the Umayyads in al-Andalus. Both were Sunni, and the Umayyad ruler, Abderrahman III, declared himself caliph in 929 CE. There were now three caliphates in the Islamic world and the Maghrib was the battleground between them, although the battle was usually fought by local surrogates and Fez changed hands several times in the subsequent struggles. At stake was control of the Saharan trade and, although the Umayyads won the battle for economic control, Fez prospered as traders and artisans poured in from outside. Its great mosques flourished and scholars, Muslim and Jewish, came too, so that the city became an important intellectual centre. Then, in the mid-eleventh century, the Umayyad caliphate in Córdoba fell apart. Amazigh troops sacked the palace in 1031 CE and al-Andalus disintegrated into petty principalities, thus beginning the era of the *taifa* ('party') sultans. Once again, outside events brought about a political change in northwestern Africa.

Empires in the Maghrib

In the eleventh century the patchwork of statelets and fortress-principalities, many founded in religious heterodoxy or Shi'ism, was transformed. Successively, two imperial systems, the Almoravids and the Almohads, united the territories once settled by the Romans with lands on the other side of the Sahara, a development that ultimately brought about the triumph of Sunnism in the region of northwestern Africa. The al-Murabitun (Almoravids) and al-Muwahiddun (Almohads) were Imaghzen, not Arabs, but *jihad* united them to spread Islam to the black populations of the western Sudan, and the trans-Saharan trade made them rich.

In the beginning, trading rivalries led the Amazigh Sanhaja confederation, Sunnis following the Maliki tradition of the theo-legal interpretation of Islam, to attack the Khariji Maghrawa tribe of the Zanata confederation. When members of the Sanhajan elite began making pilgrimages to the east, these theological differences stood out. One such pilgrim,

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Yahya bin Ibrahim, returned to the Maghrib sometime between the 1030s and the early 1050s, accompanied by a Sunni scholar named Abdullah ibn Yasin who agreed to help him reform Islam. Ibn Yasin's Islam was egalitarian, austere and rigorous, which excited opposition, so, in about 1053 CE, he set up a *ribat*, a fortified post or religious centre on the edge of the desert, whose exact location is unknown. His followers became known as al-Murabitun, those who dwell in a *ribat*. Rigorous and pure in spirit, they determined to create a just society by "condemning evil and proclaiming good" – a classic Qur'anic prescription. They relied on force, and their *jihad* unified the Sahara and increased their wealth (Pennell 2003; 38–40, Bennison 2016; 26–28).

Early rebellions encouraged the al-Murabitun to conquer greater territories still. Around 1058 CE, after Ibn Yasin was killed, Abu Bakr bin Umar led them over the High Atlas to take the little kingdom of Aghmat, near modern Marrakesh. Abu Bakr himself built Marrakesh as a military base, probably in 1072 CE, and then returned to the Sahara. His *jihad* brought Ghana and much of the western Sudan under Almoravid rule. He left Marrakesh in the care of his cousin, Yusuf ibn Tashfin, who was the real founder of the al-Murabitun empire. By 1082 CE he controlled the Maghrib as far as Algiers. Then the al-Murabitun crossed the Strait into al-Andalus, where the small Islamic *taifa* kingdoms were falling before the Castilian advance. In 1085 CE their armies routed the combined army of Castile and Aragon and stopped the Christian advance for a generation. In 1190 CE, impatient with the local Muslim rulers who he considered irreligious traitors, ibn Tashfin armed himself with a *fatwa* (a religious opinion) from the scholars of Fez, empowering him to overthrow them and to incorporate their lands into his own empire. By 1100, the al-Murabitun ruled from Spain to Algiers. Both shores of the western Mediterranean were now under one ruler, as they had been under the Romans, although the political centre of gravity was now on the edges of the Sahara, in Marrakesh. The religion and culture now derived from the Islamic east and, more locally from Kairouan, with an uncompromising emphasis on the letter of the Quran (Pennell 2003; 41–45, Bennison 2016; 31–35, 38–48).

Ibn Tashfin won support by reducing taxes to only those allowed by the Quran, which greatly improved the economy. The Almoravids funnelled the wealth of lands south of the Sahara northwards, and sent grain from the Atlantic plains southwards, so their empire became wealthy. They surrounded Marrakesh with elaborate underground irrigation channels (*khattara*) to water gardens outside the defensive walls they had built around the city (see Joffé 1992).

Their capital attracted scholars, scientists and philosophers, as had the Qarawiyyin in Fez, and they built great mosques in Tlemcen and Algiers. The court of ibn Tashfin's son, Ali, was very splendid, but the family was beset by rivalries, and it cost manpower and money to control both the lands south of the Sahara and al-Andalus, where the Christian kingdoms had restarted their advance southwards. The costs of war increased the need for taxes and by the mid-twelfth century there was to be a new challenge to the Al-Murabitun (Pennell 2003; 46–47, Bennison 2016; 55–61).

This was led by Abu Abdullah Muhammad Ibn Tumart, who was born between 1075 CE and 1080 CE, on the northern side of the Anti-Atlas, in a land of sedentary Amazigh farmers. He had a good religious education and went east to continue it. Although he did not complete his *hajj*, he studied in the great centres of Islam there. Then he went home, fired with the idea of reforming religion and morals. He first settled at Bejaïa in Algeria in 1117 CE and preached against corrupted morals, music and luxury, talking of a *mahdi* who

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would come to bring reform. This made him unpopular, so he moved on to Marrakesh in 1121 CE, accompanied by a mystic from near Tlemcen named Abd Al-Mu'min. Their criticism of the morals of the Almoravid rulers and the theology of the court scholars caused such rage that they fled to Tinmal, an isolated retreat in the High Atlas. Ibn Tumart's message was that God was a pure, absolute, and undivided spirit, so his followers called themselves Al-Muwahhidun (Unitarians, or Almohads). He demanded the complete separation of the sexes, no music and an end to luxury. In 1121 CE, drawing on Shi'i ideas of the hidden imam, Ibn Tumart announced that he himself was the *mahdi*. He surrounded himself with rings of close advisers, of tribal leaders and a phalanx of propagandists to spread the word (Bennison 2016; 68). Because Tinmal was too remote he moved down onto the plains, but could not capture Marrakesh. When Ibn Tumart died in 1130 CE, Abd Al-Mu'min conquered most of Morocco and eastern Algeria. Only in 1147 CE was he able to capture Marrakesh, after a long siege. A massacre of the Al-Murabitun followed, with palaces torn down and mosques replaced, allegedly because they were incorrectly aligned with Mecca (Pennell 2003; 48–49, Bennison 2016; 62–69).

