

Introduction

The present work retells the story of state-societal relations in Morocco over the long expanse of nearly two hundred years, beginning with the French conquest of Algeria in 1830 and ending with the death of King Hassan II in 1999. This history is arranged chronologically and falls into three large tranches: the period 1830–1912, before the coming of the French Protectorate; the period of the Protectorate between 1912 and 1956, when Morocco was a dependency of France; and the post-1956 years, when Morocco became an independent state under a monarchy. Writing across this broad swath of time has necessitated painful choices about what to include and what to leave out. While the desire to be comprehensive is a worthy one, it is in reality a losing cause: the pertinent fact, the delicious quotation, the choice observation, the nutty conclusion, all selected at the discretion of the author, may not always satisfy the reader. The expert will undoubtedly find many inexcusable absences in this book. The sweeping optic has opened the way for integrating the results from many different areas of social science research that might otherwise not have found a shared home.

This narrative presents a “writing against” earlier histories of modern Morocco, whether they are in French, English or Arabic. It is inspired by recent and profound changes within the field of Moroccan historiography, in turn influenced by the political opening of the 1990s that motivated Moroccan intellectuals to “liberate” their own history from the strictures of an earlier period. Furthermore, the exposure of the crimes of the “years of lead” via testimony given to the Instance Équité et Réconciliation (the ERC, or Commission of Equity and Reconciliation) in the first years of the twenty-first century has not only seized the public mind, but also forced

people to confront a past they might have preferred to forget. Suddenly the historical profession in Morocco has become a vortex of ideas about what constitutes “authentic” history, and who is responsible for writing it. The personal histories and memories of ordinary people that welled up in the context of the ERC are valuable historical sources of the first order, filling in yawning gaps in the official record. But they are also controversial, and have set in motion a heated debate within Moroccan society about how and to what extent memory (in the absence of more conventional sources of documentation) ought to be mobilized for producing history. As a further consequence of the revelations of the “years of lead,” the need to write contemporary history, or *l’histoire du temps présent*, has been foregrounded as a major concern of Moroccan historians who have finally acknowledged that the recent past – and especially the period since 1956 – is practically a blank slate. Moreover, when considering the existing corpus, it becomes clear that earlier historical production – both native and foreign – is badly in need of revision, augmentation, and reinterpretation.

What are some of the problems that have bedeviled the writing of recent Moroccan history? What are the presuppositions that have informed it? What are the blockages that inhibit the production of a viable contemporary history? Silences that are politically motivated, myths about the sanctity of the nationalist cause, the inviolability of the monarchy, the state monopoly over representations of authenticity, the violence of state-societal relations, the occultation of sources, fears of retribution, all have played a role in shaping the contours of contemporary historical discourse. The identification of those blockages and the effort to overcome them is the endeavor that inspired this book. An overriding difficulty stems from the fact that the long middle period of the present account, the Protectorate years, have been a source of contention, included within the grand narrative of Moroccan history only on the condition that they be recognized as a time of deviation, a kind of historical “mistake.” This point of view is primarily a product of the immediate postindependence years when the fervor to write a “national” history cut loose from the weight of colonialist thinking was a driving force, but it has inexplicably endured beyond its time. Various intellectual positions have converged around the idea that the Protectorate was an aberration not especially worthy of study; in fact, for many years, it was shunned by Moroccan researchers (with one or two exceptions) as a contaminated subject to be placed in isolation. The enormous impact of the Protectorate years organizationally, administratively, culturally, and politically on the postcolonial state has been minimized, or even denied. Moreover, the deep connecting currents between the

precolonial and the colonial periods have also been obscured, which is ironic, given the fact that many of the outstanding Moroccan political personalities of the interwar period were born and schooled in the nineteenth century and their intellectual formation was decidedly of that era. As a consequence, the continuities that tie one stage of modern historical development to the next have not come together, making for a fragmented and disjunctive history rather than a cohesive, nuanced, and contextualized one. This blockage is not only a methodological error but also a conceptual one, preventing us from seeing modern Moroccan history as an unfolding, variegated, often discontinuous and textured canvas, yet all of one piece. Our critique does not constitute an argument in favor of teleology, for the errors of that approach are amply clear; rather, it is a plea for recognizing the ill effects of a discourse of total rupture, the reasons why it came about, and why it should be overcome.

