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THE INVENTION OF MOROCCAN ISLAM

Edmund Burke III

Moroccan Islam, the subject of this chapter, constitutes a particular case. In the inchoate formative period (1900-1906), French scholars concentrated upon studies of "Islam in Morocco" (i.e., specific cultural manifestations and social forms). After 1906 under the influence of the laws of colonial entropy, a disciplinarily defined field, "Moroccan Islam," emerged. What began with the remarkable open and historically grounded studies of Georges Salmon and Edmond Doutté in the early 1900s undertook a long slow fall into the bestiary of colonial stereotypes of Islam. That Michaux-Bellaire's "L'organisme marocain" (1908) was the summum of colonial knowledge about Moroccan Islam tells us all we need to know about the possibilities of achieving discursive escape velocity. Thus the French failed to produce a functional analysis of the cultural roots of Moroccan resistance, ignored the role of the ulama, its links to the countryside, and to Islamic centers in the Middle East. The ideologically polarized political context prohibited original thought.

By 1912, French ethnographers had produced a comprehensive inventory of Moroccan social groups and institutions: the makhzan, the Arab tribes of the south Atlantic plains, and the Berber groups of the high Atlas.(1) In the space of little more than a decade the books, journals and articles on Morocco written in French had swelled to an impressive total. If the extent of the bibliography were an index of expertise, then the French could claim to be experts on Morocco. But looked at another way one might wonder about the utility of "scientific imperialism." For example, it had not predicted or explained any of the major anti-French uprisings of the period. Why was it while numerous major rebellions marked the pre-colonial period, none were forecast by the French? Why were there no studies of the Kattaniya, Aynayniya, and Darqawa – the sufi turuq that led the anti-French resistance? Why was there so little interest in the Hafiziya, the movement that came closest to ending French dreams of acquiring Morocco? More generally, why were French Morocco watchers so unprepared for the social movements that repeatedly challenged their policies between 1900 and 1912? Might there be a link between the success of French ethnographers in mapping Moroccan realities, and their inability to perceive its politics? This chapter explores the

(1) There was one major exception to the ethnographic inventory: the tashilhyt-speaking Berbers of the Middle Atlas, who as late as 1912 remained mostly unknown.

question of why a self-consciously social scientific venture should have gone so seriously astray.

To understand the reasons why the French failed either to foresee or understand Moroccan opposition to their policies, we need to shift our attention to French representations of Islam in Morocco, a topic that we have reserved for discussion here. The invention of "Moroccan Islam" as a complex of stereotypes sought to explain Moroccan cultural realities and justify the French conquest. The discourse on Moroccan Islam provided the explanatory frame through which French and subsequent researchers perceived Moroccan culture. The discourse on Moroccan Islam was shaped by the general limitations of colonial knowledge systems and more specifically by the defects of the Algerian colonial gospel. As a consequence it contained hidden blind spots that inhibited the French ability either to perceive or to explain Moroccan responses to French actions. To be sure, the tabula rasa with which they began the study of Moroccan history and culture in 1900 also played a role. Finally "Moroccan Islam" was shaped by the discursive context of pre-World War I French politics.

The French discourse on Moroccan Islam gradually took shape between 1904 and 1912. As a system of explanation, it loosely integrated pre-existing conceptual/ ideological sub-discourses on Sufism, popular religion, sharifism and the role of the ulama. The first two were components of the Algerian intellectual toolkit imported with some modification (given the proliferation of Moroccan folk religion and its political potency) for the study of Moroccan Islam. By contrast, the study of sharifism and the ulama, which had been relatively undeveloped in the Algerian literature, became in the hands of Doutté and his followers established approaches to religion in Morocco. While the essential components of the discourse on Moroccan Islam did not change over the course of the colonial period, they did undergo significant changes. They reached their mature form in Henri Terrasse's two volume *Histoire du Maroc* (1950).(2) Like the light of a dying star that continues to diffuse through the heavens long after its actual extinction, the colonial discourse on Moroccan Islam has continued to radiate outward in the post-colonial era, providing a lens through which observers (both expatriate and Moroccan) continue to perceive Morocco.

How then did the discourse on Moroccan Islam begin? Let's begin with an examination of its Algerian components, before proceeding on to a discussion of its specifically Moroccan components. By 1900 French experience of Islam

(2) Henri Terrasse, *Histoire du Maroc: des origines à l'établissement du protectorat français,* Casablanca, Éditions Atlantides, 1950.

in colonial Algeria had cohered into an intellectual toolkit that was readily transferable to Morocco. The toolkit incorporated intellectual protocols and categories for the study Algerian Sufi orders and the study of popular Islamic beliefs and practices. At a deeper level, it drew upon French institutional memory of the Algerian conquest and the administration of Algerian Muslims. A final element that underlay the French approach to the study of Islam in Algeria was the deep-seated fear of pan-Islamic conspiracies and Sufi-led uprisings.(3) The symptomatic readings and diagnostics of Algerian Islam by French colonial observers provided a central element in their understanding of Sufi brotherhoods as potential centers of resistance. Periodic intelligence panics about Muslim politics were thus the reciprocal of ethnographic ratiocinations about the Muslim Algerian other. In them we see in its most naked form the ideological component of French colonial ethnography.(4)

French studies of Islam in Morocco drew upon the Algerian colonial legacy of thought and practice on Islam in to 1900. French studies of Algeria were generationally sedimented, with studies of Islamic millenarianism preceding works on Sufi turuq, and the study of popular beliefs arriving only toward the end of the nineteenth century. This sequence matched up with the phases of the French conquest. Historically the anti-French resistance in Algeria had been led by the sufi orders, notably the Qadiriya, which under the leadership of Amir Abd al-Qadir fought for more than a decade. Following his defeat in 1847, resistance continued in the countryside led by the Rahmaniya and the Darqawiya, regionally based turuq that posed less of a threat. By then the military balance had begun to shift decisively toward the French. In the course of the conquest, the French learned that not all Sufi orders were opposed to them and that they could take advantage of the micro-politics of inter-tariqa relationships to win their support.