Making Marrakesh their capital, the Al-Muwahhidun began building an empire, although even before taking it they had been sucked into fighting the advancing Christian armies in Al-Andalus. In 1145 CE, Abd Al-Mu'min sent an army, and despite losing several Muslim cities, the Al-Muwahhidun rescued Córdoba (in 1146 CE) and very slowly took control of most of Islamic Iberia through a mixture of menace and alliance (Bennison 2016; 74–78). But Christians were not the only foes. In 972 CE, the Fatimids had moved to Cairo, leaving Ifriqiya to a dynasty of governors, the Zirids, who struck out on their own and briefly controlled all the central Maghrib. In the early eleventh century, the family split, and the Hammamid branch took over Algeria. The Zirids remained in control of Ifriqiya from Kairouan and set about destroying Shi'ism. In 1049 CE they transferred their nominal allegiance to the Abbasids. Then the Banu Hilal, an Arab tribal confederation encouraged by the Fatimids in Cairo, moved into Ifriqiya and sacked Kairouan in 1057 CE. The Zirids moved their capital back to the old Fatimid base at Mahdiya. Later Arab historians claimed the Fatimids had sent these nomads from Egypt to punish the Zirids for rebelling, and they wrecked the countryside, but it is likely that these warrior nomads were part of a general population movement (Perkins 1986; 39–42, Laroui 1977; 144–156). Abd Al-Mu'min encouraged the Banu Hilal to settle on the Atlantic plains to provide him with military contingents. Amidst the confusion, the Norman rulers of Sicily occupied parts of southern Ifriqiya. Abd Al-Mu'min responded by sending his own forces eastward. They occupied Algiers, Constantine and Bejaïa in 1152 CE, Tunis in 1159 CE and then Tripoli. When he died in 1163 CE, Abd Al-Mu'min's empire stretched from Spain to Libya (Pennell 2003; 52–53, Bennison 2016; 79).

Abd Al-Mu'min named his son, Muhammad, as his successor, legitimising him by dynastic authority rather than religious virtue. This alienated some of the religious elite and the dynasty itself suffered from familial rivalry (Bennison 2016; 82–85). Abd Al-Mu'min's immediate successors put down rebellions in southern Ifriqiya, and in 1195 CE, Abu Yusuf Ya'qub won a great victory at Alarcos in Spain, stopping the *Reconquista* in its tracks (Bennison 2016; 95–108, Pennell 2003; 53–54). In this triumphal period, Marrakesh attracted scholars of world renown including Muhammad Ibn Rushd (known in Europe as Averroes), whose commentary on Aristotle was translated into European languages. At the same time, Sufism took hold in the Maghrib. Sufis sought a personal knowledge of God through asceticism and devotional practices, and some early masters attracted a wide public

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following. Their disciples formed the first religious brotherhoods (*tariqas*) that would have enormous influence on the politics and religion of North Africa. The descendants of great Sufi masters were often greatly revered, and their tombs became holy sites with many pilgrims. But religious toleration had its limits. The regime burned the books of Ibn Rushd, and persecuted Jews. The great citadels (*qasbas*) at Marrakesh and Rabat emphasised the dynasty's authority, and so did the mosques, with their huge minarets, such as the Kutubiyya in Marrakesh, and the Giralda in Seville. Abu Yusuf Ya'qub started a huge mosque at Rabat to commemorate the great victory at Alarcos. It was never completed, but its minaret still towers over the modern city. This building programme was expensive, but the al-Muwahhidun were rich; their efficient administration collected taxes, which they spent on irrigation and agriculture. The trans-Saharan trade and manufacturing in the cities both flourished whilst their gold coinage was used on both sides of the Mediterranean (Pennell 2003; 54–57).

Then, in the early thirteenth century, the dynasty's dominion began to break down. Christian forces in Iberia inflicted a stinging defeat at Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212 CE. The army could no longer collect taxes and internal rivalries divided the family. The religious arm of the movement resented the autocracy, and new tribal confederations arose, including the Banu Marin, in northern Morocco. The petty *taifa* rulers, who now ruled Iberia, crumbled before the advancing Christians. Córdoba fell in 1236 CE and other major towns soon followed (Pennell 2003; 114–117).

Three competing dynasties now emerged from former clients and supporters of the Al-Muwahhidun. In Ifriqiya, the Hafsids, descendants of a companion of Ibn Tumart, took control of Bejaïa, Constantine and Tunis. In 1244 CE, Abu Zakariyya al-Hafs declared himself caliph, and extended his domain as far west as Tlemcen. The Hafsids weakened in the fourteenth century, because of the Black Death and because of the uncertain allegiance of the Banu Sulaym – Arab Bedouins who, like the earlier Banu Hillal, migrated from Egypt. In the later fourteenth century, strong Hafsid rulers re-established stability and trade made Tunis powerful; Algiers, Tlemcen and even Fez sometimes acknowledged Hafsid supremacy (Perkins 1986; 49–50). Even so, indigenous tribes owing only nominal allegiance to central authority controlled the hinterland, and the coastal city of Tripoli in what would become Libya functioned as an independent enclave (St John 2008; 26).

In Tlemcen, Yaghmurasan Ibn Abd Al-Wadid (1236–1283), whose family had supplied governors to the Al-Muwahhidun, ruled a separate Zayyanid state. Its economy was powered by the trade route between Andalusia and Timbuktu via Tlemcen and Sijilmasa. But in the late fourteenth century the regime succumbed to internecine violence. In the far west (Morocco), the Marinids replaced the Al-Muwahhidun. They were warriors and pious Muslims, but it is not clear whether they were also a movement of religious reform, as they claimed to be. Abd Al-Haqq, who established Marinid power, emphasised his own piety, respect for the sharia and scholarship and justified the initial rebellion by the irreligion of the Al-Muwahhidun. They fought fiercely to keep Al-Andalus out of Christian hands. Abu Yusuf Ya'qub (1268–1286), one of the greatest of the Marinids, took the title of Amir al-Muslimin (Commander of the Faithful), one of the honorific titles of the caliphate, and called for *jihad*. He also set up the first *madrasas*, residential colleges where students lived and studied law and theology.