A second blockage we have encountered relates to the practice of imagining the monarchy as the main symbol and arbiter of Moroccan “authenticity.” In this scenario, the Protectorate period is seen as a wasteland from which the Moroccan people emerged unscathed because of the mantle of protection thrown over them through their mystical identification with a spiritualized monarchy. This position asserts that despite its immense intrusion into every aspect of Moroccan life, colonization had little effect on Moroccans, who came out of the experience with their “pure and essential” qualities intact. The danger here is manifold. First of all, when Moroccan history is subsumed under monarchical history, other institutions in society are deprived of their agency; tribal loyalties, religious loyalties, bonds to work, to neighborhood, to other social organizations, become subsumed under the monarchical principle, where they are submerged and eventually forgotten. Moreover, the hybridity that was a by-product of the colonial experience is lost. Many of the examples we give in this account of the interpenetration of two worlds that colonialism brought about – in social customs, laws, politics, in intellectual life – are invalidated by adopting such a narrow perspective. Also filtered out are the luxuriant varieties produced by the colonial experience – social deviants, border-crossers, and experimenters of all types who enliven historical studies. Alternatively, denying the importance of the exportation of Moroccan influences abroad that were unmediated by the royal center – through expositions, world fairs, architecture, migration, and other forms of diasporic activity – is the other side of this constricting narrative. Seeing Moroccan history solely through the prism of monarchical history is a distorting practice that begs to be superseded.

A third blockage concerns the nationalist movement and the tight grip the political parties have held on recent Moroccan historiography. There are many reasons for this: the hegemony of the nationalist parties over the daily press, the myth of an all-encompassing national “unity,” the concept of nationalists as “heroes of the revolution.” Nationalist leaders, especially those on the left, have been enveloped in a cloud of hagiography that is difficult to penetrate, and the closer one gets to the relationship between Muhammad V and the nationalists, the thicker is the wrap. Myths surrounding the history of the nationalist movement are deeply embedded in the popular imagination: for example, the misleading idea that Fez dominated the nationalist movement in the 1930s and 1940s dies hard, as does the contention that the nationalists made no headway in rural areas, or that its leadership was of a single mind. Studying the regional basis of nationalist organizations, the role of women in the resistance, the relations between nationalists and communists, between nationalism and Berber ethnicity, and other pertinent topics would help us understand the incessant infighting, personality clashes and violence engendered by the nationalists among themselves and later, in the late 1950s, between the liberation armies and the state’s forces of order. These topics are only now emerging from the halo of mythologizing that surrounds the nationalist movement allowing them to be explored in greater depth.

The question of violence that is a subtheme of the nationalist endeavor must also be examined more carefully. The tendency toward violence in the Moroccan state is not necessarily explained by the struggles that accompanied its birth; rather, violence in itself calls for explanation, particularly in light of the connection between the war of liberation, the growth of a security apparatus in the independent state, and the eventual emergence of all-powerful police and intelligence services in Hassan II’s makhzan. The history of institutions of violence, like any other history, is best understood through an analysis of the events that surrounded their formation, and by placing less emphasis on ideologies of domination, or on suspected character flaws in the Moroccan “personality,” or on culturally learned behaviors, and more emphasis on the specific circumstances, fears, and assumptions of decision makers as they went about the business of state-building.

Furthermore, I have tried to bring an international dimension to this story and to situate it within the setting of regional and global events, in the belief that we cannot understand the context in which everyday decisions are made without a sense of the surrounding political landscape. This history is not informed by theories of globalization or by Marxist dialectics, but it

does implicate a dimension of Moroccan history that is often forgotten; namely, Morocco's relations with the outside world as a reflection of its domestic concerns. In the nineteenth century, global powers with their thirst for colonies determined Morocco's fate. In the 1930s, the global economic crisis impacted heavily on colonial ambitions as well as native expectations. In the immediate postwar period, the perturbations in French politics, and the growing ties between Moroccan nationalists and their European, Asian, and American friends, formed the matrix for the coalition-building that helped bring about independence. In the age of Hassan II, the monarch's vision of Morocco's place in the world, his quest for international support through subtle diplomacy that relied mainly, but not exclusively, on the West, his courting of African allies, his role in the Middle East peace process, make explicit the importance of overseas efforts in managing internal affairs. In order to understand the success of the movement for liberalization in Morocco of the 1990s, one must make note of the external actors who effectively publicized the makhzan's hidden human rights abuses to the world, forcing their recognition at home. If Morocco had lived in a closed bubble, its standing in the world today – surely not arrived at by dint of its wealth – would never have come about.