A case in point was the Tijaniya brotherhood. Based at Ain Madi in the Algerian Sahara, the Tijaniya had been rivals of Amir Abd al-Qadir ‘s Qadiriya order well before the French conquest. When Abd al-Qadir became the leader of Algerian resistance in 1834 the Tijaniya refused to join his movement. Instead they approached the French, seeking an alliance. After Abd al-Qadir’s defeat in 1847, the Tijaniya to cement their position in the High Plateaux and the Saharan oases of Oran province with French backing.(5)

(3) Julia Clancy-Smith, «In the Eye of the beholder: Sufi and Saint in North Africa and the Colonial Production of Knowledge, 1830-1900,» *Africana Journal*, 15, 1990, pp. 220-257.

(4) Jean Servier, *Le Péril d’avenir: le nationalisme musulman en Egypt, en Tunisie, en Algérie,* Constantine, E. Boet, 1913.

(5) Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *The Tijaniyya*: *A Sufi Order in the Modern World*, London, oxford Universty Press, 1965, pp. 58-82 for French attempts to ally with the Tijaniya in Algeria.

Much the same story played out in Tunisia where again the local Tijani zawiya proved a willing French collaborator. But French dreams of using the Tijaniya to advance their cause elsewhere in Africa failed. Although the Moroccan branch of the zawiya seemed at first a natural supporter of French policy, the Moroccan Tijanis refused to play ball with the French.(6) Much the same occurred in West Africa, where the leaders of the Tijaniya also refrained from attaching themselves to the French. These failures reveal a faulty analysis of the Tijaniya, which instead of having a centralized structure, was comprised of semi-autonomous local franchises.

A second example dates from the 1880s. Finding themselves challenged by growing British influence in Morocco, the French cast about for influential Moroccan figures whom they might use to counter their rivals. Having little or no regular access to the Moroccan court or the makhzan (where Britain was strong) they sought to identify Sufi turuq and rural elites with whom it might be possible to ally. A promising candidate was the Sharif of Wazzan, Mawlay al-Ahmad al-Wazzan. Based in the northern city of Wazzan, the Wazzaniya had great influence throughout Morocco. The Sharif was regarded as a quasi-divine personage by his followers. French interest was attracted as well by the fact that the Wazzaniya had branches in colonial Algeria, like the Tijaniya. The Quai d'Orsay gave him a regular stipend, and accorded him protégé status, which by the arrangements in place with the Moroccan government exempted him from local Moroccan taxes and other civic obligations. A crisis was provoked in 1884 when the French Minister Ordega sought to use the Sharif of Wazzan to force Sultan Mawlay al-Hasan to accept a reform package. This only succeeded in alarming the sultan however, and in the resulting crisis the reform plan was abandoned and Ordega withdrawn in disgrace. This incident appears to have galvanized the ulama and notables of Fez who opposed to the superstitious practices of Sufi orders like the Wazzaniya. The Sharif's influence declined steadily thereafter, and his successors failed to carry his legacy forward.(7) To add to this policy debacle, the Algerian branch of the Wazzaniya proved hostile to French rule, and refused to cooperate with them.

In Algeria, the Sufi orders did indeed provide the backbone of several of the most important movements of resistance to the French. Abd al-Qadir al-Jaza'iri, the leader of the main opposition force in the period 1832-1847, was also head of Qadiriya *tariqa* in Algeria and employed its connections in organizing the anti-French struggle. Therefore the French made a point of keeping close

(6) *The Tijaniyya*, pp. 93-98; Also Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, "The Salafiyya Movement in Morocco : the religious Bases of Moroccan nationalist movement". St Anthoy's papers, XVI, 1965, pp. 90-103.

(7) Abun-Nasr, "The Salafiyya Movement," pp. 96-99.

tabs on the Qadiriya. Similarly, bcause the Rahmaniya *tariqa* played a key role in the organization of the Moqrani rebellion (1871-872), police files were opened on Rahmaniya adepts all over Algeria. Other brotherhoods known for their anti-French activities, the Darqawa, for example, were also closely watched. *Fin de siècle* panics about Sanusiya conspiracies prompted further recurring episodes. The underlying mentality can be accessed in Jean Servier's *Le Péril d'avenir*.(8) It is worth noting, however, that such fears received no support from Edmond Doutté, who stated in 1901: "The religious brotherhoods are not secret societies….They come in all forms…In reality the brotherhood is simply the common form of social organization in the Maghreb." He was even willing to acknowledge that mistakes had been made in the past:

> *"It is possible that in Algeria we have ourselves contributed to giving the brotherhoods a bit of a character of secret societies. This would be a very natural evolution following our domination, even as it is also quite natural that these associations provide refuge for fanatics appalled by contact with unbelievers. We don't consider them dangerous in the current state of things*."(9)

Because of this history, it was predetermined that the French would have discovered the Sufi orders as an object of study. The methodology they developed called for the head of the Arab Bureau to list the Sufi brotherhoods under his jurisdiction, along with their leaders and members. By 1890 Sufi brotherhoods were no longer much of a political threat to the French, and their study had become highly routinized and bureaucratized along the lines of Octave Depont and Xavier Coppolani's *Les confréries religieuses musulmanes* (1897). The regular census of Sufi orders, their leadership and membership was a task assigned to the native affairs officers of the local Arab Bureaux. That it was not quite a pointless task was demonstrated in the post-World War I years, when in response to the emergence of the proto-nationalist Association of Algerian Muslim Ulama (AUMA), the French sought to mobilize the pro-French marabouts and Sufi brotherhoods utilizing their colonial connections.(10)

Early studies of Moroccan *turuq* tended to follow the Algerian precedent in listing the numbers of adherents of sufi orders in each village, the name of the local *muqaddam* (leader), and other relevant features.(11) Given the

(8) Jean-Louis Triaud, *La Légende noire de la Sanusiyya: Une confrérie musulmane saharienne sous le regard français (1840-1930),* Paris, Editions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 1995.