The later Marinids became famous for building *madrasas*. They also sought religious support from the *ulama*, the religious scholars, from the *sharifs* who claimed descent from the Prophet Muhammad, and from the Sufi religious brotherhoods, the *tariqas* (Bennison

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2016; 154, 227, Pennell 2003; 60–62). Religious legitimacy was urgently needed because the Strait of Gibraltar had become the boundary between the Maghrib and Europe. Repeated Christian victories had sucked the Marinids into an Andalusian morass. The Nasrid rulers of Granada did not want to become Marinid vassals and in 1292 CE they had allied with Yaghmurasan's son against the Marinids. After Algeciras finally fell to the Christian armies in 1344 CE, the Marinids abandoned Spain and turned their attention to Ifriqiya. In 1347 CE, the year after the Hafsids ruler died, the Marinid ruler, Abu Hasan, invaded and managed to capture Tripoli but the regime fell apart the following year when the Black Death ravaged North Africa.

At its height, the Marinid dynasty had been a glittering regime, but dependent on external support; the massive walls and gateways of Fez and Sale, for example, were defended by outsiders: a Christian mercenary militia, and a corps of Syrian archers. Jews were employed as administrators. But the Marinids could well afford it because they encouraged trade, favouring Fez rather than Marrakesh because the gold routes had shifted eastwards (Bennison 2016; 328). Yet power and riches were not enough and when the economy faltered, political power began slipping away. The *wazir* (minister-delegate) of Sultan Abu Inan (1348–1358) strangled his master, but was then killed by a survivor of the massacre he had planned. Forty years of violent coups followed, often organised by *wazirs* supported by tribal groups in the mountains and deserts, or by foreigners such as the ruler of Granada or the king of Castile or of Portugal. The Castilians raided the coasts, and the Portuguese occupied territory along the coasts. They took Ceuta at the mouth of the Strait in 1415 CE and then other beachheads along the Atlantic coast: Asila, Tangier, Al Ksar Al-Saghrir and Arguin, far to the south in what is now Mauritania. More sophisticated firearms helped the Portuguese to advance and impose themselves on local forces (Pennell 2003; 63, 69–70).

The Marinids could not contain the collapse and after the Banu Wattas, who had long supported them, took over the vizirate in 1472 CE, a Wattassi declared himself sultan. Militant *sharifs* joined them in the battles around Tangier. Central power in the far west collapsed and the Portuguese occupied more enclaves along the Atlantic coast: Agadir (1505), Safi (1507), Azemmour (1513) and Mazagan and Anfa (modern Casablanca) in 1515 CE. Towns that did not fall became centres of resistance to the Christians, peopled by refugees from al-Andalus. When Granada fell in 1492 CE, more refugees flooded out and some, who wanted to continue the fight, settled in Salé. In the far south, *sharifs* and leaders of Sufi *tariqas* led the opposition to the Portuguese (Pennell 2003; 72). Other refugees, largely from Al-Andalus, who wanted to continue their old trades, settled in the towns along the Mediterranean coast: Oran, Algiers and Tunis. The many local regimes there all needed a scholarly workforce, so educated men moved quite easily between their capitals, finding employment as administrators and scholars in different courts.

The experiences of one itinerant scholar, Abd Ar-Rahmān Ibn Muhammad Ibn Khaldūn, inspired him to write a book to explain this political disarray. He came from a family of Andalusian refugees who had been court officials in Tunis in the thirteenth century. After studying law and philosophy, he entered government service himself, moving from Fez to Granada, and then Bejaia, finding each place wracked by violence and feuding. So he retired to a village in western Algeria, to think and write about the political conditions through which he lived. He began his history of the world, the *Kitab al-Ibar*, with an introduction, the '*Muqadimma*' ('The Prolegomena'), that was a methodological study of history, a search for truth within it and its deeper meaning, and an effort to discern the fundamental

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rules of human society. Making the state his subject, Ibn Khaldun gave a cyclical explanation of the rise and fall of dynasties.

Dynastic states, he wrote, began in an extended family, sharing agnatic descent and bound together by agnatic solidarity (*'assabiya*), economic interests and territory. A tribe had greater political solidarity than the inhabitants of the cities, but towns were industrious and rich and could mobilise huge resources, so only through a wider unity could tribes overcome them. Religion provided that unity, motivating tribesmen to fight for God as well as themselves. From this nucleus of a state, the tribe could grow and capture the cities, or found its own. But cities undermined political and religious solidarity, and became the main props of the state, providing luxury, pleasure and rest. State power declined in consequence, so new forces grew up on its periphery and replaced it. A system of government that was dynastic and elitist in constitution but populist in message was, in short, thoroughly unstable. Ibn Khaldun's own experience inspired this pessimistic vision of the Maghrib. His grim vision of a ruinous political cycle was a systematic effort to understand the deep currents of political society, one that has a deep relevance even to the modern study of the development of political power (Alatas 2014; 107–108, Alatas 2006; 782–795).

Early modern empires

While the Maghrib disintegrated politically, the Portuguese sailed round the Cape of Good Hope and the Spanish began conquering the Americas and fought to hold off the Ottomans in eastern Europe. In the Maghrib new political and economic structures emerged. The stumbling Wattasi sultanate in Fez could not cope with the Portuguese Atlantic outposts and in the late fifteenth century, the Sufi movement and the *zawiyas* joined the struggle, although its leadership was too fragmented to be really effective. Nevertheless, sharifianism provided an alternative to the tribally-based Wattasids and it halted the Ottoman advance along the Mediterranean coast, laying down the bases for the future legitimisation and the boundaries of the states in modern North Africa.