The question of sources is of perennial concern to the historian. The argument has been made often that certain periods in Moroccan history are difficult, if not impossible, to study because of an absence of written sources. While it was true for a very long time that the sources for studying the Protectorate period were not accessible, that has not been the case for nearly a decade. For some time now, excellent monographs have been produced based on the colonial archives in Rabat and Nantes. For the precolonial period, that is to say, the nineteenth century, the Moroccan and European sources are voluminous and hardly exploited. For many years, the Moroccan state archives were the atelier of the very few, selected either for their innocuous politics or their poor command of Arabic; today, they are generally open to everyone. Official documentary sources for the period of Hassan II are not, however, available, and for this most recent period scholars must resort to often inaccurate newspaper accounts, the memories of participants, and the foreign press; as a result, the writing of the history of the *temps présent* is a particularly challenging venture. The controversy surrounding the historical value of personal memory raised by the testimonies to the ERC is indicative of the problematic nature of this sort of material and the passions raised by it. It is a widely accepted fact that while memory can be misleading, it can also be treated as any other historical source by using methods of comparison, fact-checking, and common sense.

Finally, it should be noted that this study is a synthetic history covering a long stretch of time, and archival sources figure into it mainly through the use of monographs, articles, dissertations, and other studies that rely on original documents. Arabic chronicles form the substance of the early chapters of the book; specialized books and articles by both Moroccan and non-Moroccan researchers are the foundation on which the later chapters are built. This variety of material in several languages and from various disciplines brought together for the first time in one volume will hopefully increase our appreciation for the complexities of the recent Moroccan past, and offer the curious reader a refreshing lesson in history.

I

The Closing of the Era of Jihad (1830–1860)

In 1830, Morocco found itself under attack by an assertive and expansive Europe, in the shape of France's massive and well-planned attack on the city of Algiers. With this event, Morocco was ineluctably drawn into an economic and political maelstrom that would absorb its energies and color its outlook for years to come. Europe for Morocco was a familiar adversary. Morocco had lived in Europe's shadow for centuries, sometimes amicably, at other times in a state of violent confrontation. Their histories were intertwined due to proximity and political necessity. Traders from Marseilles set up a *funduq* (merchants' inn) in Ceuta in 1236; in the fifteenth century Jews banished from Iberia after centuries of settlement found a safe haven in Fez; and in the seventeenth century, Moriscos – Muslims who had adopted Catholicism but were forced to leave Spain by the Inquisition – transformed Morocco's maritime economy into a corsairing one, returning the confrontation with the Christian West to Europe's shores. From the mid-eighteenth century onward, Europe's slow and steady march toward what historians call "modernity," meaning greater degrees of state integration, capitalist development, and technological progress, inevitably shaped its attitudes and actions toward Morocco. Meanwhile, Morocco responded by adopting ploys and stratagems that it hoped would mitigate foreign influence and allow it to preserve its independence.¹

The year 1830 marks the beginning of a transition to a new phase in which Europe is no longer an intermittent factor in Moroccan affairs, but an omnipresent reality looming over political events, the economy, and even social life. Yet, at the same time, the European factor was not all-determining; other salient features of Morocco's interior landscape

continued to evolve, change and confront one another, testing the capacity of the state to meet challenges at home and abroad. Factors that moved quite independently of the European encounter remained in play, such as the struggle for quotidian existence against the forces of nature, changes in intellectual life, the tension between the sultanate and the ruling classes, and the arrival of new ideas from the Muslim East that swept over society. These themes constitute the backdrop to the drama of Morocco's tumultuous confrontation with the West in the early nineteenth century. In order to fully understand the events of 1830 in their fullest context, we must first reach back into the eighteenth century to uncover some of those factors that determined how Morocco composed its response to European aggression.

REBUILDING THE MOROCCAN STATE

Unending civil war following the death of Sultan Isma'il in 1727 led to a dispersal of state power, a damaged reputation for the ruling 'Alawi dynasty, and a devastated economy. Sultan 'Abdallah (intermittently reigned 1729–1757), son of the great state builder Isma'il, suffered the ignominy of being deposed five times during his thirty year reign; these convulsions were a harsh lesson for his own son and successor, Muhammad III (reigned 1757–1790), who was convinced that in order to preserve the dynasty, a new approach to statecraft was required.² Chronic problems produced unending troubles: a fractious, tribal-based countryside that required constant policing; a subsistence economy plagued by inadequate reserves of capital; a lack of infrastructure in the form of roads, bridges and other methods of communication. The population in the last quarter of the eighteenth century hovered between four and five million, kept stagnant by periodic waves of disease, drought, and famine.³ Other endemic problems blocked the path to the consolidation of state power, creating a permanent deficit of capacity at the center: the army was ill-organized, poorly disciplined, and made up of a rebellious praetorian guard and unreliable tribal contingents, the bureaucracy was undisciplined and corrupt, and the religious classes, or *ulama*, were notoriously independent. Finally, the navy had been disbanded, leaving Morocco's coastline denuded of protection.