(9) *Doutté, "Une mission d'études au Maroc,"* R. C.(1901), p. 175.

(10) Ali Merad, *Le réformisme musulman en Algérie de 1925 à 1940. Essai d'histoire religieuse et sociale*, The Hague, Mouton & Co., 1967.

(11) For example, see the lists of Sufi brotherhoods in the *Villes et Tribus du Maroc* series.

delays between the compilation of the data and its publication, such studies were obsolete before they were printed. Indeed, the study of Sufi orders was never a high priority for French policy makers. One sign of this is that a survey of Moroccan brotherhoods along the lines of Depont and Coppolani was published only in 1951 as the protectorate entered its final days. Its author was Georges Spillmann, a career native affairs officer (rather than a civilian).(12) By this date, the *turuq* had long since ceased to have political weight in Moroccan politics. In a last-ditch effort to save the protectorate, French authorities sought to enlist Abd al-Hay al-Kattani, head of the pro-French Kattaniya *tariqa*, to demonstrate in favor of the puppet king Ben Arafa only reinforces this judgment.(13)

In the elaboration of the discourse on Moroccan Islam studies of rural folk religion were a second focal point of research.(14) As exemplified in the approach of researchers like Doutté, the study of marabouts, saint cults, curing practices and spirit possession provided the larger frame around which the discourse on Moroccan Islam was constructed. For Doutté, the intellectual task was to locate Moroccan religious beliefs and practices in an evolutionary scheme and link them up to Frazerian symbols. Writing about Morocco in a 1901 research report, he states: "No country is more amenable to the study of the survival of old religions than Mohamedanism: springs, trees, especially stones still play an important role in popular religion." While fascinating in themselves, Doutté and his colleagues regarded such cults as fossilized relics, throw-backs to the early days of Islam. They firmly believed that Moroccan superstitious beliefs were incapable of change, which in their eyes made them the best possible remedy against the preachings of anti-French prophets. However, neither studies of Sufism in the tradition of the Arab Bureaux, nor studies of popular Algerian religion à la Doutté were calculated to shed light on the cultural roots of Moroccan resistance.

Sharifism (lineal descent from the family of the prophet), and *baraka* (blessing or charisma) were additional components of Moroccan Islam that while although known in Algeria, had never been culturally significant there. This was in part due to the fact that Algeria was part of the Ottoman empire, whose sultan traced his lineage to the prophet. In Morocco, following the maraboutic crisis of the sixteenth century, the principle of sharifism became

(12) Georges Spillmann, *Esquisse d'histoire religieuse du Maroc; confréries et zaouïas*., Paris, J. Peyronnet, 1951.

(13) Charles-André Julien, *Le Maroc face aux imperialismes*., Paris, Editions Jeune Afrique, 1978, chapter 8.

(14) Edmond Doutté, *L'Islâm algérien en l'an 1900, Alger,* Giralts, 1990, 181p; *Notes sur l'Islâm maghrebin: les Marabouts, Reveue de l'histoire des religions,* Paris, 1899; and *Magie et religion dans l'Afrique du Nord*, Alger, 1909.

central to Moroccan politics and sharifian lineages proliferated widely. It was common that local Sufi leaders and marabouts might claim a sharifian origin. Sharifism provided believers with alternative access to the divine. Non-elites as well as those of well-established families might claim sharifian descent. The ruling Alawi dynasty's claim of descent from the family of the Prophet served as a guarantee of its authority and legitimacy. However, rival sharifian lineages also existed. These included (in addition to the Alawis) the Idrisis (who first brought Islam to Morocco), the Sa'dians (the previous dynasty) and other lesser sharifian lineages like the Sharqawis. Given the plethora of individuals and groups asserting sharifian descent, French observers found it difficult to grasp the significance of the assertion of a sharifian origin to Moroccan politics. Recalling the history of French dynastic struggles, they calculated the chances that a collateral branch of Moroccan sharifs might make a bid for power. French diplomat Eugène Descos sought to put to rest such obscure fears in his *Le Maroc d'aujourd'hui*. Drawing upon the insider knowledge of Kaddour Ben Ghabrit, an Algerian Muslim in the employ of the French Legation, his book provided one of the earliest and clearest explanations of the role of sharifs in the Moroccan polity.(15) More authoritative (because it was based upon Arabic manuscripts) was a 1904 article by Georges Salmon in *Archives marocaines* that described in detail the different sharifian lineages in Morocco, and their relationships and rivalries.(16)

A third component of the discourse on Moroccan Islam was *baraka* (charisma), a quasi-sacral power held to inhere in the sultan, but also held by lesser saints and Sufi leaders. The Moroccan sultan's power derived from his possession of *baraka*. His mere touch (a manifestation of his supernatural power) could heal the sick, while his curse could blight crops and destroy lives. Sharifism and *baraka* were intimately linked to popular Islamic practices more generally. (The Sharif of Wazzan was also widely reputed for his *baraka*). *Baraka* was not something one could claim for oneself; rather it was accorded by popular attribution. French observers were slow to appreciate the enormous significance of *baraka*, its multivalent spiritual power, and its quixotic nature in Moroccan culture. Doutté was the first French observer to appreciate the importance of *baraka*.(17) Here we see the influence of the Swedish ethnographer Edouard Westermarck (1862-1939), whose *Ritual and Belief in Morocco* was the first documented study to draw attention to

(15) Aubin, *Le Maroc d'aujourdhui* 8th edition; first edition 1904, Paris, Armand Colin, 1913, pp. 332-334.