Sharifian dynasties have ruled Morocco ever since, but there were many sharifian lineages. A resounding question was how a ruler should behave and whether his subjects could remove him. Indeed, Ibn Khaldun might have written the scenario for the first sharifian dynasty, the Sa'dis and their trajectory from rise to collapse in three generations. They came from the Drâa valley on the northern Saharan edge and claimed to be descendants of the Prophet, although their enemies denied it. Muhammad al-Qaim Bi-Amr Allah, the first Sa'di ruler, bolstered his authority by allying himself with the leaders of the *jihad* against the Portuguese at Agadir. His sons continued the alliance and in 1524 CE they took Marrakesh and from there attacked what remained of the Wattasids. They had some success: Muhammad Al-Shaykh occupied Fez in 1549 CE, and in 1550 CE, the Portuguese evacuated Al-Ksar As-Saghir and Asila on the coast, in effect making way for more powerful competitors (Pennell 2003; 79–81).

The Habsburgs and the Ottoman Turks were much more powerful than the Portuguese. The Habsburgs controlled the Iberian peninsula, parts of Italy and Sicily and swathes of central Europe. They dominated the Strait of Gibraltar, the chokepoint on passage between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, and the treasure of South America made them rich. At the eastern end of the Mediterranean, the Ottomans controlled two other chokepoints: the Dardanelles, leading into the Black Sea, and the Greek archipelago that was close to the

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entrance of the Adriatic and the route to Venice. That left the Sicilian channel, the narrows at the midpoint of the Mediterranean, as a great strategic prize. Both empires wanted to control it. Their strategy was to occupy ports and outposts along the North African coast rather than conquer the interior.

In what is now Morocco, the Spanish took Melilla in 1497 CE and then moved eastwards into the territory of modern Algeria, taking Mers el-Kebir in 1505 CE and Oran in 1509 CE. In the following year the Spanish fortified a tiny islet (Peñon) off Algiers and blockaded the city's anchorage and, in that same year, occupied Tripoli, before assigning it to the Knights of St John. In 1534 CE, Spanish forces took Tunis and installed a vassal Muslim regime. The Ottomans moved in from the east in the same fashion. The Ottoman Empire, to give it its Europeanised name, had originated with an Anatolian warlord named Osman, who died in 1326 CE. His descendants, Murad (1362-1389) and Bayezit (1389-1402), extended it into southern Europe. In 1402 CE the Mongols virtually wiped the Ottomans out in Anatolia, but within a generation, Mehmet I (1413-1421) and his son Murat II (1421-1444) reconstituted the Ottoman slave army (the Janissaries), reorganised the administration and rebuilt the dynasty.

In 1453 CE, Murat II's son, Mehmet II (1451-1481), took Constantinople and his son, Bayezit II (1481-1512), and grandson Selim (1512-1520), spread the empire eastwards towards Persia and southwards into Syria. Selim took Egypt in 1517 CE and absorbed the remnants of the Abbasid caliphate. The Ottoman sultan could now claim to be caliph as well as sultan. Both in southeastern Europe and in Cairo, the Ottomans extirpated existing rulers if they could not incorporate them: this was not a holy war but one driven by the needs of a multi-ethnic empire. Under Suleiman (1520-1566), whom Europeans called 'The Magnificent' and his subjects called 'The Lawgiver', the Ottoman Empire reached almost its maximum extent: from the walls of Vienna to Baghdad and south to Egypt.

From Egypt, it leapfrogged along the North African coast. In 1516 the Amir Selim of Algiers invited two corsairing brothers, Aruj and Khayr Al-Din Barbarossa, to help him expel the Spanish from the Peñon at Algiers. The Barbarossa brothers then took control of the city but found it hard to hold, so in 1529 CE, Khayr Al-Din asked Sultan Suleiman to assume sovereignty. In 1551 CE, an Ottoman commander, Turgut Rais, took Tripoli. In 1569 CE, Tunis fell into the hands of the Bey of Algiers (McDougall 2017; 10-11). These cities were strategic outposts in the Habsburg-Ottoman struggle at sea for control of the Mediterranean. In 1560 CE, at Djerba, the Ottoman fleet overwhelmed a huge joint Christian fleet, and then tried to take Malta from the Knights of St John five years later. However, the siege of Malta, one of the pivotal battles of the early modern Mediterranean, failed and in 1571 CE, a Catholic alliance of European states and principalities destroyed the Ottoman fleet at Lepanto. That same year the Ottomans lost Tunis too, but they rebounded quickly, retaking Tunis, permanently this time, in 1574 CE (Perkins 1986; 51-52).

In all these manoeuvres, the struggle to control Morocco was a side-show. The Sa'dis were a dynastic regime with quite extensive dominions and for both the Spanish Habsburgs and the Ottomans it was more valuable to occupy outposts along the coast than to control large swathes of territory. In 1553 CE the Ottomans occupied the islet of Badis in the western end of the Rif. In 1554 CE they did briefly take Fez, but Muhammad Al-Shaykh expelled them, although he died in the battle. His son, Abdallah al-Ghalib (1557-1574) secured his succession by killing several of his relatives, and others fled to the Ottomans in Algiers, who promptly invaded Sa'di territory once again. Again the Sa'dis stopped them, but could not recover Badis. In 1559 CE, during a brief alliance with Spain against the Ottomans, the

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Sa'di ceded the islet of Alhucemas, halfway along the Rif coast, although Spanish troops did not actually garrison it for a further 114 years. In 1564 CE, the Spanish captured Badis from the Ottomans and renamed it Peñón de Vélez. Both islets have remained in Spanish hands ever since (Pennell 2003; 81).