Grandson of the illustrious Isma'il, Muhammad III realized that in order to bring greater stability to his rule, he had to rebuild the state from its foundations. He carried on a lively correspondence with the Ottoman court and exchanged emissaries with them. His most trusted

envoy was the historian ‘Abd al-Qasim al-Zayani, who brought home from Istanbul first-hand news about the Ottoman way of doing things – their order, rationality, and organizational strength.⁴ Following the Ottoman example, Sultan Muhammad III first revamped the state bureaucracy, extending it to the local level; then he reorganized the army, making it more responsive to his command. Finally, he revised the financial basis of the state with new methods of tax-collection that depended on customs duties derived from overseas trade. These bold reforms distinguish Sultan Muhammad III as the initiator of a new age in Moroccan history, influenced by intimations of modernity filtered through practices arriving in Morocco mainly from the East. The scope of the Sultan Muhammad III’s ambition was so wide that Moroccan historian Abdallah Laroui has called him “the architect of modern Morocco.”⁵

In order to carry out this ambitious program of reform, the sultan had to find a balance among interests that competed with and sometimes counteracted one another. On the political front, he had to give up the idea of recovering the Spanish-held territories of Melilla and Ceuta, enclaves on Morocco’s Mediterranean coast held by Spain since the fifteenth century, knowing full well that such a move would expose him to the complaint from religious quarters that he was abandoning the jihad. But he had resolved that peaceful commerce with Europe was a far wiser course than engaging in fruitless warfare: “Ceuta is the heart of Morocco,” he avowed, “but only a crazy man or a fool would consider attacking it . . . nothing will come of it except the disgrace of Islam.”⁶ On the economic front, he rebuilt the Atlantic ports, most notably, the town of Essaouira (al-Sawira) on Morocco’s Atlantic coast, for the purpose of promoting overseas trade.⁷ He created monopolies over goods for export and levied heavy duties on imports that dramatically increased the revenues of the state, but in so doing, raised the ire of foreign merchants. He filled his treasury by imposing a new, non-Qur’anic tax (the *maks*) that was widely condemned by both the ulama and ordinary folk, not only because its legality was in doubt, but also because the hand of the state now reached into the substance of daily life. People had to pay taxes when making the ferry crossing between Rabat and Salé; when they butchered a sheep; or when they used the public scales in the marketplace. Finally, in order to mitigate the corrosive effect of these unpopular measures, he refurbished mosques and *zawiyas* (religious lodges) throughout the land, hoping to win over the affection of the “men of the pen” as well as the hearts of the common people.⁸

The campaign for reform embraced even the most sacrosanct elements in society. Muhammad III intervened “where no sultan had ventured before,” organizing the ulama into classes, depending on their responsibilities, and paying them accordingly. He personally revised the teaching curriculum in the mosques, prescribing the works to be studied, giving emphasis to simplified texts that demystified legal practice. He seized his prerogative as chief *imam* (religious leader) of the Moroccan Muslim community to reinterpret existing laws and make new ones by issuing *fatwas* (legal opinions) and *dahirs* (official decrees) that buttressed his policies. Finally, he established lists of the religious nobility (*shurafa*), purging those who made false claims of kinship with the family of the Prophet in order to reap the benefits of tax exemption.

These sensible changes shook Moroccan society to its roots, and the reaction was not long in coming. In the vanguard of the opposition was his own son, Yazid, who became his father’s archenemy. Building his credibility mainly on the basis of his father’s “neglect” of the jihad, Yazid was joined by disgruntled others who had lost ground through Sultan Muhammad’s reforms: religious elites stripped of their special privileges, brotherhoods that found their income reduced, and ordinary people who deplored the *maks* as a contravention of religious law. For two years after the death of Muhammad III in 1790, the country was thrown into turmoil, as Yazid raged from north to south, trying to undo the innovations instituted by his father.

When Sultan Sulayman, a second son of Muhammad III, acceded to the throne in 1793, the populace was in a black mood; they looked to him for relief from the excesses of Yazid, but were disappointed. Early on, Sultan Sulayman showed personality traits that impaired his ability to rule. His contemporaries remarked that he was obstinate and a poor judge of people, he paid no heed to the advice of his ministers, and he even forbade his scribes from correcting the grammar of his letters.⁹ This unbending personality was thrust into power at a delicate moment, when fears of a clash with the West were growing. News of the French invasion of Egypt in 1798 reached Morocco, along with reports of French soldiers looting, killing, and abusing Egyptian women.¹⁰ The pilgrimage to Mecca was momentarily suspended, and Moroccans felt cut off from the rest of the Islamic world. The crux of the problem, it was widely believed, was that foreigners were causing the grief and placing the *umma* (the nation) at great risk.

Sultan Sulayman responded by putting Europe at arm’s length. First, he reversed the policy of Muhammad III of making overseas trade the