(16) Salmon, "Les chorfa idrisides de Fès d'après Ibn aṭ-Ṭayyib Al-Qadiry ", *Archives marocaines* t.1, 1904, pp. 425-453.

(17) Edmond Doutté, "Une mission d'études au Maroc," Rapport sommaire d'ensemble (Rens. Col. et Doc. Comité Afr. fr., XI, 1901, pp. 161-178). *R.C.* (August 1901), 173.

the role of *baraka* in Moroccan culture).[18] Only with the establishment of the protectorate however, did *baraka* assume a central role in the discourse on Moroccan Islam, becoming the cultural feature that best distinguished Moroccan culture from that of other Muslim societies.

A final way in which Morocco differed from Algeria was the much greater role of the ulama in resistance. Unlike Algeria, Morocco had never been part of the Ottoman empire and the institutions of urban Islam had not suffered the devastation of the French conquest (especially hard on mosques, madrasa and waqf). Indeed, after the French conquest Algerian ulama fled to Fez, Tunis, Cairo and Damascus. Those who remained (except those in eastern Algeria, especially Constantine) witnessed the systematic destruction of Islamic religious institutions by the French, powerless to affect the course of events. By contrast, the Moroccan ulama retained an autonomous intellectual and political authority unknown in colonial Algeria. Also unlike Algeria, the Moroccan ulama (especially the ulama of Fez) played a crucial role in galvanizing Moroccan opposition to the French in the period under study. Although the Moroccan ulama were badly split prior to 1912, some of their members (especially Muhammad ibn Abd al-Kabir al-Kattani) played leading roles in opposing the French. In 1904 members of the Fasi ulama were actively involved in the Fez *majlis al-a'yan*. They also led the December 1907 movement to depose Abd al-Aziz and to swear allegiance *(bay'a*) to Abd al-Hafiz in January 1908. Despite this history of activism, French researchers displayed little interest in studying the Moroccan ulama. In this respect studies of Morocco resembled colonial Algeria. The Moroccan ulama inspired no book length studies, and only a few articles, most of which emphasized their superstitious and backward nature, rather than the roots of their political authority. Nor were there studies of the premier institution of higher learning in Morocco, the Qarawiyin mosque university of Fez. The absence of studies of the ulama, especially those in touch with Middle Eastern currents of reform, left French Morocco specialists without a means of understanding some of the most important challenges their policy confronted. The one significant exception was Descos' *Le Maroc d'aujourd'hui* (1904), which drew upon the insider knowledge of Kaddour Ben Ghabrit, an advisor to the French Legation in Tangier. Descos was among the first to stress the political and intellectual heterogeneity of the Fasi ulama, and to recognize their links to currents of political and religious reform originating in the eastern

(18) Westermarck, *Ritual and Belief in Morocco*, pp. 35-261. First published in Swedish as *The Moorish Concept of Holiness (Baraka)* in *Ofversigt af Finska* Vetenscaps, Societetens Forhandlingar, LVIII (1915-1916), sec. B no. 1, Helsinki, 1916. Westermarck's authority derived from his long residence in Morocco and his voluminous and detailed ethnography.

Mediterranean.[19] This was a rare perspective for the time: until the end of the colonial empires, European researchers on Islamic societies (not just Morocco) comfortably regarded the ulama as unworthy of study: the heyday of what is sometimes called "ulamology" (the study of the ulama) lay well in the future.[20]

Viewed in a larger perspective, Moroccan Islam was a composite construction that linked the Ecole d'Alger's approach to marabouts, folk religious practices, the Bureau Arabe statistical approach to sufi orders, Aubin and Gaillard's studies of the ulama of Fez. As I have argued above, most of the elements of what would become Moroccan Islam were present by 1904, the ensemble was slow to cohere. Most of the studies of Islam were written by individuals affiliated with the Ecole d'Alger (Doutté, Mouliéras Bernard, Mauchamps, Bel, Aubin and Gaillard) Interestingly, Islam was not a topic for Georges Salmon or the Mission scientifique du Maroc. Their concerns were more specific and concrete, more empirical. The one exception is Michaux-Bellaire, for whom Islam became a topic only after he became drawn in to the political field. While Doutté frequently spoke of a Moroccan organism (*l'organisme marocain*), Michaux-Bellaire seems initially not to have used the phrase. Nor initially did he speak of Moroccan Islam. There are reasons to believe he later appropriated Doutté's concept "l'organisme marocain" in his 1909 *Revue du monde musulman* article. French social thinkers of the period frequently employed organismic analogies. The works of Henri Bergson and August Comte, along with the latter's disciples and rivals (including Emile Durkheim) all manifested organismic thinking. For Michaux-Bellaire, the term "Moroccan Islam" appears to have referred more to the Berber component in Moroccan identity, than to its Muslim roots.[21] By 1912, the term Moroccan Islam was regularly used as a shorthand to signify the distinctive characteristics of the Moroccan polity. As we have seen, Moroccan Islam was the central feature in Terrasse's (1950) two volume *Histoire du Maroc*. After Moroccan independence in 1956, "Moroccan Islam" acquired new life and new meanings in expatriate (especially American) and Moroccan scholarship on Morocco.[22] Having examined the construction of the French discourse on

(19) Eugène Aubin, *Le Maroc d'aujourd'hui*, Paris, 1904; See also Henri Gaillard, *Une ville d'Islam: Fès*, Paris, 1905.