Al-Ghalib tried to put the Sa'di dynasty on a firm footing. He gave his army guns and set up a small corsairing fleet, but when he died, in 1574 CE, it all fell apart. His son, Muhammad Al-Mutawakkil, was no warrior, yet war was lapping at Morocco's borders. Al-Ghalib's exiled brothers, Abd Al-Malik and Ahmad, allied themselves with the Ottomans and, on the margins, King Philip II of Spain and his great rival, Queen Elizabeth of England, manoeuvred to outflank each other; Elizabeth was particularly interested in Moroccan trade. The Portuguese king, Dom Sebastião, horrified by the Ottoman advance, sent an army to support Al-Mutawakkil when the latter's domains were invaded from the east in 1578 CE. The three armies met in a battle on the banks of the Oued Al-Makhazin, near Ksar Al-Kabir, in which thousands died, including Dom Sebastião, Muhammad Al-Mutawakkil and Abd Al-Malik. It became known as the Battle of the Three Kings: a dynastic squabble became one of the epic battles of the early modern world. Ahmad, Muhammad al-Mutawakkil's brother, emerged as the winner, named himself al-Mansur, the Victorious, and re-founded the dynasty. He made peace with both Spain and the Ottomans and negotiated friendly relations with Elizabeth, bringing a great expansion in trade. Trade underpinned the Sa'di state and al-Mansur created a huge sugar industry in southern Morocco. When, in 1591 CE, he conquered the southern side of the Sahara desert as well, his control of the trans-Saharan trade gave him access to gold, and slaves to work his sugar factories (Pennell 2003; 83–87).

Yet Al-Mansur's regime depended on him alone, so that when he died in 1603 CE, apparently of the plague, three of his sons plunged the Sa'di state into civil war. That, combined with the plague epidemic, destroyed what their father had built. The Iberian powers occupied more outposts on the Moroccan coast, notably Tangier, which the Portuguese took in 1643 CE. They passed it to England 19 years later, in 1662 CE, as part of the dowry of King Charles II's wife, Catherine of Braganza. The rest of the far west disintegrated into fiefs, ruled by whoever could win enough local support. The contenders included members of the Sa'di family, various religious figures and leaders of local Sufi movements. Muhammad Bin Ahmad Al-Maliki Al-Zayyani Al-Ayyashi led the attack on the Portuguese in Mazagan and launched a *jihad* against the Spaniards around Larache. Abu Al-Mahalli, who originated from Sijilmassa, tried to seize Marrakesh, but failed. Two powerful *zawiyas*, Igh in the Sous valley and Dila in the Middle Atlas, controlled huge territories, preaching both religious reform and the need to fight the Spanish. Al-Khidr Ghaylan built up a proto-state in northern Morocco which he tried to secure by alliances with the English in Tangier and the Spanish. And at the mouth of the Bu Regreg River on the Atlantic coast, the twin cities of Rabat and Salé went their own way.

In 1609 CE the Spanish king expelled the remaining Muslims from the Iberian peninsula. Morisco communities settled in all the cities of the Maghrib as craftsmen and professionals. One group settled in Rabat and its sister city of Salé, and engaged, not in commerce, but in revenge on the Spanish. Their settlement was a foreign colony, perhaps 3,000 or 4,000 strong, oriented towards the sea and corsairing. A *jihad* at sea, conducted with their corsairing fleet, supported a fragile autonomy. At its height in 1637 CE, Rabat had between 40 and 50 ships, mostly quite small, but able to range far into the Atlantic. At first they attacked Spanish ships and later, all Christian shipping. Other Andalusian exiles settled in

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Tetuan and especially in Mamora, some 30 kilometres to the north of Rabat, where a heterogeneous group of pirates from all over the Atlantic world joined them: Englishmen, Irish and Dutch in particular. They ranged as far as Wales (1626), Iceland (1627) and Ireland (1631) (Pennell 2003; 88–90).

The absence of central authority inspired ideological arguments about just rule that echo down to the twentieth century. Some stressed a duty to respect established authority, no matter how badly rulers acted, while others said that only a just sultan, ruling according to the sharia, was legitimate. With no overall leader, the responsibility for *jihad* devolved onto local warlords and the various claimants to power sought support from foreigners, both Christian and Muslim (Pennell 2003; 90–93).

Central authority in Ottoman North Africa was even more diffuse. After taking Tunis, Ottoman rule soon evolved towards local autonomy in the main cities. In 1587 CE, Tripoli, Tunisia and Algeria became formal provinces, each under its own pasha. The sultan in Istanbul was still the caliph with overarching political and religious authority, but the reality was that in the Maghrib, power was now exercised by the local armies of occupation. Algiers was the biggest Ottoman in the Maghrib city and early seventeenth-century pictures show the port where large ships could anchor and the walls rising in a pyramidal shape from the water's edge up the hill on which the city had been built. They cut the city off from the countryside and the agricultural gardens adjacent to the city walls.

They also isolated the city from the distant mountains that were the territory of the local Amazigh population, who were troublesome tax-evaders. The military elite in Algiers was determined to keep them out of power and denied them and the *kulughlis* – the children of licit and illicit relationships between Turkish men and local women – any influence in political affairs. The city was well-organised and orderly, for criminal behaviour was punished promptly and severely. It was multi-ethnic and in the early seventeenth century, the population was believed to be over 100,000, in an estimated 13,000 households (2,500 Muslim households, 700 Amazigh households, 200 Morisco households) plus another 1,600 *kulughlis* together with 16,000 Christians – slaves captured by the corsairs and held for ransom – and 12,000 Jews.

Tunis was smaller, with a population of perhaps 25,000 people in the seventeenth century. There too, the division between the city and the countryside was sharp. Inside the walls were some 3,000 to 4,000 Turks armed with guns who provided the only organised military force, together with a large number of *kulughlis*. The interior tribes had only lances as weapons and the urban forces compelled them to pay taxes, supposedly to fight Christians and defend the Ottoman Empire against Spain. Otherwise, the rulers ignored the interior, apart from the fertile plains on the coast. Real power soon fell into the hands of the *diwan*, or council, controlled by the commanders of the janissary troops. As early as 1580 CE, the military refused to send tribute to Istanbul and in 1590 CE, after a severe famine, the Janissaries revolted. The *diwan* elected the leader of the janissaries as dey and their most potent rivals were not the Ottoman Empire pashas, but the increasingly powerful corsair captains, or *raises*, who provided much of the wealth. Many of these captains were European converts, or 'renegades'. By the late seventeenth century, they numbered maybe 3,000–4,000 men. Then, in 1594 CE, Uthman Dey seized personal power. He ruled until 1610/11 CE and could be called the creator of the Tunisian state. Even outsiders noted that Uthman maintained strict order with very little crime. The finances increasingly came from corsairing, but in 1636, the last effective Ottoman pasha of Tunis, Yussuf, left, taking all the finances of the state with him.