(20) Nikki R. Keddie, ed. *Scholars, Saints and Sufis: Muslim Religious Institutions Since 1500*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1972, marked the start of a trend.

(21) Edouard Michaux-Bellaire, "L'organisme marocaine", *Revue du Monde musulman*, 9, septembre 1909, pp. 1-43.

(22) For some examples, see Dale Eickelman, *Moroccan Islam: Tradition and Society in a Pilgrimage Center*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1976; Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1968; Elaine Combs-Schilling, *Sacred Performances, Islam, Sexuality, and Sacrifice*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1989; and Susan Gilson Miller and Rahma Bourqia, eds. *In the Shadow of the Sultan*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1999.

Moroccan Islam, we are now prepared to consider how despite its manifest inadequacies, it functioned in the larger French discourse on Morocco.

The invention of "Moroccan Islam" marked an important innovation in the field of French orientalism. An ideological discourse that took its origins in Algerian colonial culture and the larger political and intellectual culture of France, Moroccan Islam distinguished Morocco as an object of study from Algeria and Tunisia. It thereby enabled specialists on Morocco and Moroccan society to assert their expertise against those with credentials forged elsewhere. By delimiting a specifically Moroccan ethnographic terrain Moroccan Islam also shaped the French understanding of Moroccan politics throughout the protectorate period. It brought together elements of French knowledge about Sufism and popular Islam, along with the more explicitly Moroccan elements of sharifism and *baraka*. The realm of the ulama was regarded as traditionalist, obscurantist, as was the realm of the marabouts, whom Alfred Bel called "les hommes fetiches," miracle-working thaumaturges. By emphasizing the superstitious religious beliefs and practices that allegedly characterized Moroccan culture, the discourse on Moroccan Islam provided an explanation of Moroccan backwardness, and hence its "colonizability." In so doing it also implied that only France had the knowledge and experience to assist Morocco along the path to progress without causing major upheavals. By definition, "Moroccan Islam" excluded investigation of contemporary Muslim belief and practice in Morocco and the world. It pertained to a timeless Morocco.

The discourse on Moroccan Islam was based upon a number of cultural assumptions that bear further examination. One was the image of Morocco as a land that time forgot, an outdoor museum of archaic customs and beliefs, the abode of tradition. For the generation of Doutté, Morocco appeared as a survival from another age, its religious scholars stuck in an out-dated cultural groove. The portrait of Morocco as a place without history was convenient, for it allowed the French to portray themselves as the bearers of progress to a benighted land.

It is not that Doutté and the other researchers exaggerated the popular religious beliefs and practices of *fin de siècle* Morocco. Doutté was a splendid ethnographer of popular religion. He was right to invoke Fraser's *The Golden Bough* as a lens through which to see Morocco. But his enthusiasm for seeing Morocco in this way in effect blinded him to the fact that the Morocco of his research was already eluding his categories. (Or perhaps the opposite: that his predetermined categories created a "research Morocco" frozen in time, even though part of him knew that it was not the actually existing Morocco).

In many respects, of course the "Morocco That Was" (the title of a book by Walter Burton Harris) was indeed rich in ethnographic beliefs and practices that looked as though they stepped out of the pages of *The Golden Bough*.(23) The collected books and articles on the Moroccan colonial gospel amply document this fact. But the idea that Morocco was immune to the winds of change was deeply misleading.

The paradox of Morocco in this period was that it was simultaneously in the embrace of multiple cultural influences. Some Moroccans (especially younger ones) had traveled through Europe and the Mediterranean, read newspapers, and were in touch with the historical trends of the period. Literate and aware, their voices counted in the world of urban notables, ulama and makhzan officials. They strongly opposed a French protectorate and were willing to do what they could to stave it off. Peasants and tribesmen might have had less of an ability to calibrate the global balance of forces, or to understand events outside of the framework of religious belief, but many of them were nonetheless opposed to the prospect of foreign rule, which they saw as the source of the changes that were undermining their way of life. While deeply conservative, they were also critics of an old order that had in increasingly alarming ways appeared to have lost its way. But they were caught in the middle, uncertain which way to turn. Still others decided to bet on maintaining the old order, refused to join the Hafiziya, or to participate in other acts of resistance to Abd al-Aziz and his French puppet masters. Unfortunately for French analysts, Morocco was not a land where time stood still and the actors were condemned to endlessly repeat the same orientalist script. Thus they missed seeing the extent to which Moroccans refused to mouth the lines assigned to them. As a result they were unable to understand Moroccan resistance, so imbued were they with the magic power of the discourse on Moroccan Islam.

A second disabling assumption that was interwoven into the fabric of the French colonial gospel was that Morocco had no real politics. Instead of politics there was the eternal Sisyphean struggle of the forces of *bilad al-makhzan* to impose order upon the denizens of *bilad al-siba*. Occasional spasmodic outbursts (knee-jerk jihads) were seen by the French as unavoidable, but were devoid of political meaning. French researchers came to this conclusion because they were looking in the wrong direction. What interested them was rural folk religion, marabouts, saint cults, curing practices, spirit possession and other signs of a decaying but once vital culture. None of these groups had a significant role in opposing the French. Despite

(23) Walter Harris, *Morocco That Was,* Edinburgh and London, 1921.

a few notable exceptions (the Kattaniya, Aynayniya, and Darqawa among others), the main Sufi brotherhoods (Ar., turuq) were politically quietistic. Quasi-fossilized remnants of a Morocco that was, neither marabouts nor the Sufi orders were politically salient in the pre-protectorate period. From this to the thought that Morocco was lacking in meaningful politics was but a step. French observers and policy makers were lulled into assuming the Moroccans were push-overs, and their actions were devoid of political meaning. For the French evenemential politics such as the struggles of rival princes, makhzan factions, *grands qa'ids*, peasants and tribesmen were of no real significance in the European scheme of things (the only one that counted). Thus they could safely be disregarded. So the French ignored the extent of the politicization of Moroccan society. But they did so at their peril.

If we glance at the deeper history of colonial struggle in which the Moroccan colonial archive came into being we find additional reasons for the absence of French interest in Moroccan resistance. Studies of jihad had earlier been a subject of keen interest to French Arab Bureau officers like Charles Richards, Eugène Daumas, and others in the first decades of the French conquest.(24) This changed following the Moqrani rebellion of 1870-71, the last significant *jihad* prior to the Algerian revolution.(25) By the end of the century the military balance had shifted dramatically in favor of the French. As a result, Algerian Islam was widely if erroneously perceived as moribund.(26) There was certainly no risk in studying it. Ethnography became a career that studied cultural survivals. Morocco specialists therefore approached their subject with a sense of confidence in the supremacy of French arms that contrasts sharply with nineteenth century Algeria. By 1900 it was clear to French policy makers that while France might be inconvenienced in Morocco, there was little danger it could be militarily defeated. Thus with a few exceptions (Alfred Le Chatelier and A.G.P. Martin come to mind) French Morocco specialists were slow to become concerned when things began to go badly. Viewed through the lens of the Moroccan colonial gospel, Moroccan resistance was invisible.

A third related assumption that underlay the discourse on Moroccan Islam was that Morocco was isolated from the rest of the Muslim world, a

(24) Charles-Louis-Florentin Richard (Commandant.), *Etude sur l'insurrection du Dahra (1845-1846),* A. Besancenez, Algérie, 1846, 207 p; Eugène Daumas, *Exposé de l'état actuel de la société arabe, du gouvernement et de la législation qui la régit*, Alger, Imprimerie du Gouvernement, 1844.

(25) Nil Joseph Robin (Colonel), *L'insurrection de la Grande Kabylie en 1871*, H. Charles-Lavauzelle, 1901, 579 p; Louis-Marie Rinn, *Histoire de l'insurrection de 1871 en Algérie*, 1 vol. in-8, Alger, Jourdan, 1891, 692 p.

(26) At this precise instant, largely unnoticed by French experts, reformist Islam was already transforming the cultural and political context; see Ali Merad, *Le Réformisme musuluman en Algérie de 1925 à 1940*, Paris, Mouton, 1967; also James McDougall, *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

kind of Muslim Tibet on the doorstep of Europe.(27) Research on Moroccan folklore à la Doutté provided an accurate if partial portrait of Moroccan popular culture and its superstitious beliefs and practices. But to conclude from this that Morocco was a cultural island was a mistake. The culturalist approach of researchers like Doutté and Michaux-Bellaire missed many of the key determinants of Moroccan resistance. If we wish to transcend the Moroccan colonial gospel, we need to locate Moroccan political culture in the larger regional, civilizational and global contexts in which it existed. French blindness to Moroccan connections with the Arab East and the world at large meant that they had little awareness of the larger context of Moroccan actions, or of their political meaning. This lacuna repeatedly jeopardized their position in Morocco. While Le Chatelier's broad vision at least implicitly recognized the importance of "off stage" factors in the evolution of Moroccan politics, neither he nor anyone else sought to place events in Morocco in the wider context of world history.

Contrary to the nostrums of the Moroccan colonial gospel, some Moroccans were literate. Some were even well traveled and a few subscribed to the Arabic press of the Middle East (as well as in a few cases the French press). Some of the ulama of Fez were staunch modernist scripturalists in direct touch with the universities of the Middle East. Largely unseen by the French, Moroccan notables were in sustained contact with Ottoman authorities as well as with pan-Islamic circles that spanned the globe. They sought to forge an alliance with the Ottomans, including not only diplomatic support but also the sending of Turkish military instructors. Other individuals sought to activate pan-Islamic connections with the Middle East and beyond. The Egyptian newspaper *al-Muayyad* played a key role in forging ties between Moroccan activists and *al-ittihad al-maghrabi* ("Maghreb Unity"), a Cairo-based pan-Islamic organization whose main goal was to support anti-colonial resistance in Arab North Africa.(28) There's also evidence that South Asian Muslims were contributing to support the Moroccan resistance in the pre-1914 period.(29) French insouciance (military intelligence had picked up the scent) regarding Moroccan connections to the Arab East and to the world at large meant that they failed to grasp the larger context of Moroccan actions, or its political meaning. They produced no studies on what these connections might say about Moroccan society, the nature of Moroccan politics, or its

(27) Edmond Doutté, "Les Cause de la chute d'un sultan", (*Rens Col et Doc Comité Afr*: *Fr et Comité Maroc*, XIX, 1909, pp. 129-136, 163-168, 185-189, 220-224, 246-250, 262-267, fig, photo).

(28) Edmund Burke III, *Prelude to Protectorate in Morocco*: *Pre-Colonial Protest and Resistance, 1860-1912*, University of Chicago Press 1976, p. 161, 205.