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Tripoli was smaller and poorer. After 1551 CE, the city was ruled by the local militia, headed by the dey with a nominal Ottoman pasha. These deys were unstable – the *diwan* was riven by disputes and rivalries, particularly between the Turkish and *kulughli* military, on the one hand, and the *raïses*, on the other. Thomas Baker, the English consul in Tripoli between 1679 and 1685 CE, describes an unstable political structure where the ruler, the dey, was repeatedly replaced by the *diwan*, and where the *raïses*, the corsair captains – many of them converts from Christianity – objected to diplomatic agreements with European powers that limited their earnings from sea-raiding (Baker and Pennell 1989).

Corsairing so damaged the trade of European powers like England, France and Spain, however, that in the seventeenth century they began making treaties with the major corsairing states to limit the damage. This began with Algiers (the English and Dutch in 1622 CE, followed by the French in 1628 CE). These treaties were generally drawn up on Algerian terms and were a formal recognition that Algiers was quasi-independent. But in 1653 CE, Oliver Cromwell, the Lord Protector of England during the Commonwealth, sent a fleet to burn Tunisian corsairs in their base at Ghar Al-Milh. Nine years later, after Charles II had regained his throne, he signed a treaty that put an end to corsairing against English shipping. But even this treaty recognised Tunisian autonomy, for the Ottomans now had no role in Maghribi affairs. However, such treaties that limited the activities of North African corsairs also made it clear that an economy based on Mediterranean corsairing was no longer viable. Algerian corsairs moved into the Atlantic and raided the fisheries in Newfoundland and the coasts of Iceland, Ireland and Wales instead. A more legitimate trade grew up too: French merchants began exporting grain from Algiers and the English and French competed to set up a trading post on the Tunisian coast at Cape Bon. The consuls of the more powerful European powers became, instead, the overseers and interlocutors with the local authorities for foreign trading communities that emerged in the North African ports.

The origins of the North African state system

The political turmoil of the seventeenth century was now increasingly unsustainable and, over the succeeding century, a more permanent political structure for Northwest Africa began to emerge. There was greater political cohesion as more stable states cemented territorial identities. Except for Algiers, these were founded on local dynasties. The local economies integrated into the diplomatic and trading networks of the Mediterranean and Europe and, both for economic and political reasons, corsairing ceased. All this paved the way for European colonisation in the nineteenth century.

However, only the Alawi dynasty in Morocco has lasted from that era to the present day. It arose from the fragmented remnants of the Sa'dis, as another sharifian regime that would rule the lopsided triangle that stretched westwards between the environs of Tlemcen, in modern Algeria, the coast and the desert. Rule by *sharifs*, descendants of the Prophet, had become the basis of political legitimacy and, from their origins near Sijilmasa, the Alawis had joined the war against the Portuguese and then, during the seventeenth-century civil war in what was to become Morocco, spread their control over *zawiyas* and warlords competing for power in the remnants of the Sa'di state. The first Alawis reopened the trade route between Sijilmasa and the Mediterranean by taking control of Fez in 1666 CE and of Marrakesh three years later. Then the real founder of Alawi Morocco, Mawlay Ismail, seized control in 1672 CE and remained sultan for more than half a century.

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Ismail imposed himself by force. He crushed local warlords, recalcitrant Amazigh tribes and rebellious members of his family. He made alliances with major tribes and, trading on his sharifian ancestry, with other powerful *sharifs*, including Sufi *shaykhs* and their powerful *tariqas*. He rebuilt the tomb of Moulay Idris II in Fez and obliged the *tariqas* to move their motherhouses into the city to ensure his control of them. His instrument was an army of black soldiers, the Abid al-Bukhari. Unlike the Ottoman Janissaries, however, this was not really a slave army, but like the Janissaries, it was kept apart from the rest of society. Its soldiers swore allegiance to the sultan on the *Sahib al-Bukhari*, the great collection of traditions about the Prophet; hence the army's name (Pennell 2003; 100).

Mawlay Ismail was a builder. His new capital at Meknès, surrounded by rich farmlands in the north of Morocco, was remote from Iberian or Turkish attack, and had none of the political attachments of Fez. He fortified Fez and Rabat, and constructed *mellahs*, where the Jewish population lived close to the royal palace, under his protection and control. His policies were, however, expensive in terms of money, labour and the cruelty required to extort the resources that such initiatives required.

Mawlay Ismail punished his enemies severely. Some ulama protested that his taxes went beyond what Islam permitted and one brave scholar, Hasan al-Yusi, warned him that “oppression, and violence and haughtiness and tyranny and iniquity” invalidated his right to rule. He took the precaution, of then going into exile to avoid the sultan's anger (Pennell 2003; 107). After the sultan died in 1727 CE, waves of rebellion surged across Morocco as his repressive regime relaxed its grip. Although he had many sons (one of whom, Abdallah, was removed four times from power but then proclaimed again five times), the legitimacy of the Alawi family as the ruling elite was not challenged. When Abdallah died in 1757 CE, his son, Sidi Mohammed III (1757-1790), was determined to rebuild the state on commerce, not on force.

Sidi Mohammed broke up the black slave army and relied on tribal contingents instead, whose loyalty he secured by tax exemptions. Finance was so crucial to the survival of the state that the word for ‘treasury’ – *makhzan* – came to apply to the government structure as a whole. Taxes on producers in the countryside were replaced by a gate tax (*maks*) imposed on goods when they were brought into the cities, and by developing international trade. Yet once again, when he died, the country disintegrated. His successor, Yazid (1787-1792), dismantled much of his father's system, and Mawlay Sulayman, Yazid's brother, took many years to bring his various opponents – from within the Alawi family, from rebellious *qabilas* in the mountains and from some *tariqas* – into line. Nonetheless, when he died, the Alawi sharifian dynasty still dominated the political structure. Unlike previous dynasties, it had not collapsed after a few generations. The most potent danger that faced his successor, Mawlay Abd al-Rahman, came from European powers that were not confined to isolated coastal outposts, but threatened the fabric of the North African state system itself instead (Pennell 2003; 108–113).