(29) See my "Pan-Islam and Moroccan Resistance to French Colonial Penetration: 1900-1912," *Journal of African History* XIII, 1972, pp. 97-118.

capacity of resistance. While French Morocco experts focused on Islam past, they seem not to have been aware of Islam present. The discourse on Moroccan Islam raised potent intellectual obstacles to understanding social roots of resistance. Simply put, it was a form of self-blinding that repeatedly jeopardized the French position in Morocco. The search for Moroccan Islam remains an exercise haunted by ghosts.

For analysts like Doutté, Moroccan Islam was a Frazerian survival. If we look more deeply however, we see that it was religion (and not just Moroccan Islam) that was the true "survival." Here consideration of the French domestic context of the Morocco crisis can add resonance. In the aftermath of the Dreyfus affair, French domestic politics was riven by intense political conflict along a number of different lines. This included worker strikes and activism, the clash of proto-fascist street leagues like *Action française* and worker syndicalist groups on the Left. The bitter struggles between pro- and anti-clerical forces greatly polarized *fin de siècle* French society. Most important in the present context is the struggle between church and state, which had deep roots in modern French history. The French Revolution saw the seizure of church lands by the revolutionary assembly, and the requirement that the clergy swear an oath of allegiance to the republic. This was opposed by the higher clergy who together with most of the aristocrats supported the counter-revolution. The relations of church and state were regularized by the Concordat (1801), which was imposed by Napoleon I. By its terms the Papacy acquiesced in allowing the French state to name Catholic bishops, in return for which the clergy became salaried state employees and were authorized to provide primary education. This historic compromise went down poorly with the Jacobins and others on the French Left as well as with ultramontane Catholics and royalists on the Right. Nonetheless, the relations of church and state continued along the lines laid down by the Concordat until the advent of the Third Republic (1872-1940).

The Third Republic got off on the wrong footing because the monarchists were in the ascendancy and the republicans were divided. The alliance of the French church with the monarchists and the Right stoked the political fires on the Left. The hostility of Pope Leo XIII to the republic and to modernity in all its forms only exacerbated the situation. While not explicitly about church/state relations, the Dreyfus affair activated this political faultline. In an effort to disrupt the monarchists, the *parti radical* (the main left political grouping) and the French Masonic orders began to push for the legal separation of church and state. Things came to a head in 1901, when the rising tide of anti-clerical fervor in France led to the passage of the first of a series of laws

that eventually culminated in the legal separation of church and state. After a prolonged and bitter debate, the 1905 law separating church and state was passed. It abolished the Concordat, and required the Catholic church to submit to the administrative regulation of the French state. The state would no longer provide salaries to the clergy, but undertook to pay the upkeep of religious buildings. Had things remained on this plane, the compromise might have held. But the anti-clericals saw a chance to twist the knife. They inserted a clause into the law requiring the state to verify the value of the buildings and their contents, if necessary deploying police to enforce the law. As a result, French officials were sent to churches to take inventory of the vestments, altar plate, and other valuables provoking angry demonstrations and fighting, including at least one death.

The violent passions aroused by the clerical/anti-clerical struggle in this period underscore the embattled feelings of both sides. Anticlerical forces saw themselves as the inheritors of the legacy of the revolution, and anti-clericalism as the ideological core of the Jacobin tradition. For militant secularists, especially members of the Radical party, religion was seen as a holdover from another age. Through its institutional power and hold on the minds of the faithful, the church posed a major obstacle to the advance of science and progress. In response, anti-clericalists proposed a highly charged, emotional defense of the Third Republic against its enemies: monarchy, medievalism, obscurantism and papism. Only if the church and its allies were crushed could the good news of the revolution finally flower. As the chief defender of anticlerical position, the Radical Party felt itself to be embattled. Algeria was a part of France where the Radical party felt itself to be especially strong. It regularly sent six deputies to the French parliament, all of whom were *Radicaux* or *Radicaux de Gauche*. Colonial Algeria was a space in which religion was daily on view, the marker of the ethnicity of Muslims (who were legal subject but not citizens of France). Jews had been citizens since the Crémieux Decree (1871), but insofar as they retained their distinctive customs and dress, their recalcitrance was a sign that the work of the revolution remained undone. The anti-Semitic crisis of the 1890s stemmed in part from this perception. The Catholic Church in Algeria was weaker than in other parts of France. However prelates such as Cardinal Lavigerie (1825-1892), the Archbishop of Algiers, had ready connections with the higher circles of the French Right. In sum, there was much in the colonial Algerian setting to motivate Radicals. In the University of Algiers, many of the faculty regarded religion as profoundly retrograde. Doutté was therefore not exceptional in their concerns with popular religion, but he transposed

it to the study of Islam, which they saw as the chief example of the baleful influence of religion. Doutté and the others wrote from a position of great confidence in the success of the modernist project in Algeria. Thus we need to understand the emergence of this research topic in this cultural moment as deeply linked to their militant laicité.

For French Morocco specialists Moroccan Islam (and the Moroccan colonial gospel more generally) was a relic of a former age. This "research Morocco" was a product both of the cultural moment (and the dominance of organismic thinking in French social thought) as well as the political context (the apex of anti-clericalism).(30) It led researchers to emphasize the political salience of cultural features that no longer drove events in Morocco (though they once may have done so). Other features that in retrospect might have attracted their interest (the political turbulence generated by French policies) remained outside their field of vision. Their failure to understand the importance of the Hafiziya revolution (1907-1908) is instructive in this regard. In sum, while the success of the "research Morocco" in elaborating upon existing intellectual paradigms added to the prestige of French *science* and the reputations of individual scholars, from another point of view (given its dismal record in explaining or predicting events) it could equally have been considered a scandalous waste of intellectual energy.

Of course in the end French ignorance was functional. After the 1904 signing of the *entente cordiale* and the first major loan agreement, France acquired a vested interest in the existence of the makhzan. Loudly trumpeting the virtues of "peaceful penetration", they claimed that by collaborating with the Moroccan government, reforms would be rolled out, Moroccan police trained, and Moroccans would acquire, with French tutelage, the ability to govern themselves. This way of framing Morocco permitted the French to portray Moroccan protest and resistance as devoid of political meaning, merely the spasmodic response of primitive tribes, always averse to paying taxes or recognizing the authority of the makhzan. Given the level of resistance generated by French policy (Moroccans came close to expelling the French from Morocco no less than five times in the period), it is remarkable that the French and international publics never raised the issue. In part as I suggest, one can ascribe this result to the discursive power of the Moroccan colonial archive, which allowed France to claim expertise against all doubters. Indeed the discourse on Moroccan Islam was essential to the prosecution of French policy. Given the narrow political margins in the French parliament on

(30) Judith Schlanger, *Les Métaphores de l'organisme*, Paris, Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1971.

colonial questions (governments rose and fell two and three times a year), and the level of opposition and scrutiny French policy inspired internationally, the French claim to expertise on Moroccan affairs constituted a crucial card in their hand. So there could be no official admission that anything was amiss in its Morocco venture.

The Hafiziya revolution of 1907-1908 occasioned only one published analysis of what went wrong. It was Edmond Doutté's 1909 public lecture series "Les causes de la chute d'un sultan."(31) Published in *Afrique française* (two years after the event) it was a tired rehearsal of the author's views on Moroccan Islam. The entire lecture series was redolent of the trait-collecting mania of Sir James Frazier's *Golden Bough* and displayed not the slightest engagement with its ostensible subject.(32) Each of the six lectures was keyed to topics on which Doutté had previously established expertise: Moroccan Islam and and marabouts, anti-Christian fanaticism, sharifianism, sacrifice, messianism, and jihad. Dazzling in their erudition, these lectures sought to link Moroccan cultural traits to Frazerian cultural archetypes ("sacral kingship" for example). Although Doutté identified some of the causes of Abd al-Aziz's overthrow (for example why the 1901 *tartib* tax reform proved so polarizing) and displayed an acute knowledge of Moroccan factional politics, he failed to identify the social roots of Moroccan resistance. A deeply orientalist and narrowly political reading of the Hafiziya revolution by a leading Morocco expert, Doutté's lectures makes one question not only his seriousness, but that of French policy planners in general.

Despite its impressive achievements, the Moroccan colonial archive remains haunted by the inability of researchers to pierce the cloud of orientalist stereotypes that occluded their vision of Moroccan society as it actually was. In this sense the Moroccan colonial archive is a record of a systematic intelligence failure. Although numerous powerful rural rebellions marked the pre-colonial period, none were forecast by the French. The 1900-1912 period was replete with urban insurrections, yet the urban working classes and artisanal guilds excited little interest among French researchers. Nor, despite the continual French military debacle, was a detailed study of urban/rural connections written. Although rural revolts were numerous and important, they prompted no re-assessment of the social roots of Moroccan resistance. Despite major French military blunders in the Middle Atlas in 1911, 1912, and 1913, they were swept under the rug. Not until 1914 were the first studies

(31) Edmond Doutté, "Les causes de la chute d'un sultan", *op.cit.,*

(32) Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough*: *A Study in Comparative Religion*. It was first published in two volumes in 1890; in three volumes in 1900.

published of the Middle Atlas Berbers. Of course, there was no interest in the role of women, an almost inconceivable research topic at the time. Finally, other than a few studies by Nahum Slousch, there was little research on the small but important Moroccan Jewish minority.

Knowledge of Morocco was sought for a variety of reasons and under a variety of auspices in this period. Nonetheless, in the larger perspective, the Moroccan ethnographic archive was summoned into existence as part of a systematic French effort to gather information (*renseignements*) about Morocco, the better to dominate and control it. Thus there can be no doubt about the ultimate purpose for which this information was gathered. Certainly it is no great feat to discover that colonial forms of knowledge were colonialist. What else could they have been? There is no alternative epistemological space from which celestial ethnographers might have produced uncontaminated knowledge of Moroccan society. Historians are taught that sources always bear the stigmata of the time and place of their production, including the personalities of their authors, the nature of their intended audiences and the contexts into which they sought to intervene. Sources must therefore be carefully cross-questioned, and all sources are to one degree or another contaminated. Human attachments to the world inevitably make this so. The sense of superiority that we feel toward earlier generations – we know so much now that earlier people were unable to perceive – is thus deceptive, since we too labor under the same conditions of time-boundedness.

ملخص:

تصور دعاة الاستعمار الفرنسي من أمثال دوتي وميشو-بلير، المكلفون بالإخبار عن المغرب عند الاستعداد لاحتلاله، «الإسلام المغربي» بناء على منطلقات وضعوها وضعا مما كانوا قد وقفوا عليه من الواقع الإسلامي في الجزائر، وأيضا مما كان يجري يومئذ من الصراع في فرنسا بشأن فصل السلط بين الكنيسة والدولة، فروجوا لصور عن «الإسلام المغربي» لم تأخذ بعين الاعتبار خصائص البلاد فعجزوا عن توقع ما اعترض سبيل الاقتحام الاستعماري من حركات المقاومة وفي مقدمة ذلك الحركة الحفيظية.