While the Alawis used sharifian legitimacy to create what would become Morocco, and backed it with military force, soldiers in the Ottoman provinces used military force to impose their will, deriving their religious legitimacy from the Ottoman sultan, although they had little truck with the sultan-caliph's temporal authority. In doing this, they established two dynastic systems, first in Tunis, in 1705, and then in Tripoli, in 1711 CE, that fixed those state structures in place. The Qaramanlis in Tripoli collapsed at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but the Husaynid dynasty in Tunis lasted through to independence in 1956 CE.

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Both the Qaramanlis and the Husaynids emerged out of civil wars that left a legend of nightmarish violence. Ibn Abi al-Diyaf, the famous nineteenth-century chronicler of Tunis, and Ibn Ghalbun, his less-well-known equivalent in eighteenth-century Tripoli, both recorded stories of soldiers who ate the bodies of their enemies as acts of ritual triumphalism. These stories are impossible to credit as being truthful, but they were symptoms of a politically malign society (Pennell 1991; 159–180). Both these crises ended when military officers seized power. In 1705 CE, Husayn bin Ali, a cavalry officer of Greek descent, declared himself Bey, thus founding the Husaynid dynasty in Tunis which was to last until 1956 (Perkins 1986; 61). In 1711 CE, Ahmad Qaramanli, a *kulughli* officer, seized power in Tripoli, proclaimed the triumph of the sharia, imposed order and appointed himself pasha (St John 2008; 34). Both dynasties declared their allegiance to the Ottoman sultan, yet both were, in reality, completely autonomous.

Algiers did not join this trend towards autonomous dynasticism. Europeans used terms such as “this nest of wasps, this den of thieves” to describe it, but things were more complicated than that. Certainly, the Ottoman state in Algiers did not indigenise itself in the same way as Tunis and Tripoli. The social groups and territories over which the state sought to exercise control were very complicated and the sources of available revenue were more disparate than in Tunis or Tripoli. They formed an overwhelmingly rural society in which agriculture produced most of the wealth, and over most of that society Algiers and the other coastal cities such as Oran and Constantine only had nominal control (McDougall 2017; 13). Some parts, on the edges of the desert, were always extremely arid or at best semi-arid. Such regions produced food only through very intensive management of the environment that relied on lineage relationships and servile or semi-servile labour to maintain its viability. Other areas were arid only on some occasions, whilst at other times, when the annual rainfall was good, they supported extensive wheat cultivation on the plains and pastoralism in the mountains. In addition, locust swarms frequently destroyed harvests. Agriculture, in short, only provided a fragile existence and the rulers in the cities had only partial control of either the land or the people on it. The inhabitants of Kabylia, packed into mountain villages, spoke Berber not Arabic or, still less, Turkish; although they supplied the plains and cities with workers, their own family and tribal-based structures controlled their mountain redoubts, not the authorities in Algiers, Constantine or Oran (McDougall 2017; 15–19).

Some of the urban elite were themselves very big landowners in the Mitidja, the immensely fertile plain around Algiers whose gardens and estates supplied the capital with food, and they also controlled access to much of the state-owned land. Thus, the governing elite, in one way or another, dominated the distributive powers of the state in the environs of Algiers. Further afield, the state worked through local intermediaries – *qajids* and *shaykhs* – to keep control, using tribal contingents to collect taxes (McDougall 2017; 2, 23). In the cities themselves, power and wealth lay with a political and economic class that had originated either in Islamic Iberia or with Christian converts to Islam – the *ulujs* – and the Turkish or semi-Turkish *kulughli* community. Andalusis and *ulujs* could amass enormous personal wealth, from corsairing and commerce, but nothing was stable because, although this ruling class was linked by ties of patronage, its members suffered frequent changes of fortune. It was easy for an individual to lose even the highest office (McDougall 2017; 35).

Power was inherently unstable. In the late seventeenth century, the Algerian corsair *raises* in the *diwan* had made one of their number dey, and from then on, the *diwan* was the

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forum of political competition. The sultan in Istanbul confirmed the deys whom the *diwan* approved, coins were struck inscribed with the sultan's name and the sermons in mosques mentioned the caliph in Istanbul (McDougall 2017; 38). All these practices legitimised the dey's authority locally, but internationally it was his ability to make treaties with foreign governments that legitimised the dey's military and economic authority. Algiers negotiated 40 international treaties between 1661 and 1772 CE, thus underlining the state's international legitimacy.

In fact, all the North African rulers made their own treaties with European states. Sometimes the objectives were political. Mawlay Ismail was anxious to remove all the foreign enclaves from Morocco and was able, in the late seventeenth century, to chase away the Spanish from their enclaves on Morocco's Atlantic coast, but not those on the Mediterranean. So, instead, he sought an alliance with the Bourbon French king, but Louis XIV would not endanger his own relations with the Ottomans, and when a member of the Borbón family took over the Spanish throne in 1700, family loyalties predominated. The alternative was the English and, after they evacuated Tangier in 1684, Mawlay Ismail made a series of commercial treaties with them in the first half of the eighteenth century (and none with any other European power). England became Morocco's largest trading partner, and trade was the lifeblood of the Ismaili state. Morocco exported wax, wool, copper, tin, lead, dates, almonds, ostrich feathers and hides. And it imported silk, cotton and spices from the Levant via Livorno, alum and sulphur from Italy, and cloth, arms and gunpowder from France and Britain. Ismail sold monopolies in different commodities to his close protégés, binding them ever closer to him, but he used his army to retake control of the trans-Saharan trade routes. Two hundred and fifty years later, that would become the basis for Moroccan claims to the Western Sahara (Pennell 2003; 98–102).

After Sidi Mohammed III (1757–1790) rebuilt Alawi power following a generation of civil war, he took commerce to a higher stage. He signed treaties with most of the European powers and in 1765 CE started building a new port at Mogador (Essaouira), giving it a monopoly of all trade in the south of the country. The new city boomed, in partnership with mercantile agents of the sultan (the *tujjar al-sultan*), many of them Jews with commercial links across the Mediterranean. Having failed to retake Ceuta and Melilla, Sidi Mohammed even made peace with Spain, with a treaty in 1780 CE (Pennell 2003; 109).

Tunis had started signing treaties with European countries in the second half of the seventeenth century (11 between 1662 CE and 1700 CE and 32 in the eighteenth century). Tunis also became a cash-crop economy in the eighteenth century, exporting huge quantities of olive oil, as well as cloth and felt hats, across the Ottoman Mediterranean. Caravans brought slaves and gold from the Sahara, and sponges and coral were harvested off the Tunisian coast. In the 1790s half of all ships offloading at Marseilles came from Tunis (Boubaker 2020; 149, Gallagher 1983; 33).

One sixteenth-century pasha had told King Charles II of England that Tripoli was a "Sterill Country" (Pennell 1985; 101–112), and Tripoli made nine treaties, mainly with Britain or France between 1662 and 1711 CE. When Ahmad Qaramanli came to power, he tried to stimulate the economy. His efforts to encourage agriculture on the coast were fairly futile – in 1767 the British consul in Tripoli talked of the soil being nothing but sand even in the gardens outside the city walls (Pennell 1982). A more important part of his plan was to extend control over the eastern trade routes through the Sahara, by incorporating the Fezzan in the heart of the desert into his realm. This began to define the shape of Libya under colonial rule and, subsequently, as an independent state. Ahmad made treaties with

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France, Britain and the Netherlands, sometimes more than once. Even after he died in 1745, plunging Tripoli into political turmoil made worse by plague, famine and economic stagnation for most of the rest of the century (St John 2008; 35), the floundering regime continued to sign treaties with European states.

North African agreements with European powers were commonly called “treaties of peace and commerce”, but the Algerian ones dealt far more with questions of corsairing than those of the other states. In Algiers, corsairing still provided approximately one third to one half of the revenue of the state in the mid-eighteenth century. Even in 1822 CE, tributes paid by Naples, Sweden, Denmark and Portugal to exempt their ships from capture totalled \$96,000 while taxes on Algiers and the surrounding countryside brought in revenues of \$268,000. In Tunis, the commercial environment became more profitable than corsairing in the late seventeenth century and corsairing activity quickly decreased as investors sought higher returns through trade. But the Tunisian rulers did not formally abandon the practice and corsairing rebounded as an important part of the Tunisian economy in the mid-eighteenth century. Hammuda Pasha (1782–1812) took advantage of the Napoleonic wars to rebuild the fleet, which then captured several European ships. The British consul warned that Hammuda might be able to close the Mediterranean. In 1798 CE, Tunisian ships made 100 corsairing trips and brought back more than 1,000 slaves. This was a state fleet – it was used against Algeria in a war in 1813 CE. In the early nineteenth century trade again became more profitable, and in 1806 CE the war fleet simply transformed into a merchant fleet in a matter of months (Perkins 1986; 64, Boubaker 2020; 149–150). Similarly, in Morocco, Sidi Mohammed II briefly revived corsairing until he reached the same conclusions about profitability.

The most successful attempt to recommence corsairing was in Tripoli. Yusuf Karamanli made himself pasha in 1795 CE after a civil war that caused a general collapse of authority and great hunger in the city, so he revived corsairing on a large scale. In 1795 CE he had only three ships, but by 1805 he had 24. The threat was enough to force Spain, Venice, Austria, Ragusa, Sardinia and Sweden to pay large annual subsidies to exempt their shipping from attack. This tactic carried the seeds of disaster, for in 1796 CE, Tripoli corsairs took ships from the newly independent United States which then made a treaty agreeing to an indemnity payment. When the American government did not pay up, Tripoli ships captured more American vessels and in 1801/02 CE the new American navy blockaded Tripoli. In 1804 CE American warships bombarded Tripoli and then invaded the far east of Yusuf’s domains by taking the town of Derna in 1805 CE and marching on his capital. Although the invasion did not get far towards its destination, Yusuf quickly made peace (St John 2008; 41–43).

The Tripoli war, the young United States’ first foreign war, gave the North African states notice that corsairing was on the way out. In 1814/15 CE, when the Napoleonic wars were over, the Congress of Vienna abolished corsairing. Early in the following year, the British admiral, Lord Exmouth, took a joint Anglo-Dutch naval force to each of the capitals to demand an end to corsairing and the release of Christian prisoners. First in Tunis and then in Tripoli, the authorities crumbled in front of the threat (Brown 1974; 60, Folayan 1979; 71–72). The dey of Algiers did not, so Exmouth bombarded the city and destroyed its navy. The Algerians swiftly rebuilt their fleet, but in 1830 CE the French finally brought the Algerians to heel by invading the country, heralding a colonial occupation which was to last for 132 years. The excuse for invading lay in the French government’s refusal to pay a longstanding debt to Algerian merchants who were closely connected to the dey, and during an audience he gave to the French consul, the dey smacked him across the face with a

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ceremonial fly-whisk. This, the French government announced, was so grave an insult that they declared war and despatched an army of 37,000 men to begin the conquest of Algeria (Thomson 1994; 111–113). In reality, it was no more than a cover for French imperialism and a domestic distraction from the future of the post-Napoleonic monarchy.

Algeria's agricultural riches, and the more ephemeral hubris of the French monarchy, were more important objectives, but the establishment of European control did bring an end to the corsairing within the Ottoman regencies. By agreeing to abandon corsairing, Tunis and Tripoli managed to escape occupation for another 50 and 80 years respectively, although Ottoman troops that landed in Tripoli in 1835 did away with the Qaramanlis and Tripolitan autonomy forever. Morocco remained outside imperialist clutches for almost another century, and it abandoned corsairing the year before the French army occupied Algiers. It was not the British or the French or even the Americans who forced it to stop; indeed, with a treaty in 1786 CE, Morocco had become the first state in the world to recognise the United States as an independent state in its own right. Muley Abderrahman (1822–1859), stricken by debt, briefly flirted with corsairing once more, but when his ships took an Austrian vessel, that country's warships bombarded Larache, an event that decided him to end corsairing (Pennell 2003; 105). The end of corsairing marked, but did not cause, the opening of a new relationship with Europe and the western powers that ran on political and economic concerns – control of territory and resources – that underpinned a new imperial age.

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